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### Characteristics of the Pre-Reformation Age as they are Reflected in Some Selected Preaching of the Age Particular in Germany

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRE-REFORMATION AGE  
AS THEY ARE REFLECTED IN SOME SELECTED PREACHING  
OF THAT AGE, PARTICULARLY IN GERMANY

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Practical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1954

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

History cannot be forced into arbitrary divisions, for at the borders there will always be overlapping. The history of any age is dependent upon the preceding, and contributory to the subsequent ages. The history of any people touches that of other peoples; and the history of any subject is related to that of kindred subjects. Yet there is manifest propriety as well as necessity in having divisions into certain periods as a convenience of study and requirement of the subject matter. These boundaries can be approximate only, never exact.<sup>1</sup>

The history of preaching, the full record of which remains to be written, will also prove to conform to the above assertion about history in general. Its course corresponds, however, to a marked degree with that of general and ecclesiastical history. The outward events with which church history deals are often reflected in preaching; it bears the impress of the various forms of thought known to us as philosophies; the prevailing heresies affect it, either in the way of attraction or repulsion. It leads us into many areas of life rarely considered either in general or

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 25 f.

with what is most distinguished in the Christian Church. To the life of the nation and the race the preacher has ministered, for his appeal has been to his own generation. He has dealt with the present duty as well as with the final destiny of man and women about him; with their relation to "the life that now is as well as to that which is to come."<sup>5</sup>

To pursue the course of history in the last two thousand years is to trace not an Apostolic succession, but, what is much more important, a Prophetic succession which has delivered its message to the centuries. So the history of preaching cannot be studied nor understood apart from the histories of the Church and of Christendom at large.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1 Tim. 4:8b.

<sup>6</sup> Pattison, op. cit.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRE-REFORMATION AGE

The Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century was primarily a religious movement. It was also a very complex movement, and its factors were not exclusively religious nor moral. A variety of forces, political, economic, social and intellectual, as well as religious and moral, went into the making of it. Without the cooperation of these forces, Luther would hardly have succeeded in bringing about the Reformation of which he became the main instrument.<sup>1</sup>

Even as a religious reformer, Luther had precursors who had striven to effect a thorough amelioration of the Church during the previous centuries. Commonly mentioned, and rather well known, are the "Morning Stars of the Reformation," Wyclif in England, Hus in Bohemia and Savonarola in Italy. In the Pre-Reformation centuries attempts to bring about a practical reformation were also being made by reforming churchmen and Humanists in France and the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup>

The reform of the Church was a general aspiration of the age in which Luther appeared, and it periodically found expression on the part of individuals, councils and fraternities

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<sup>1</sup>James Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1925-1930), I, Preface, 111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3. See also William K. Anderson, editor, Protestantism--A Symposium (Nashville, Tenn.: Parthenon Press, 1945), pp. 30-41.

before and up to Luther's time.<sup>3</sup>

With reference to the general spirit and conditions of the Church, the need of a change and a renovation existed, and was deeply felt. From the law, which Christianity had again become, men longed to escape into the enlargement of the Gospel--to exchange ecclesiastical bondage, not for lawlessness of the spirit, but for the "liberty of the children of God."<sup>4</sup>

Historically the course of preaching has, since Apostolic times, had three high points, in the fourth, the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> These centuries approximate the Ancient or Patristic, the Medieval and the Transitional-Reformatory-Modern periods of Christian preaching.<sup>6</sup>

There is no significant preaching in the post-apostolic period until the third century. The period of major patristic significance is from the third through the sixth century. Here we encounter the theological innovations of Origen, the social sensitivity of Chrysostom, the catholicizing of Augustine, and the traditional sweep of the first Gregory. With the coming of the seventh century, and on into the eleventh century there is a current of sermonic sterility and uninspired

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<sup>3</sup> Mackinnon, op. cit., p. v.

<sup>4</sup> C. Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1885), II, 3. Romans 8:21b.

<sup>5</sup> T. Harwood Pattison, The History of Christian Preaching (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), Chapters 4-7. See also Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 1-2; and John Ker, Lectures on the History of Preaching (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1889), pp. 1-8.

<sup>6</sup> Dargan, op. cit., p. 28.

preaching, in spite of certain noticeable exceptions. Sermons and sermon manuals exhibit almost slavish dependence on the great leaders of patristic homily . . . . The thirteenth century, however, was certainly the age of genuine preaching revival.<sup>7</sup>

"The Reformation marks the commencement of the modern period of preaching, the use of the principle of individuality separating us from the old world as by an ocean."<sup>8</sup>

The term "Pre-Reformation" in this thesis will be used of that period of Christian preaching beginning with the opening of the thirteenth century and ending with the early sermons of Luther up to the beginning of 1522. While in this period there were also thinkers whose work was done mainly or entirely with the pen, such as Melancthon and Erasmus, the great majority of Christian leaders and teachers were men irresistibly drawn to use the living voice in the great congregation.<sup>9</sup>

This Pre-Reformation period began with the "greatest of all centuries," the thirteenth. In this century the Papacy was at its zenith.<sup>10</sup> The long struggle between the Medieval Church and the Medieval Empire, between priest and warrior, ended in the first half of this century with the

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<sup>7</sup>Ray C. Petry, editor, No Uncertain Sound (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 1 f.

<sup>8</sup>Ker, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 3 f.

<sup>10</sup>E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and his Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 16.

overthrow of the Hohenstaufens. This left the Papacy sole inheritor of the claim of ancient Rome to be the sovereign of the civilized world.<sup>11</sup> This claim to universal supremacy, temporal as well as spiritual, had been previously urged by ecclesiastical jurists only. In this thirteenth century theology also began to state it from its own point of view through Thomas Aquinas.<sup>12</sup>

With this in mind, it is not difficult to agree with Ullmann: "Whoever intends to depict ecclesiastical affairs of the Middle Ages, finds himself immediately involved with the political."<sup>13</sup> Wherever any affairs of Europe in this age are to be studied, the Papacy will always be in the picture. In our study, therefore, we will have to include the preaching of at least one pope, Innocent III.

This period was also the age of continuing heresies and their challenge to the Church. It witnessed the last upswing of papal crusading, not against infidels, but against heretical Albigenses and Waldenses. This brought about the rise of at least one preaching order, the Dominicans, from amongst whom the Inquisition later developed. Another order that arose to supply the current need of reform and preaching

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas M. Lindsay, "A History of the Reformation," International Theological Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), I, 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Ullmann, op. cit., pp. 162 f.

was that of the Franciscans.<sup>14</sup> Two of their best products in the field of preaching will be presented in Berthold of Regensburg and John Tauler.

The revival of preaching in this period of the thirteenth century took various forms in preparation for the eventual Reformation. Three main types of preaching can be traced, some of them meeting and overlapping in the same individual. The first of these is the Scholastic type. The Schoolmen, or Scholastics, sought to reconcile theology with the philosophy of Aristotle. Their preaching addressed itself to the intellect rather than to the heart or conscience. It was addressed to the Schools in the monasteries rather than to the common intelligence and reason.<sup>15</sup> Its contribution to the development of preaching was primarily in the matter of form. Pre-eminent representatives of this Scholastic mode of thought were the Dominican, Albertus Magnus, born in southern Germany (d. 1280) and his greater pupil Thomas Aquinas. Scholasticism gave us the ordered sermon with its infinite divisions.<sup>16</sup> This is its main contribution to preaching, and, since it largely addressed itself only to a certain class of society, our study will not include any Scholastic preachers excepting Innocent III, whose sermons show the Scholastic influence.

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<sup>14</sup> Petry, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ker, op. cit., pp. 124 f.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 125 f. See also Dargan, op. cit., pp. 231 f.

The next two schools of preaching are, for the purpose of this study, of greater interest to us. They are the Mystic and the Popular schools, the latter with much of the mystical in its character, but clearer in form and presentation of Christian truth.<sup>17</sup> From these schools John Tauler and Berthold of Regensburg are most prominent in Pre-Reformation preaching in Germany.

Humanism, which also had its influence in this period at a later date, is well-represented by the last preacher we shall study before Luther, viz., John Geiler of Kaisersberg, the "German Savonarola."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ker, op. cit., p. 127. See also Dargan, op. cit., pp. 271 f.

<sup>18</sup> Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 52 f. See also Elmer Carl Kiessling, The Early Sermons of Luther and their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), pp. 54 f.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PRE-REFORMATION PAPACY AT ITS ZENITH, UNDER INNOCENT III (1160-1216)

At the turn of the centuries (1198-1216) the greatest of all the Popes, Innocent III, was in the chair. In him the papal power reached its zenith. As vicegerent of Christ and successor of St. Peter, he claimed sovereignty over all the nations of the earth.<sup>1</sup> "The greatest of all pontiffs in the greatest of all centuries, the thirteenth."<sup>2</sup> This was the golden age of Roman Catholicism. The church party of Gregory VII (Hildebrand) had attained its purpose. The church militant was also the church triumphant. The vicar of Christ was undisputed sovereign of kings, bishops, church and state, the lord over the temporal and eternal welfare of men. Never was a Pope more powerful; never, excepting the Vatican decree of 1870 (infallibility) did a Pope utter such great boasts and blasphemies as he: "The Pope holds a position between God and man. Though he is less than God, he is greater than man. He judges everybody, but is himself

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 179 and 224.

<sup>2</sup>E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and his Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 16.

judged by none."<sup>3</sup>

The culmination of the power of the papacy occurred under Innocent III, who succeeded in making real all the dreams of Hildebrand (Gregory VII). It was he who declared, "The Pope is above the secular power, as Christ is above Caesar, or the soul above the body, or time less than eternity." He set up kings, decided alliances, compelled and revoked marriages, and freed subjects from their allegiance to their sovereigns. In him the priest had become lord of emperors and king of kings.<sup>4</sup>

These unparalleled claims of the papacy were seconded and defended in the name of theology by the new Mendicant Orders of Dominicans and Franciscans and the great teachers of the high Scholastic period.<sup>5</sup>

The state of European politics at this time may be summed up as follows:

In Italy and Germany, confusion; in France, decay of feudalism and tendency to absolute monarchy; in England growth of parliamentary power and strengthening of constitutional monarchy.

The social conditions, however, had a more immediate and influential connection with the pulpit. The mighty impulse of the crusades was felt in every part of the social order. With this were united many other forces which contributed to the activity and progress of men during that stirring era. The crusaders' contact with many wares and luxuries hitherto unknown in the West, produced a taste for these

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<sup>3</sup>J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, 198.

<sup>4</sup>Samuel George Smith, Democracy and the Church (New York and London: D. Appleton Co., 1912), pp. 94 and 130.

<sup>5</sup>Neve, op. cit., p. 198.

things and stimulated trade. Merchants became wealthy and a more considerable class of society. Along with the merchant, the banker and usurer grew rich. Commercial activity stimulated others, and the whole realm of trade, finance and labor received a mighty impulse. The growth of cities and the rise of the middle class gave promise of coming strength. The intellectual life received a powerful uplift, and the great universities of Europe arose in this age.<sup>6</sup>

The crusading fervor, however, was only a temporary enthusiasm. On a foundation so uncertain, no permanent revival of preaching could be built.<sup>7</sup> The spiritual life of this age did not center where the power of the Church centered. To remedy the neglect or abuse of preaching, heroic treatment and a better foundation were needed. This was found in two of the greatest figures in the annals of preaching, Dominic and Francis of Assisi.<sup>8</sup>

Some characteristics of the age of Pope Innocent III are described by these two heads of the greatest preaching orders. Dominic (1170-1220), a bigot, looking out over Europe with the eye of a churchman, saw evils everywhere to be remedied--Moors to the South, Jews all around, Albigenses across the Pyrenees, ignorance in the Church, no purity of

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<sup>6</sup>Dargan, op. cit., pp. 220-222.

<sup>7</sup>T. Harwood Pattison, The History of Christian Preaching (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), p. 99.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

life, no fervor of faith, no devotion of spirit with which to combat these errors.<sup>9</sup>

Francis of Assisi described the times in this way:

Churches without people; people without priests; priests without respect; Christians without Christ; holy places denied to be holy; the sacraments no longer sacred, and holy days without their solemnity.<sup>10</sup>

To reform these evils, Dominic and Francis resorted to preaching.<sup>11</sup> But when they sought permission of Innocent III to found their orders, they discovered that he was opposed to the multiplication of orders. He reluctantly yielded to Francis' persuasion in 1210, on condition that his order be wholly subordinated to the Church.<sup>12</sup> Dominic was less successful, and his order was first confirmed by Honorius III, successor to Innocent III, 1216.<sup>13</sup> This was characteristic of Innocent III who sought world-domination, not to free nor reform the Church, but to possess power.<sup>14</sup>

Under this same Pope another abuse, besides that of power, arose in the Church, viz., the development of money-

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Dargan, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>13</sup>Joh. Ph. Kochler, Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1917), p. 267.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

payments for indulgences. Full absolution was granted anyone who would pay the cost of a substitute for the crusades.<sup>15</sup> Thus, while under the supreme power of the Papacy, reform received but little attention; the abuses which required the Reformation continued to grow.

In the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, loyal churchmen almost unanimously recognized the sure signs of unchecked decadence, and the need of better homiletic form.<sup>16</sup> Innocent III in this same Council, forced all opposition to bow to his arbitrary dictation.<sup>17</sup>

The preaching of Innocent III shows him to have been the man that history says he was. He had received an excellent education, and was thoroughly grounded in Scholastic philosophy and canon law. His writings are evidence of his scholarship, while his clever maneuverings reveal a diplomacy found only in the greatest statesmen of history.<sup>18</sup> He inaugurated his administration with a sermon replete with Biblical phraseology, calling for the feeding of Christ's

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<sup>15</sup>Heinrich Boehmer, The Road to Reformation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 169.

<sup>16</sup>Ray C. Petry, editor, No Uncertain Sound (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 17. See also Albert Hyma, Renaissance to Reformation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 34 f, and Samuel McCauley Jackson, editor, Schaff-Herzog New Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1950), II, 498 f.

<sup>18</sup>Schwiebert, op. cit., p. 17.

sheep with the bread of the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup> His extant sermons are almost entirely unavailable in translation. They are fairly well represented by the following example of his spiritualized exegesis. By means of allegory and proof-text the primacy of the Roman Bishop, the preaching of Peter and Paul, and the glorious reign of the Church over all the faithful are developed:

TEXT: Luke 5:3-6.--Preached on the Festivals of the Apostles Peter and Paul.--HOW WE OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE SEA AS THE WORLD, THE SHIP AS THE CHURCH, THE DEEP SEA AS ROME AND THE NET AS PREACHING. (Sermon XXII.) If "many waters," Rev. 19:6, signify many people, the whole world is certainly denoted by the "great sea." . . . Just as the sea is always stormy and turbulent, so the world remains in storm and stress; nowhere is there peace and security, never is there rest and quietness, but everywhere toil and trouble, 1 John 5:19; Prov. 14:13. With reason, therefore, the Apostle laments, Romans 7:25; Psalm 142:7; Job 5:7; Eccles. 2:23; Eccles. 40:1. In the sea, small fishes are devoured by the great; and in the world, weak men are oppressed by the strong, Psalm 53:4; Eccles. 13:23; (Post Horace quoted, "The wrongs that kings do, are suffered by their subjects.")

When Christ said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep"--that depth of the sea was Rome, Rome which held and holds primacy and sovereignty over the whole world, the city which God deemed worthy of such high dignity that she alone in pagan times had dominion over all nations, and in Christian times she alone has authority over all the faithful. God prepared a place worthy and suitable; indeed He provided both suitability and worth when He commanded him who was head of the Church to establish his throne in the city which held the primacy of the world. Thus the Lord said to Peter, "Launch into the deep," V. 4; saying in effect, Go to Rome, proceed, you and yours, to the city and there "let down your nets, etc."

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<sup>19</sup>petry, op. cit., p. 17.

We see clearly how much God loved that city; to make her alone both priestly and royal, imperial and apostolic, to give her power to win and exercise, not only dominion over bodies, but also authority over souls. She is now far greater and honorable with heavenly authority than formerly with earthly power. By the one she holds the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; by the other she holds the reins of the realms of the earth. Truly to no other city can there ever come the honor of such dignity--or rather the dignity of such honor. But in this city the dignity will remain by the eternal law of God's providence.

When Peter had left Rome in flight from the persecution of unbelievers, the Lord appeared to him near the city. Peter said to Him, "Whither goest Thou, Lord?" He answered, "I go to Rome to be crucified again."<sup>20</sup> Peter understood that this was spoken concerning himself, since the head is crucified with every member. He returned to the city and consecrated it with his blood shed on the cross.

Also he had as helper there the most blessed Paul. This is the reason why, in our text, a singular verb is followed by a plural, "Launch (thou) into the deep; and (you) let down the nets for a draught," because Peter, the Head of the Whole Church, alone ascended to the height of Supreme Pontiff, but he and Paul together "let down their nets" of preaching to "catch men" in the city. Certainly it was by special dispensation of Providence, that exactly where two brothers according to the flesh, Romulus and Remus, who founded the material city, lie buried in honorable tombs, two brothers according to the faith, Peter and Paul, who laid the spiritual foundations of the city, lie at rest buried in two glorious churches-- Peter in that quarter where Romulus is buried, and Paul on the other side where Remus is buried. So from both sides, they watch over and guard your city. One indeed reached the height, but both "let down their nets, etc."

Further, as the "ship" is the Church, the "sea" the world, the "deep" Rome, so by the "net" we understand preaching. As a "net" is composed of different cords and strings, a sermon is also

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<sup>20</sup>This legend is the subject of the book Quo Vadis by Henry Sienkiwicz, Polish author (1845-1916).

made strong by different authorities and arguments. The careful preacher ought to compose his sermon with a variety of material and many different authorities so that he speaks now of virtues, now of faults; of rewards, of penalties; somewhat of mercy and of justice; now simply, now subtly; using history, then allegory; speaking literally, figuratively; citing authorities and giving arguments; employing metaphors and illustrations--so that each point takes its place fitly set forth.

This is taught by St. Paul, I Cor. 2:6-12; 3:1.2-- Moreover with "nets" we capture fishes, birds and beasts . . . in water, air and on earth. By fishes we understand the self-indulgent, by birds the proud, by beasts the violent. Therefore the preacher composes his sermon against self-indulgence, pride and passion . . . in order to win to self-control, humility, and mildness. When he "lets down the net," . . . he does not kill his captives, he gives them new life, . . . feeds, . . . protects them.

Such "nets" the blessed saints Peter and Paul alike, "let down." By their preaching Rome was converted from error to truth, from sins to virtues. Therefore Rome owes veneration to all Apostles, but to these two especial honor. . . . By their merits and prayers may she be preserved on earth, that in the end she may be crowned with joy in heaven! In the Name of our LORD Jesus Christ, Who is above all, GOD, blessed for ever. Amen.<sup>21</sup>

This sermon mirrors the position of the Papacy under Innocent III, as well as the political and social characteristics of the time in which that papal power was dominant. Of historical interest in this connection is also the fact that this Pope attempted to annul the Magna Charta in England, which country he subdued through his Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton. He failed in the effort against the Charter, but he succeeded in forcing King John to acknowledge Langton as Archbishop, and in making the king subject and tributary to the

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<sup>21</sup>Petry, op. cit., pp. 177-180.

Roman See, 1215.<sup>22</sup> Innocent III was also the first pontiff to tax the whole Church by the tithes for the crusades. He had sixteen successors in the thirteenth century, under whom papal power was carried on. With the overthrow of the House of Hohenstaufen, in the defeat and death of Innocent's ward, Frederick (1212-1250), the Medieval German Empire ended.<sup>23</sup> By 1294, upon the accession of Pope Boniface VIII, the Papacy was beginning to crumble, and was being attacked by disputing forces, especially concerning its political claims.<sup>24</sup>

The great French preacher, Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) tells us of the end of Innocent III. De Vitry was charged by the Pope to preach a new crusade to the Holy Land. Having succeeded in that, he was chosen by the canons of Acre to be their Bishop. On his way to Rome to be set apart for this charge, he found at Perugia the lifeless body of Innocent III who had suddenly died there, 1216. It was lying shamefully neglected in the Church of St. Laurence. Attendants had rushed off to Rome for the new papal election!<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp. 95-99.

<sup>23</sup>Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), I, 11.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-12.

<sup>25</sup>Dargan, op. cit., p. 235.

CHAPTER IV  
THIRTEENTH CENTURY GERMANY,  
FROM THE PREACHING OF  
BERTHOLD OF REGENSBURG (c. 1220-1272)

There was no independent, indigenous preaching in Germany before the thirteenth century. For four hundred years after the death of Boniface, "the Apostle of the Germans," few names of German preachers are known. Those we do know all leaned heavily upon the Greek and Latin Fathers for sermons and sermon materials. There was preaching throughout this period. Germany had been brought within the pale of Christianity by the missionary preaching of such men as Gallus, Pirminius and Boniface.<sup>1</sup>

By the middle of the thirteenth century, however, German preaching showed the influence of new currents of thought and feeling, such as Mysticism. The crusades, the preaching of heretics, as well as that of the Mendicant Orders, also did their share in producing the itinerant preacher, and the popular outdoor preaching.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. Nebe, Zur Geschichte der Predigt (Wiesbaden: Julius Niedner Verlagshandlung, 1879), I, 299. See also Elmer Carl Kiessling, The Early Sermons of Luther and their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), pp. 10 f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

The Franciscan, Berthold of Regensburg or Ratisbon, in Bavaria, was the greatest of German preachers before Luther. He combined in himself most of the good parts of the itinerant Mendicants: their homely eloquence, the dramatic arrangement of their material, their concrete applications, and their fervid call to repentance.<sup>3</sup> The Franciscans, in part due to their vows of poverty, were in closest contact with the people. They had received papal permission to preach in the temple of creation, under the open heaven.<sup>4</sup> Berthold did this in the market place, the cathedral square, or in any open field near the town. Determining the direction of the wind so as to speak with it, the pulpit was erected and the people were called together by the ringing of bells.<sup>5</sup>

All historians, both Protestant and Romanist, who write of preaching in Germany during the Middle Ages, speak of Berthold with pardonable pride. He was neither Scholastic nor Mystic like so many of his contemporaries, but distinctively a Popular preacher. Though proficient in Latin, he did most of his great work in the crude German of his time.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Nebe, op. cit., p. 300.

<sup>5</sup>Kiessling, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>6</sup>Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 256 f.

The enormous crowds who came to hear him bear evidence of the revival of popular interest in preaching.<sup>7</sup> No church could hold the crowds, estimated as high as sixty thousand people.<sup>8</sup> Some ancient chronicles even speak of as many as two-hundred thousand before whom he often preached by means of an interpreter in the non-German areas.<sup>9</sup>

Berthold's ministry coincided with the years of the Great Interregnum in Germany, when for twenty years there was no king after the fall of the Hohenstaufen emperors (1250-1272). The reins of authority were loosed; petty sovereigns and lords were without an overlord; the political, social and moral disorders were great.<sup>10</sup>

To such an age Berthold was a stern preacher of righteousness, denouncing the popular religious pilgrimages of his day as creating more sins than they yielded pardon.<sup>11</sup> His preaching was largely missionary, stressing

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 228 f.

<sup>8</sup>T. Harwood Pattison, The History of Christian Preaching (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), p. 111.

<sup>9</sup>Nebs, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>10</sup>Dargan, op. cit., pp. 257 f.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas M. Lindsay, "A History of the Reformation," International Theological Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), I, 134.

sorrow for sin, penance (not without contrition) and renunciation. He also denounced indulgence-preachers severely as "penny-preachers." While shunning political subjects, he showed his social consciousness by speaking of all that affected people, their joys and sorrows, superstitions and prejudices, oppressive taxes, unjust judges, usury, dishonest trade, Jews, heretics, actors and women's vanity.<sup>12</sup>

While often in his words we catch the trumpet notes of Luther, Berthold preached more duty than doctrine. Though he denounced the indulgence-preachers unmercifully, he remained a true priest of the Roman Church.<sup>13</sup> Clearer in form and presentation than most of the Mystics, he was, nevertheless, in sympathy with their spirit and doctrine.<sup>14</sup> Roger Bacon agreed that Brother Berthold could preach the Gospel down out of heaven and the people loose from their sins--if any one could. The following passages are redolent of his power. Translated excerpts are from G. G. Coulton, Life in the

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<sup>12</sup>Samuel McCauley Jackson, editor, Schaff-Herzog New Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1950), II, 71.

<sup>13</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

Middle Ages. 15

## SERMON SELECTIONS ON "TRICKS OF TRADE."

(Note: Various "folk" are admonished)

The first are ye that work in clothing, silks, wool, fur, shoes gloves or girdles. Men cannot dispense with you; men must have clothing, therefore serve them to do your work truly; not to steal half the cloth, use other guile, mixing hair with your wool or stretching it out longer . . . and make good cloth into useless stuff. Nowadays no man can find a good hat for thy falsehood. . . rain will pour through the brim into his bosom. Even such deceit is there in shoes, furs, currier's work; one sells an old skin for new . . . manifold are your deceits, . . . no man knoweth so well as thou and thy master the devil. Why should I come here to teach thee frauds? Thou knowest enough thyself.

The second are all such as work with iron tools, goldsmiths, penny-smiths and other smiths, carpenters or blacksmiths, men that smite, stonemasons, turners, all such as use handicrafts with iron. Such should be true and trustworthy, whether they work by the day, or by the piece, as many carpenters and masons do. When they labor by the day, . . . stand not all the more idle that they may multiply the days. If by the piece, . . . hasten not too soon therefrom, . . . to be rid of the work as quickly as possible . . . , that the house may fall down in a year or two; thou shouldest work at it . . . , as it were thine own. Smith, thou wilt shoe a steed with a shoe that is naught, . . . a mile thereon, and it is already broken. . . , horse may go lame . . . , man be taken prisoner or lose his life. Thou art a devil and an apostate. . . . The tenth Order is utterly fallen beyond recall; I bar no man from contrition and repentance, but, otherwise, such as beat out long knives wherewith men slay their fellow-men, such may use deceit or not, sell dear or cheap, as they will, yet for their soul there is no help.

The third are such as are busied with trade; we cannot do without them. They bring . . . what is good and cheap beyond the sea to this town . . . and carry over from Hungary, France, on ships, on wagons, on beasts, or bearing packs. Trader, . . . trust God! . . . He will find thee livelihood with true winnings, . . . for so hath He promised. Yet now thou swearest loudly how good thy wares are, . . .

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<sup>15</sup>Ray C. Petry, editor, No Uncertain Sound (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 206.

more than ten or thirty times takest thou the names of the saints in vain, . . . swearest, "I have already been offered far more," and that is a lie, . . . a great mortal sin. The more thou swearest, the less men buy, . . . thy worldly profit is small, . . . all the time thou damnest away thine own salvation . . . . And if thou wilt buy from simple folk, thou turnest all thy mind to see how thou get it without money and weavest many lies before his face. . . . Many thousand souls are damned thereby, seeing there is so much fraud and falsehood and blasphemy that no man can tell it. Yourselves know best what lies and frauds are busy in your trade!

The fourth are such as sell meat and drink. . . . All the more needful that thou be true and honest therein; other deceit dealeth with man's goods; this with man's body. . . . If thou offerest measly or rotten flesh, kept too long until it be corrupt, unwholesome before the slaughter, or unripe of age, which thou knowest well and yet givest it for sale, . . . thou art guilty of the blood of folk. The same I say to him who selleth fish. . . . captive in water till Friday come, . . . corrupt . . . , a man eateth his death by them, or some great sickness. . . . So are certain inn-keepers and cooks who keep sodden flesh too long. . . . So do certain others betray with corrupt wine or mouldy beer, or unsodden mead, or give false measure, or mix water with the wine. Others again bake rotten corn to bread . . . , salt their bread which is most unwholesome. We read not that salt is so unwholesome and harmful in any other food as in bread; and the better it is salted, the nearer to great sickness or death.

The fifth folk are such as till the earth for corn or wine. Such should live truly towards their lords and their fellows, and among each other; not plow over the other's landmark, trespass nor reap beyond the mark, nor feed their cattle to another's harm, nor work any other deceit one on the other, nor betray their fellows to the lord. *Fie, traitor! Untrue man! Where sittest thou before mine eyes, thou Chusi, "thou Achithopheli!"*<sup>16</sup> Thou shouldest be true to thy lord; yet dost thy service so sparingly, slothfully, and with such constraint, . . . that when he chideth thee, thou dost leave him and flee to some other master.-- Sometimes the lords are guilty here. . . . Ye

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<sup>16</sup>2 Sam. 15:12.31; 16:20.

deal sometimes so ill with your poor folk . . . .  
 can never tax them too high . . . ., would fain  
 tax them higher and higher. It is far better  
 for you that ye take small taxes every year, . . .  
 and all the more straitly. Ye cannot till the  
 land yourselves, therefore should ye so deal with  
 your folk that they gladly serve you. It is their  
 duty too to serve you truly, live truly one with  
 the other . . . ., and sell truly among yourselves.  
 Thou beer, bringest to town a load of wood that  
 is all full of crooked billets beneath; so sellest  
 thou air for wood! And the hay thou layest so  
 cunningly on the wagon that no man can profit by  
 it; thou art a right false deceiver, . . . thou  
 layest fine corn at the top of the sack and evil  
 corn beneath, . . . all thy work is spoiled with  
 deceit, hate and envy.

The sixth folk are all that deal with medicine  
 . . . ., these must take great heed against untruth.  
 Who is no good master of that art, let him in no  
 wise undertake it, or folks' blood will be upon  
 his head. . . . Such as are not learned--may  
 not even deal with a wound--such men presume to  
 possess and exercise the inward art, and must  
 needs give drinks to folk. Take heed, doctor,  
 and keep thyself from this as thou lovest . . .  
 heaven. Even learned masters have enough to do  
 here. "O, Brother Berthold, four times already  
 have I had all success!" Lo, that was but a blow  
 at a venture. If thou wilt not let this matter  
 go and study farther . . . ., then the rulers should  
 forbid it thee on pain of curse and banishment.  
 We have murderers enough without thee, to slay  
 honest folk. Deal with thy wounds for the present,  
 and practice not the rest until thou be past master.  
 Children, or old folk, thou hast much need of good  
 art before thou canst well cut them for the stone. . .

God send in His grace that these nine Orders  
 be kept safe, for the tenth is utterly fallen from  
 us and become apostate. These are buffoons, fiddlers  
 and timbrel-players, and all such folk, whatever  
 may be their name, who sell their honor for money. . .  
 For such have turned their whole lives only to sin  
 and shame, . . . they blush not for any; yea,  
 thou buffon, whatever the devil is ashamed to  
 speak, that speakest thou; and all that the devil  
 may pour into thee, thou lettest fall from thy  
 mouth. Alas, that Holy Baptism ever came upon  
 thee, since thou hast denied Baptism and thy  
 Christendom! And all that men give thee, they  
 give sinfully, and must answer for it to God at  
 the Last Day. If there be such here, forth with  
 him!

So are some men deceivers, liars, like the craftsmen. Shoemaker sayeth, "most excellent soles," . . . he hath burned them before the fire, and lieth and cheateth thee of thy money.--Baker floods his dough with yeast, . . . who dreams to have bought bread, has bought mere air.--Huxter pours beer, water, sometimes into his oil.--Butcher will sell calves' flesh, saying, "It is three weeks old"; and it is scarce a week.--Fishers must catch fish with manifold devices; these fish betoken poor folk, poor, naked, ever cold, . . . bare of all graces, . . . helpless. Devils have set for them bait of untruth. . . , with no bait could he have taken them, but with this. Because they are poor and naked, they devour one another. Poor folk that are called menservants and maidservants, that serve your needs, such will steal your salt, bacon, meal, corn, eggs, cheese, bread if not a whole loaf, a fragment, and the half loaves and joints of flesh.--And those are false too to whom thou bringest thy thefts, for if they took it not, thou wouldst have left it alone. Thus many a man betrayeth another for life or possessions; but none are so false as the countryfolk among each other, who are so untrue for envy and hatred, they can scarce look upon one another. One will drive another's cattle to his harm and damage, and another will buy his fellow-peasant out of his farm, all from untruth.<sup>17</sup>

SERMON SELECTIONS ON "WOMEN'S DRESS": BROTHER BERTHOLD. I am come here to speak of . . . how you should beware of snares of the devil, for the holy saint saw so many . . . , he said, "Lord, who may avoid all these snares?" The whole world was full of them. They go by night to towns, villages and lay snares of many kinds, for devils have naught else to do.--"But, Brother Berthold, thou sayest much to us of devils and guiles, and we never see a single devil, nor hear, nor grasp, nor feel them."--Lo, now, that is the worst harm they do thee, . . . for didst thou once see a single devil as he is, then wouldst thou surely not commit one sin again. The worst of snares that they have is that they deal so stealthily with us. See how dead a silence they keep, albeit there are many

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<sup>17</sup>Petry, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-211. See also Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 f; and Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), II, 320 f.

thousands in this place! Ye devils, ye hear me well enough preaching here, yet ye would not take all the wealth under heaven (I except a man's soul) that one of you let himself be seen; for then all your cunning and snares would avail you no more.--Now see, ye young folk, what a deadly snare that is. . . . They are so foul of form that, if we could but see one as he is, all mankind would die of fear. As little as man may endure sight of God with fleshly eyes, so little may one ever see the devil for fear. And if it were so that a man might see the devil with bodily eyes and not die of horror, and if the devil were to come out at this moment from yonder forest, and this town were a burning fiery furnace, there would yet be the greatest throng of men pressing into that fiery furnace that ever there was, or will be! . . .

The second snare, set so perilously for us Christian folk, they have set especially for women. Women as well as men are created for, and need, the Kingdom of Heaven. Many more would come in, but for this snare. Fie, ye wicked devils! How many thousand poor women's souls would be in heaven, but for the single snare you laid for them! Ye women . . . , have compassion, . . . go to church more readily than men, pray more, come to hear preaching and to earn indulgences more readily than men; and many of you would be saved, but for this one snare, vainglory and empty honor.--In order that ye may compass men's praise, ye spend all your labor on your garments, your veils and kirtles. Many of you pay as much to the sempstress as the cost of the cloth; it must have its shields on the shoulders, be flounced and tucked all around the hem; it is not enough for you to show your pride in your very buttonholes, but you must also send your feet to hell by special torments, ye trot this way and that with your fine stitchings, and so many ye make, with so much pains, that no man may rehearse it all. At the least excuse ye weary yourselves with your garments; all that . . . . is naught but vanity.--Ye busy yourselves with your veils . . . , twitch them hither and thither; ye gild them here and there with gold thread and spend thereon your time and trouble. Ye spend a good six months' work on a veil, which is sinful, great travail--and all that men may praise thy dress, "Ah, how good, how fair!" Our Lady was fairer than thou, . . . exceeding humble of heart . . . and St. Margaret . . . , other saints.--"How, Brother Berthold, we do it only for the goodman's

sake, that he may gaze the less on other women." No, believe me, if thy goodman be a good man indeed, he would rather see chaste conversation than outward adorning, so that folk point fingers and gape, "Who is she?" or "Whose wife?" Or if he be a lewd fellow, all thy crimple-crispings and christy-crosties and thy gold thread are of no avail . . . they help thee only to hell forever, unless thou come to contrition and true penitence. Every woman's excuse is, "I do it not for vainglory, but for my goodman!" But many husbands are heartily sorry for your dressing, especially when ye leave them no rest. Now ye will have this, now that. When thou shouldst be busy in the house with something needful for the goodman, thyself, thy children, or guests, then art thou busy instead with thy hair or wimple . . . , careful that thy sleeves sit well, or thy veil, thy headdress, wherewith the whole time is filled, the days, weeks, the whole year long.

Now see, ye women, to how little purpose ye lose the Kingdom of Heaven! Believe me, whatever thou doest with dress, in all the world it is but a little dust and a bit of cloth. With all thy crimple-crispings here, thy christy-crosties there, the gold thread here and there, yet I say it again, it is naught but a bit of cloth after all! Only Jewesses and the parsons' lemans (mistresses) and the lost women who walk outside the town walls--only such should wear these yellow scarves, that they might be known from the rest.

Ye men, put an end to this thing, and fight against it doughtily, first with good words, and if they are still obdurate, then ye should step valiantly in. "Ah, Brother Berthold, that is a perilous enemy whom the goodman must keep in his house! I have oft besought her kindly, . . . commanded her straitly, yet she would never forbear. Now . . . , were I to pull one veil from her, I fear she . . . should go buy another twice as dear."--Lo, now thou shouldst take heart of grace. Thou art a man after all, and bearest a sword, yet art thou easily conquered by a distaff. Take courage, and pluck up heart, and tear it from her head, even though four or ten hairs come away with it, and cast it into the fire. Do not thus thrice or four times only; and presently she will forbear. It is fitting that the man should be the woman's lord and master.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Petry, op. cit., pp. 211-213.

The complaints about extravagance in dress, echoed in this sermon, were justified. At a later date the dress of men and women in Ratisbon or Regensburg was regulated by law:

The wives and daughters of the burghers should be allowed eight dresses, six long cloaks, three dancing gowns, one pleated wrapper, two pearl hair-bands, eight tiaras of gold set with pearls, . . . and two veils.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Flick, op. cit., pp. 317 f.

## CHAPTER V

### FOURTEENTH CENTURY GERMANY, AND THE PREACHING OF JOHN TAULER OF STRASBURG (c.1290-1361)

We now leave the thirteenth century in which popular preaching in the vernacular blossomed under the nurture of the Franciscans. The Dominicans fostered the preaching of the next century, and among them Mysticism occupied a place of high favor and power which greatly influenced preaching.<sup>1</sup> The one great, distinctive idea of Mysticism is the doctrine of the immediate intercourse of the soul with God. This was the goal of Mystic preaching.<sup>2</sup> Mysticism in Germany was found chiefly on both sides of the Rhine, and seems to have been centered in Strasburg and Thuringia from which localities many of the leading German Mystics came.<sup>3</sup> The greatest German Mystic preacher of this age was John Tauler, the Strasburg Dominican,<sup>4</sup> who filled the immense cathedral with crowds,

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<sup>1</sup>A. Nebe, Zur Geschichte der Predigt (Wiesbaden: Julius Niedner Verlagshandlung, 1879), I, 346. See also Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 269, and Heinrich Boehmer, The Road to Reformation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), pp. 143-149. 263 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Dargan, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 276-280.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

and preached the Gospel fervently.<sup>5</sup> "His Mysticism was more truly evangelical and Jesus-centered."<sup>6</sup> He owed much to the school of Meister Eckhart, but was strongly influenced by Nicholas von Basel, a Waldensian. Luther admired Tauler, but was not influenced by him as much as is sometimes assumed.<sup>7</sup>

It was partly the lofty religious life required in its better forms, partly the fanatic phases of its less-balanced forms, partly the difficulty of comprehending it in all of its forms, that made Mysticism the profession of the few, rather than of the many. In comparison with the scholastic and popular types of preaching, the Mystics had a limited range, smaller, more select audiences, usually those already Christians, and less extensive influence. In many of them there are traces of stressing the contemplative life to the injury of the active, but we do not find this mistake so much in Tauler.<sup>8</sup>

Tauler began to preach publicly between 1320-1330.

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<sup>5</sup>John Ker, Lectures on the History of Preaching (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1889), pp. 125 f.

<sup>6</sup>J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, 213.

<sup>7</sup>T. Harwood Pattison, The History of Christian Preaching (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), pp. 112 f. See also Neve, op. cit., I, 345.

<sup>8</sup>Dargan, op. cit., pp. 271 f.

and soon gained a widespread reputation. At this time he was not socially sensitive, nor a real preacher to the people. He used much Latin and scholastic division in his sermons, and was suspected of making too much show of his learning.<sup>9</sup> At the age of fifty he experienced a very remarkable spiritual exaltation.<sup>10</sup> He was lifted to what was called a "Higher Life" through the influence of a young layman, the head of a secret society which was trying to reform religion without leaving the Church.<sup>11</sup> This layman was one of the "Friends of God" and a Mystic. After hearing Tauler preach, he sought an interview and said the preacher, while preaching to others, was not yet himself fully enlightened. Unsettled by this, Tauler gave up preaching and retired to fastings, penitence and prayers in order to find the "Higher Life." After two years a new Tauler preached.<sup>12</sup> It was after this that he preached the sermons which were taken down by his hearers and remain to us.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Nebe, op. cit., I, 347.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930), I, 235.

<sup>11</sup>John A. Broadus, Lectures on the History of Preaching (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), p. 111.

<sup>12</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 285 f.

<sup>13</sup>Broadus, op. cit., p. 111.

The characteristics of the age in which Tauler lived were conducive in every way to the rise of Mysticism.

In a time of great political and social evils of protracted civil war, followed by a terrible struggle between the Pope and Emperor, a time of frightful pestilence, of sadly dissolute morals even among priests, monks and nuns, Tauler labored as a faithful priest.<sup>14</sup>

Defeated saints have found always a final stronghold in Mysticism. It stands over against the world of action as against the domain of understanding . . . when the world is evil, when reason fails, men retreat to some desert to commune with their own souls and speak with God. If the Church is busy with its own organization and forgets its great tasks in the world, the saintly soul turns to pray. To men, overwhelmed with the sense of common evils, too foul to be cured; the problems of the world, too difficult to be solved, but two paths are open, and one leads to despair, the other to some holy shrine. . . . In times when new knowledge disturbs the old faith, it is the Mystic who saves the day.<sup>15</sup>

At this time Germany was divided in allegiance to two kings. One of them, Louis of Bavaria, set up a rival Pope to John XXII. The latter's interdict followed, and people, priests and monastics were divided. Many left their homes to escape the wrath of King or Pope. In addition to political and religious disorders, there were great disasters and distresses, earthquakes, floods, famines, grasshopper destruction of crops; prices rose 600 to 700 per cent and caused untold hardship. The Black Death swept Europe, 1348. There was frightful

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel George Smith, Democracy and the Church (New York and London: D. Appleton Co., 1912), pp. 101 f.

moral corruption; dreadful crime of every sort abounded, and vices were unrestrained. Among the clergy there were the corrupt and hardened, plunged deeper into evil by the terrors of the times; the pious and thoughtful, separating themselves the more from the world and hiding in God through the monastic, contemplative life. It was an age of spiritual, social, political and economic changes and revolt.<sup>16</sup> Every characteristic of the opening fourteenth century contradicted the "Unam sanctam" of Pope Boniface VIII, 1302.<sup>17</sup>

Against this background, we can understand Tauler's sermons, when he says, e.g., in an Advent sermon:

Since this human nature has been assumed by the eternal Son of God, the believing man is a child and son of God, with Christ the eternal Son of the Father. Prayer is nothing but the giving of the heart to God. Where we should pray, the Lord Himself teaches, when He says, "in spirit". No one should imagine that that is true prayer when one mumbles many outward words and runs over many Psalms.<sup>18</sup>

Tauler understood how to preach to the needs instead of the desires of his hearers. Satisfying the mere thirst for knowledge, so prevalent at the time, was not his idea of the purpose of preaching.

The day will come when God will demand an accounting of the gifts He now so graciously bestows, and which now are so insolently used. As oft as ye come

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<sup>16</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 283 f. See also Flick, op. cit., I, pp. 57, 170, 216, 249.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Pattison, op. cit., p. 113.

together, come to speak of God and of virtuous life, not to hear disputations about the Godhead, nor adroit, subtle reasonings. . . . Who can solve the mystery of the trinity? . . . What do we know of God's union with a loving soul? . . . All the ingenious masters of Paris (University) with all their skill, cannot answer, . . . must remain silent.<sup>19</sup>

His illustrations are original and true to the times:

The joys of this world vanish before heavenly joy "like candlelight in the sunshine. . . ." "The Rhine, overflowing its banks and dams" was to him a picture of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the believers.--"The magnet's (Agtstein) power to attract iron," illustrated the drawing-power of Jesus upon human hearts.--"As coal lies dead and cold of itself, but gives light and heat when fired, so is the spiritual man."--Humble, insignificant and despised people of God are compared to "a grapevine, outwardly dry and sear, inwardly filled with the sap of life, strengthened by the pruning of the gardener, enlivened to fruitfulness by the warmth of the sun."--"As the snake crawling between two stones, divests itself of its old skin, so man rids himself of his old nature between the rocks of Christ's Deity and Humanity."--Christian discipline is illustrated by the example of "a hunting-dog, trained to scent out meat, but refraining from eating it."--"The assaults of temptation are like the heat in the body of the hunted animal;" it is thereby driven to great thirst and a desire for water. The tempted will desire all the more the "water of God."--"The Christian must repeatedly do as the farmer does in March, when the sun draws closer; he prunes his trees, digs his ground, gathers and removes weeds, so that in due time the heart will be green, warm, blossoming and fruitful in the Holy Spirit."--"As the archer closes one eye when he aims at his target, so the eye of the soul must be kept on the goal."--Seldom does one find in Tauler any illustrations of an offensive nature. His language is dignified, pious and poised, without dramatics or strivings after effect.<sup>20</sup>

The accent on "the inner voice of the eternal Word"

<sup>19</sup>Nebe, op. cit., pp. 356-361.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 352 ff.

and the bold warning against allowing "outward observance" to stultify "inward recollection," are clearly evidenced in the following sermon on Luke 6:36-38:

**Giving God Good Measure:** This begins with an ordinary good Christian life. Sincerely done, it is all that God requires of many souls. Others are called to many additional works of religion and penance, and a higher degree of virtue. These shall be judged by their inner fidelity rather than by their outward conformity. Nor does this mean a barren intellectuality of religion, but deeply-lying simplicity of intention. . . .

Children, it is a pitiable thing how alien to some men's hearts is the beautiful virtue of mercy. . . . Alas, everybody strikes at his neighbor with condemnation. If any misfortune happens to him, we add the weight of our accusation, attributing the basest motives we can think. . . . Blessed be God, that He does not do the like! . . . What untold misery comes from an evil tongue. I beg thee, pause awhile, carefully weighing thy thoughts and words about thy neighbor. . . . It is a shameful thing. Hence these words of Christ (Matt. 7, 1-2).

"And now, children, consider the Lord's words (Text). Devout teachers understand four kinds of 'measure' here, 'good, full, pressed down, and running over.' The first means a pious Christian life, ending with God's grace, in eternal life. The 'full' means God's gift to us of a glorified body at the last day. The 'pressed down' means the blessed companionship among saints and angels in everlasting bliss. And the 'overflowing' is our possession of God Himself in perfect happiness, and fulness of every desire."

"Such are God's 'measures' to us. What are our 'measures' to Him, given by that power of loving which we call the will, by which we weigh all our words, works and life?--the will, to whose properties we cannot add, nor take away? And let us ever bear in mind, 'with what measure we mete,' etc.

"First, what is our 'good measure'? A hearty turning to God, with sincere purpose to observe His commandments and those of Holy Church, holding fast the true faith, devoutly receiving the sacraments, interiorly detesting our sins and totally giving them up, living a life of penance, trusting securely in God's mercy and grace.--Alas, it seems as if nobody at all gives God this 'good measure'

nowadays, nor lives in His holy fear.--It is the indispensable rule of our religion for all and everyone. There are men from whom God requires no more. . . . And it may happen that some upright souls who thus conform to God in this life, shall go straight to Heaven, escaping all purgatory. And yet it is the very lowest degree of the divine service."

"Other men God invites to a much higher degree . . . , these may have their purgatory, . . . because they have not perfectly conformed, . . . pains beyond expression. But that being done, they will be raised high above the others in Heaven, for . . . they had the courage to undertake a far more spiritual career, although death interrupted progress in perfection. And what is our 'full measure'? It refers to those whom God calls to a life of holy observances, many prayers, kneelings, fasting, and devout practices. They give God 'full measure' if they cultivate an interior spirit of real fervor with their outward piety, seeking God within their soul, finding His Kingdom there. This life is as different from the other two kinds as running is from sitting."

"If thou perceivest that outward observance hinders thy inward recollection, give up the outward and concentrate thy soul upon the interior. This pleases God better. Do as we priests do; cut short our vocal prayers at Easter and Pentecost that the interior spirit of the festivals may be better enjoyed . . . , this interior life is most Divine. The best aid to this end: contemplate the blessed life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Study His bitter death; count His blessed wounds streaming with His precious blood, or meditate even on the Godhead itself, and the Holy Trinity, God's eternal wisdom, infinite power and merciful goodness to thee and all mankind."

"Whichever subject arouses thy sentiments, ponder it, turn inwards, full of humility, sinking deep into the Divine abyss, awaiting there God's coming. . . . A drop of the interior spirit will sanctify a whole cask of external exercises."

"But it happens that men think deeply of our Lord in their interior soul, yet are spiritually superficial--like a wide stretch of water of a finger's depth. The reason: they are deficient in humility, and lack a universal love of their fellowmen. . . . Take an example from poor farm laborers. They raise the best of wheat and wine, but not for their own benefit--they eat only brown

bread and drink only water. Such is the case with men who do good works without deep interior dispositions."

"The 'measure pressed down and running over' means superabundant charity . . . , all that is good . . . , done by God's servants, or by His enemies. . . . Consider the many recitations of the Divine office, masses, sacrifices. . . . I assure you God will not acknowledge any good works of which He is not the beginning and end. (I Cor. 13:3)

"The evil that is in man is his own; the good is to be attributed to Divine love. The grain poured into a 'measure' is pressed together and held in one mass by the sides of the 'measure'; so love presses into unity all saints and angels in Heaven and all their merits, as well as all pains suffered on earth for God. . . . As one shares this love in this life, so will one enjoy it in the life to come. Hence it is that the evil one hates these people . . . , insinuates self-righteousness, induces dislike of them, rates them hypocritical, causes us to sit in judgment on them. If we consent, we fall from this holy state of love. . . . O guard thy tongue if thou wouldst be called a friend of God!"

"Whoever shuts out any one from the spirit of universal love, is himself deprived of his own share of God's love, . . . hold all mankind in good favor, avoid contention, profane not the 'temple of God' that every man is. . . . Look carefully to your own faults . . . , fear God while you are in this life . . . , beyond this life all is over. . . . Tears of blood shed for you (were it possible) by our Blessed Lady and saints will then be of no avail. The love of God is never idle; labor and suffer cheerfully for His sake, and it will spread over and fill every corner of thy life."

"If we in our days did not have among us men of this godlike character, our lot would be an evil one indeed. Therefore let us pray the merciful God that we may be granted this 'overflowing measure' of His love! Amen!"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ray C. Fetry, editor, No Uncertain Sound (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 240-246.

## CHAPTER VI

### FIFTEENTH CENTURY GERMANY,

#### AND THE PREACHING OF

#### JOHN GEILER OF KAISERSBERG (1445-1510)

With the death of John Tauler, an era of preaching ended. During the late fourteenth and in the fifteenth centuries, the forces of decay and reform struggled side by side. In Germany, 1356, Emperor Charles IV, seeking to alleviate the confusion and turmoil attending the election of emperors, published his famous "Golden Bull." This vested the choice in seven electors, four temporal and three spiritual lords, and greatly affected the subsequent history of Germany.<sup>1</sup> In this "Bull" the Pope who had sanctioned the Emperor's coronation, and who was one of "The Babylonian Captivity" pontiffs in France, Innocent VI, was not even mentioned. He protested, but the "Bull" stood.<sup>2</sup> In this period it was becoming very plain to honest thinkers everywhere that the dream of a universal empire in the West, and

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1905), I, 291. See also E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 40, 76, 77, 81.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930), I, 74.

the ambition of former pontiffs to exercise dominion over emperors and kings, was a thing of the past. Rising national states began a process of local independence from papal control and imperial suzerainty. The popes were captives in France, 1305-1377 (Babylonian Captivity) and under repeated criticism. Clamor for reform became even greater, when, after the exile, the notorious Great Western Papal Schism began, 1378-1417.<sup>3</sup> During this time, for thirty-two years, two popes claimed the throne, and for the last eight years there were three claimants. This had a deadly effect on the Roman Church.<sup>4</sup>

The Reform Councils of Pisa (1409), Constance (1414-1418), and of Basel (1431-1439), healed the schism, but in the end the popes won. Rome ignored the rumblings of the earthquake until it was too late.<sup>5</sup> The popes that followed were no reformers. Innocent VIII was given to vices and his court was a sty of corruption; Alexander VI, most infamous of all, was "the Nero of the papacy."<sup>6</sup> He, perhaps more than any other man, weakened the foundations of the papacy. His son, Caesar Borgia, controlled Rome by betrayal and assassination. There was no vice of which

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<sup>3</sup>Albert Hyma, Renaissance and Reformation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1951), p. 95. See also Schwiebert, op. cit., pp. 22, 26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-27.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. See also Hyma, op. cit., pp. 98 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 292.

the Pope was not guilty, no weapon which he shrank from using. He died by poison which he had prepared for one of his cardinal guests.<sup>7</sup>

The political situation was one of war, ambition, oppression, cruelty, intrigue and corruption. Amid this strife there was progress in other things. Trade, industry, the art of wealth-production were stimulated. The merchant and the banker, as well as the middle classes of society, became pillars of the state. Commerce was increased by discoveries of new lands. Gunpowder revolutionized warfare and doomed knighthood and feudalism. Vasco da Gama, Columbus and Magellan widened the outlook of humanity upon its world. The Renaissance, Revival of Learning, and Humanism produced a many-sided development in all human relations, political, social, economic, moral and intellectual. The invention of printing revolutionized literature and set the pace for a new era. It enabled Erasmus to give to the world a new Greek Testament and Reuchlin to renew the knowledge of the Hebrew Testament. Mighty streams were flowing together from all directions to form the great flood that was to cleanse Christendom, and bring forth the

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<sup>7</sup>Samuel George Smith, Democracy and the Church (New York and London: D. Appleton Co., 1912), pp. 180 f. See also Hyma, op. cit., p. 101.

modern era of history.<sup>8</sup>

The state of the pulpit during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may be comprehensively and accurately described as one of decay. The forward movements of the previous centuries had reached their limit; the inevitable reaction had set in. With the exception of the growing note of reform found in most of the sermons of this age, the preaching was degenerate.<sup>9</sup> Erasmus described it with unveiled cynicism as absurdity, burlesque, sensationalism, buffoonery, aimed at provoking applause and laughs.<sup>10</sup> This scandalous and hideous kind of preaching was later condemned officially by the Lateran Council of 1512 and by the Council of Trent.<sup>11</sup>

In the midst of this, there was also a widespread awakening of conscience concerning the fearful evils of the day. In Christian homes, in some cloisters and otherwise here and there the better spirits of the age raised their voices in prayers of grief and shame. From rulers, statesmen, men of affairs, scholars, preachers and pious mystics of both sexes came the call for a "reformation

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<sup>8</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 293 f. See also Flick, op. cit., II, 209 f.

<sup>9</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 300 f.

<sup>10</sup>Janus Stultitiae, Praise of Folly. See also Thomas M. Lindsay, "A History of the Reformation." International Theological Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), I, 191 ff, and Hyma, op. cit., pp. 174 ff.

<sup>11</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 304.

of the Church in head and members."<sup>12</sup>

The reform-preaching of this age still concerned itself, however, with attacks on corruption. This is the easiest form of reform-preaching, which does not help to remove the evils and often perceives no remedy. The impetus to better preaching at this time came not from the Church, nor from the preachers, but from the people. For this reason, we have chosen for study out of this period some sermon excerpts of John Geiler of Kaisersberg, the "German Savanarola," member of the Strasburg Humanist circle.<sup>13</sup>

Geiler was, no doubt, one of the best known and most popular preachers of his time. He accepted the call to an endowed pulpit in the Strasburg cathedral, 1478. The conditions attached to this call give us a good picture of the age. A burgher of Strasburg, Peter Schott, left a sum of money to endow a preacher, who was to be a Doctor of Theology, who had taken no monk's vows, and was to preach to the people in the vernacular.<sup>14</sup> It was to be a preaching office, without

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<sup>12</sup>J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, 218. See also C. Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1855), II, 4 ff.

<sup>13</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 53 f.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

the cares of the priesthood.<sup>15</sup> A special pulpit was erected in Strasburg Minster for this purpose, and here Geiler, for the next thirty years, did most of his work.

His sermons, which have come to us in various German editions, are full of exhortations to piety and correct living. He lashed the vices and superstitions of his time, denounced relic worship, pilgrimages, indulgences, the corruptions of the monasteries and convents. He spoke against the luxurious living of popes and prelates and their trafficking in benefices, and sarcastically referred to papal decretals and the quibblings of scholastic theology. He painted the luxuries and vices he denounced so very clearly, that his sermons are a valuable mine for the historian of popular morals. His sermons, however, contain very little of the Gospel message. As we read them, we can understand Luther's complaint, that, while he had listened to many a sermon on the sins of the age and discourses on scholastic themes, he had never heard one which declared the love of God to man in the mission and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> Geiler must be classified as a moral reformer, having a social-consciousness of his age and times above most of his contemporaries and predecessors.<sup>17</sup> He is a decidedly

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<sup>15</sup>Dargan, op. cit., I, 326.

<sup>16</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>17</sup>Samuel McCauley Jackson, editor, Schaff-Herzog New Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1950), IV, 445.

important character of his age, who did much to arouse the German mind preparatory to the Reformation, and rendered great service to the German language.<sup>18</sup> His language and manner were not as refined as those of John Tauler. He is frank and outspoken, even to grossness, in his denunciations, and spares no one. Satire and humor are his weapons.<sup>19</sup> Lashing out, as he did often, against "carousals at church festivals, masquerades at the beginning of Lent, and the prevailing gluttony and drunkenness," he said: "Kirchweih ought to be called Kuechweih."<sup>20</sup> The fads and fashions of the day, of which Sebastian Brandt, a contemporary of Geiler, had much to say, came in for fierce attacks: In a "Sermon on Beards," 1498, Geiler said:

Faces are of four types, those with whiskers, imitating the Italians and the Spanish; those wearing Turkish beards; and those cleanly shaven; and then those who never shaved, but wore their hair on both head and face as long as nature would let it grow.<sup>21</sup>

Sebastian Brandt regretted that peasants, who had earlier been content with bread and water, now had wine, and

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Elmer Carl Kiessling, The Early Sermons of Luther and Their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), p. 38. See also Flick, op. cit., II, 453.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

plenty of money, and costly clothing. In one of Geiler's sermons he substantiates this peasant prosperity: "To a peasant one now says, 'Gnaediger Herr.' 'And why not?,' asks the farmer, 'I have as much money and as fine clothes as a Gnaediger Herr.'"<sup>22</sup> The moral standards of business in that day were very low. Industrial corporations began to appear on a large scale. A craze for speculation set in. Capitalism in Germany was a going concern long before Luther. Geiler complained about "corners in wheat, in meat, wine and other commodities."<sup>23</sup> Oppressed by a triple burden of taxation, ecclesiastical, political and feudal; confronted by soaring prices; aroused by the rife speculation and business inflation; and incensed at the evidences of financial and industrial trickery and fraud, a strong protest arose against bankers and exponents of big business. The complaints about shrewd manipulation of prices and the imposition of an unjust load on the consumer were far from groundless. The high cost of living was quite generally felt, and numerous were the efforts to fix the responsibility for this state of affairs. Of the great industrial combines Geiler said:

They make hunger and high prices, and kill poor people. The merchants are greater extortioners and deceivers of the people than even the Jews

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 322 f.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 382 f.

have been. . . . These bloodsuckers, corn and wine usurers, injure the whole community; they should be driven out of towns and parishes like packs of wolves; they fear neither God nor man; they breed famine and thirst, and they kill the poor. The Jews, Roman lawyers, and the millionaires are all in one detestable class. Since agriculture is the source of all true wealth, the Church should pronounce these financial transactions godless.<sup>24</sup>

The great merchants of Germany carried on trade in everything that would bring profit--even in human beings as slaves. There were slaves in Europe from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, but few in number and nearly always foreigners of African descent. They were held as property and had no rights. The first Negro slaves were brought to Portugal in 1444. The traffic spread from Italy to Germany and would undoubtedly have died out, but for the discovery of America. It was carried on by Jews. Geiler said: "One could not sell castrated children, particularly if they were Romans, but could easily sell other kinds."<sup>25</sup>

Prostitution was considered a public necessity and was prevalent everywhere. Nicholas of Cusa, said a century earlier what Geiler preached from his Strasburg chancel:

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 395.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

I scarcely know which course would be better--to put a daughter in a cloister, or in a house of ill-fame. Why? In a cloister she is a prostitute, yet a woman of honor! But if she goes into a public house, she is struck to the ground and must eat and drink bad things.<sup>26</sup>

The revival of Roman law and political science denied the peasants the "rights" which they enjoyed under the earlier German law. Popular hatred of Roman law appeared in the thirteenth century and grew as the years passed by. To this was added hatred for the learned lawyers who were detested by the people. Armed revolts and mob violence, socialistic and communistic tendencies, were the answer of the peasants and the working classes to this burdensome social condition. Geiler von Kaisersberg, in one of his sermons, said:

The lawyers . . . are disturbers of the peace. Instead of settling differences, they foment them in order to make money . . . the richest is right, and whoever gives the most money, gets the most law.<sup>27</sup>

As in most of the sermons that can be construed as reflections of the cultural and social conditions, Geiler also had much to say about the "times' abuse of religion." Criticism of the church was not uncommon, and a single quotation should suffice to show how far a preacher in good standing could go in this respect:

Take the spiritual estate, bishops, pope, cardinals,

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 298 f.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 329-334.

provosts, pastors. Look upon it, and you will find so much vanity and arrogance that no one can give us enough honor or fill us up. We multiply benefices one upon another and always desire a higher office. What shall I say about unchastity? Who is there that does not defile himself in the mud-puddle and filth? If you take the monastic estate, you will observe how completely it is disrupted. Its members are rascals and stand among the first in every self-indulgence, as is the case in the secular and spiritual estates.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Kiessling, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 f.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY REFORMATION, AND THE EARLY PREACHING OF MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1522; d. 1546)

There was still in 1500 a great deal of Christianity upon which a reformer might count if once he could get a hearing.<sup>1</sup> To appreciate this, we have studied the work of pastors and preachers distinguished for their faithfulness, such as Barthold, Tauler and Geiler. The biographies of some of the leaders of the Reformation bear unconscious witness to the kind of religion taught the children of pious burgher and peasant families. We know that Luther learned the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and that he knew some simple evangelical hymns. We can trace this simple evangelical family religion in Germany back through the Middle Ages. Primers of instruction, books of piety and no less than fourteen versions of the whole Bible in High-German, were spread fairly widely among literate lay people at the beginning of the age of printing.<sup>2</sup> But the general

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<sup>1</sup>William K. Anderson, editor, Protestantism--A Symposium (Nashville, Tenn.: Parthenon Press, 1945), p. 15. See also Thomas M. Lindsay, "A History of the Reformation." International Theological Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 114 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 121, 124, 149.

religious life of the people at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries is also full of discordant elements. Besides the simple, homely piety of the family-circle, the "Kinderlehre," as Luther called it, there was a certain flamboyant religion, based largely on fear and superstition, a calmer anti-clerical, non-ecclesiastical religion which spread throughout Germany (e.g., Luther's father); and the piety of the praying-circles or "Brethren," descending from the Mystics.<sup>3</sup> Such was the religious atmosphere into which Luther was born, and which he breathed from his earliest days.<sup>4</sup>

The piety of the age did not center in the Church. It was not fed by the hierarchy, nor inspired by the examples of clergy, monks or friars. Besides the conditions described by Geiler,<sup>5</sup> there is the testimony of various other men of that age, viz., Dionysius the Carthusian, d.1471; Jacob of Juetterbock; John of Wesel, d.1479; Thomas Gascoigne of Oxford, all of whom wrote books or tracts describing the utter corruption of the papacy and its priesthood. Trithemius, Abbot of Spannheim, writing in 1485, about when Luther was learning to walk, charges the priesthood as having neither learning

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-156.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>5</sup>Supra: Chap. VI, n. 28.

nor conscience, more concerned to beget children than to buy books, addicted to gambling, drinking, and without the least fear of God. Savonarola in a Lenten sermon of 1497, says of the priests:

They have withdrawn from God and despise the Scriptures. They are profligate, and no longer even pretend that their sons are nephews when they procure them clerical offices. O, prostitute Church, thou hast displayed thy foulness to the world and stinkest unto heaven.

Yet he believes that Christ has followers in Germany, France and Spain, who, responding to His call, "will cause the corpse of the Church to stir with life as did that of Lazarus at the bidding of the Lord."<sup>6</sup> We do not need to describe the age in the language of Luther alone.<sup>7</sup> But, since we are now to study when he preached, we might here insert also a word from him. In 1521 he described his age as follows:

Read all the chronicles, and it will be seen from the birth of Christ on, during all these centuries, nothing similar has been seen. Such building and planting is not so common in all the world; such expensive and frequent feasting and drinking has never been seen. Hence clothing has become so costly that it cannot go higher. Who has read of such business as now covers the world, and swallows it up? So the arts increase and continue to increase; painting, embroidery and carving--such as have not been seen since Christ's birth. Hence there are today such keen, intelligent people, who let nothing be concealed, so that today a boy of 20 years knows more than 20 doctors have known

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<sup>6</sup>Anderson, op. cit., pp. 7-9.

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

previously.<sup>8</sup>

Thus:

It will be seen that on the eve of the Reformation the condition of Europe, and Germany in particular, was one of seething discontent and full of bitter class-hatreds . . . trading companies against "Guilds," poor against wealthy. . . . The social ferment was increased by a sudden and mysterious rise in prices, . . . affecting at last the ordinary necessities of life. . . . This was the society to which Luther spoke, and its discontent was the sounding-board which made his words reverberate.<sup>9</sup>

The political situation in Germany at the time of Luther's birth, 1483, was one of confusion. Men of that day did not know a France, England or Germany. They regarded themselves as members of the Holy Roman Empire, of which, during Luther's formative years, Maximilian I was the emperor.<sup>10</sup> No man was fuller of the longing for German unity as an ideal; no man did more to perpetuate the divisions of Germany. He stood for German culture and nationality, but his one policy was to unify and consolidate the family possessions of the House of Hapsburg. His grandson, who succeeded him in 1519,

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<sup>8</sup>Johannes Janssen, Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes beim Ausgang des Mittelalters (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1883), I, 3. See also Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930), II, 319.

<sup>9</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., I, 112 f.

<sup>10</sup>E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 32 f.

Charles V of Spain, was of German blood, but no German. He was his Spanish mother's son, whom the German, Luther, faced at Worms.<sup>11</sup>

All attempts at tracing the ancestry of Luther have failed because of scarcity of existing sources. His forbears belonged to a rather fortunate economic group that held a village and lands as free-farmers. Such estates always passed to the youngest son. Luther's father, therefore, as an older son, migrated to Eisleben and entered the mining industry. There Luther was born, November 10, 1483. The following summer his family moved to Mansfeld in the copper-mining region, and by the time Martin was eight years old, his father had prospered and become one of the town council members. The poverty of the family has been much overemphasized.<sup>12</sup>

After attending school at Mansfeld, Magdeburg, and Eisenach, he entered Erfurt University and earned his Bachelor and Master degrees, preparing for the study of law. Quite unexpectedly, he entered the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt and, as part of his training, studied theology and became a priest. Shortly after his ordination, he began his studies for the Doctorate, which was awarded to him in October, 1512.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 34 f. See also Lindsay, op. cit., I, 39-41.

<sup>12</sup>Schwiebert, op. cit., pp. 102-107.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-109.

Already in the year before this, his superior and friend, John Staupitz, had prevailed upon Luther to preach. The latter gave fifteen reasons why he should not preach.<sup>14</sup> Luther was at this time still in soul-conflict about his own spiritual condition. Staupitz spoke to him of "having something to do," and Luther thought of himself as unworthy to do it.<sup>15</sup> Having been persuaded to enter the preaching office, Luther began to preach to the monks in the refectory, 1511-1512.<sup>16</sup> In 1514, he was called to preach in the parish Church of St. Mary's in Wittenberg.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile his soul-conflict was resolved when he discovered by a comparison of several Scripture passages<sup>18</sup> that "Righteousness of God" was not God's "judicial, or punitive Righteousness," but rather His "forgiving, justifying Righteousness," revealed in the Gospel. Of this happy experience he says:

Then it seemed to me as if I were born anew and

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<sup>14</sup>Elmer Carl Kiessling, The Early Sermons of Luther and Their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), pp. 9, 41. See also Heinrich Boehmer, The Road to Reformation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), pp. 83, 96.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Psalm 31. Romans 1:16.17.

that I had entered into the open gates of Paradise. The whole Bible suddenly took on a new aspect for me. I ran through it, as much as I had it in my memory, and gathered together a great number of similar expressions. . . . As much as I had heretofore hated the word, "Righteousness of God," so much the more dear and sweet it was to me now.<sup>19</sup>

This sudden change was Luther's personal reformation.

In this he had uttered nothing new, but had restored the old Gospel. This is the head and the heart of his message. He is not an innovator, but a renovator. Of all the names invented to characterize him . . . , none fits him so well as the name Reformer, coined especially for him.<sup>20</sup>

Luther emphasizes repeatedly that he was drawn into this against his will "because of his office." His preaching office had been pressed upon him. It became a matter of great satisfaction to him that he had become a Doctor "against his will." As a Doctor, he had been "forced and driven to expound the Scriptures to the world and teach everybody." He declared:

I would not take all the world's goods for my Doctorate, for if I did not have this great, heavy responsibility which rests upon me, I would surely be driven to despair and to doubt whether I had not begun this cause without call or command, like a sneak-preacher. But now God and all the world must bear witness that I began it publicly, in possession of my Doctorate and my preaching-

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<sup>19</sup>Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 110 ff.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

office, and that I was led to it by God's grace and help.<sup>21</sup>

This certainty, that he had God on his side, that his teaching was not his own, was the root and unshakable foundation of his consciousness of being called as a Reformer, as well as the reason for the historical consequences of his message.<sup>22</sup>

Luther, the Reformer, was also very keenly conscious of what was going on in his world. This is very evident from many of his early sermons. In his preaching we find concrete illustrations that "mirror the age," also "preaching to the times," or "on the crisis of the hour," as well as the more detached attitude, occupied chiefly with the universal religious interest. There is a timeless message in those eight sermons he delivered on eight consecutive days after his return from the Wartburg to quell the turmoil caused by Carlstadt and other fanatics who wished to reform by force. In these sermons he achieved in many ways the most signal results of his preaching career.<sup>23</sup> In this sermon-series he treated many of the problems which were confounding his followers. He emphasized that Christians must not use force, and the Word alone must accomplish the needed

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>23</sup>Kiessling, op. cit., p. 109. See also Schwiebert, op. cit., pp. 536, 538, 543 and Works of Martin Luther Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1943), II, 387-425.

reforms. Paul, in Athens, among the heathen altars, temples and idols, pleaded with the people to forsake them, but did not advocate their destruction by force.

Citing his own experiences, Luther said:

I will preach, teach, write, but I will constrain no man by force, for faith must come freely, without compulsion. . . . I have opposed the indulgences and all the papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. . . . the Word did it all. Had I desired to foment trouble, I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany. Yea, I could have started such a little game at Worms, that even the Emperor would not have been safe. But what would it have been? A fool's play. I did nothing; I left it to the Word.<sup>24</sup>

Even before these sermons were all delivered, Zwilling confessed his wrong, Carlstadt was silenced, the City Council thanked Luther with substantial gifts, and Wittenberg bowed to law and order, Luther continued to stress toleration and patience.<sup>25</sup>

Exactly one year before he began his historic attack on indulgences, he discussed them from his Wittenberg pulpit: "The people are being misled by seducers and fable-mongers who make broad statements that are true in a sense, and yet not true because understood falsely. . . . The Pope's purpose in granting indulgences--at least as it is laid down in the syllabi and certificates--is a correct one, but the indulgence preaching, making private confession and satisfaction the chief part of penance, is not correct.

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<sup>24</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1883 ff.), X, 13-21. See also Works of Martin Luther, op. cit., II, 391 f.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 389.

The Bible nowhere mentions either. It enjoins general confession when James exhorts, 'Confess your faults one to another.'<sup>26</sup> True confession is an affair of the heart, and if they say that only a few chosen people can achieve true confession, why, then, do harlots and publicans begin with this perfect variety? . . . Indulgences are in demand because they make sinning easier and annihilate Christ and His Cross. . . . Oh, how great are the dangers of our times! O sleeping priests! O more than Egyptian darkness!" How secure we are amid all our evils.<sup>27</sup>

In the above excerpt Luther was still an obedient son of the Church and did not suspect the Pope of complicity in the abuse of indulgence-peddling. As late as 1518 he wrote to Pope Leo X a letter asserting his orthodoxy and loyalty to the Holy See.<sup>28</sup> Later in the same year, however, he had broken with the principles that underlay the indulgence traffic. The next complete sermon on the subject shows an advance to his chief message:

The beauty of righteousness, not the fear of punishment, or even the sorrow for sin, ought to be the motive for repentance. Repentance is not the achievement of man, nor the act of a moment. Rather, it comes from above, and is a lifelong process in which faith is the chief element.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>James 5:16.

<sup>27</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., I, 94, 132.

<sup>28</sup>Boehmer, op. cit., pp. 212 and 218.

<sup>29</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., I, 319.  
See also Kiessling, op. cit., pp. 101 ff.

The same truths were expressed in his Ninety-Five Theses. The "faith" here spoken of is the "faith which justifies." In this sense the word was seldom, if ever, used by Medieval preachers. With them it connoted assent to the Church dogmas, or virtue that came by practice and brought merit, or one of the seven virtues. "Faith" as Luther conceived it, is a Pauline concept.<sup>30</sup> He was now harking back to the Apostle; not to Geiler, nor Tauler, nor the Fathers, nor to any Church dogma, nor to Conciliar decrees.

Luther was accused even in those early days of preaching faith to the exclusion of works. But his doctrine and preaching were nothing if not ethical. He tells his critics:

I do not preach works, but works that come from faith. If I do not stress the fruits as much as the life-giving vine that bears them, the reason is that the fruits follow faith as necessarily as day follows the rising sun. . . . Workless faith is as unreal as a vision in a mirror.<sup>31</sup>

This is frequently dwelt on in more than half of his extant sermons, in none more nobly and clearly than in what has been called "Luther's Social Gospel";<sup>32</sup>

God requires, for Himself, only faith. Every other

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., X, 1; II, 168.

<sup>32</sup>Kiessling, op. cit., pp. 105 ff.

expression of the Christian spirit in us belongs to the neighbor. The Christian must go out of his way to find and help the poor, sick and weak. He must learn to associate with the stubborn, foolish, proud, and other unpleasant types of people. . . . A Christian lives in the world, not to find, but to make holy people; just as he also seeks to make rich, strong, healthy those who are poor, weak, and sick. . . . The natural way for Christians to fulfil the works of brotherly love is in and by their callings. . . . Only one calling, as such, has status before God--the spiritual calling of those who have faith.<sup>33</sup>

It is not surprising to find Luther's sermons filled with "preaching to the times," for the Medieval Church and world were being lifted out of their tracks in those years.<sup>34</sup> Though it is not characteristic of him to inject picturesque detail into his sermons, he occasionally gave full play to his talent for observing and describing the more intimate side of life. In his "Sermons on the Ten Commandments," 1516-1517, we have some pictures of popular manners more colorful than those of Geiler. The "Decalogue Sermons" not only provide a cross section of the life of the times, but also reveal the attitude of the Pre-Reformation preacher towards certain practical questions, and how he dealt with them

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<sup>33</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., VII, 481; X, 1; II, 71; I, 491. See also Boehmer, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>34</sup>John Ker, Lectures on the History of Preaching (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1889), pp. 149-153. See also Kiessling, op. cit., p. 105.

in the pulpit:<sup>35</sup>

The I Commandment is transgressed by outward and inward idolatry, . . . when in our hearts we worship riches or honor. In order that simple folk might understand, I will describe certain crude forms of outward idolatry . . . indulged in, by youth, in the prime of life, in old age, . . . witches and witchcraft, etc. It seems that some young people charm swords, arrows and guns with words or signs to make themselves invulnerable, or they draw a circle in the sand to uncharm what others have charmed . . . write letters or signs on a piece of glass and throw it in the fire . . . to constrain another person to love or follow them. Some display letters written in supposedly holy characters and signs of magic power. Others watch the moon closely for the best time to choose a wife, to have or not have children. They steal wax from Easter candles, water from the holy basin by which they hope to find an egg in an ant-hill and be invisible when they go out. Holy water is also used to catch thieves . . . suspected persons names are written on slips and thrown into the water . . . that bearing the thief's name will sink. He who falls asleep first on the wedding-night will die first. . . . A woman can be boss of the family by touching the threshold and muttering certain words as she enters her husband's house for the first time . . . so young people learn to trust the creature in small things and to forget God in great things.

Men and women hang written slips about children's necks to banish sickness. Even priests and sextons furnish them. Magic arts are used to protect cattle . . . set the devil to watch over their fields. The sick who make a vow, must take no more medicine. Those recovering after extreme unction must wear black and not dance for a year. Like to the heathen, meaning is found in the calls of birds, especially the raven.<sup>36</sup>

Quite sarcastic treatment is given "special days for doing certain work," and "astrology which can tell what you will be, but not who is a sinner, or who

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 109 ff. See also Boehmer, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>36</sup>This idea is also found in Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Raven."

righteous. Sin comes from the heart, not from the stars." Transgressions of old age are identified with hags or witches. "Women have inherited their propensity for being fooled from Mother Eve." "In a less crude way, people transgress by worship of saints, erection of shrines, and pilgrimages."<sup>37</sup>

The II Commandment is concerned mainly with oaths in popular use, which do not differ essentially from our modern ones.<sup>38</sup>

The III Commandment is transgressed by those who think the day is only for "eating, drinking and wearing fine clothes. . . to keep the vigils and then indulge the flesh on the festivals." All necessary work, like that of cooks, taverns, butchers, bakers, fishermen, doctors, messengers, mail-carriers, menders of roads and bridges and firefighters, may be done. . . . To carry a keg of beer into the cellar is not as bad as to carry beer out in cans; . . . to shoot birds, or practice arms, would be better on other days.

He is dissatisfied with parish preaching, and, like Geiler, he dislikes keeping people under the ban from hearing the sermon. "How can they repent, unless they hear the Word of God?"

In the IV Commandment he offers sound hints on bringing up children. Parents ought not fill them with fear, "not hire nursemaids who fill their minds with superstitions, fears of dark, stories of monsters, etc. . . . Some parents, alas, are more concerned about fine clothes

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<sup>37</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., II, 83, 178.

<sup>38</sup>Kiessling, op. cit., p. 119.

than spiritual gifts for their children."

Here he digresses to a favorite theme of preachers of all time, "finery of women." His chief emphasis is on costly and fantastic styles:

I believe they will soon go about naked, for they do go half-naked already. Who is to blame, the women, the men, or the city authorities--for not making laws against so much wasteful prinking? . . . As for the men, they have recently adopted the silly style of wearing their hair in nets. But the real trouble is, they are not strict enough with their wives, . . . men ought to be masters in their homes . . . , a woman may consider she is wearing enough ornament when she pleases her husband.

The relation of masters and servants, and of the people to spiritual and temporal authorities, comes under this commandment:

There is much complaint about cheating, waste of time, and of charging too high wages among artisans and laborers. . . . Furthermore the whole commandment is in danger of being annulled, as it was in the days of the Jews,<sup>39</sup> because it is considered more virtuous to endow churches, donate paintings and sacred vessels, than to give to one's parents, friends, or to the needy.<sup>40</sup>

Luther differs with the theologians of his time also in their interpretation of the Commandments. This is particularly evident in the following:

The V Commandment, they say, is not fulfilled by love, but when men do not commit murder. That limits the all-inclusive quality of God's commands to love, but anger, hatred, sins of the tongue<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Mark 7:9-13.

<sup>40</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., I, 554; X, 1.

<sup>41</sup>Matthew 5:20-26. James 3:3-10.

. . . are included. Philosophers long ago said that man has two ears and one tongue. . . . Aesop, when asked to bring the worst and best meats, brought tongues. . . . There is good reason for the vow of silence in the cloisters, but the devil spoiled the good work of silence by introducing logic, the teacher of garrulousness. . . . Do you doubt the evils of the tongue? Ask the man with a quarrelsome wife, a wordy woman.

The VI Commandment interpretation is still rather strongly monastic. Some attribute that tinge to the reporter who took down the sermons in writing:

There are such who do not partake of the sacrament because they have not been able to mortify desires. To them I would speak a word of comfort. God sends these afflictions to humble us. The wagon-wheel must go through mud, but that is not its main purpose.

There is the monkish tendency in these sermons to view the relation of the sexes with suspicion, and then to go into full details. Sexual sins are grouped as:

visual, verbal, tactual, factual and osculatory. Among the many things that lead up to them are the unsavory legends of preachers and teachers, the obscene stories in taverns, mostly about the philanderings of the priests and monks, the public dances, and the fancy dresses of the women.

A plea for leniency in the punishment of stealing is voiced in the sermon on The VII Commandment:

To take a life for the sake of property, is to act too severely, not to say unjustly, especially when the goods were taken because of bodily need or poverty. Altogether reprehensible are harsh sentences imposed for stealing church property.<sup>42</sup> The powers are very keen-eyed for their miserable money or goods, while adultery, simony and cheating go without punishment.

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<sup>42</sup>German proverb: "Kirchenraub bestraft sich schwer."

Here some social evils otherwise are also condemned, "raids of robber-barons, usury as it is practiced by the Jews, gambling and restitution of a gambling debt. The winner need not restore it." He allows the practice of "buying income" for certain people, in which the buyer paid a sum of money to a seller, the latter agreeing to pay a percentage of the price annually in perpetuity.<sup>43</sup>

Bearers of "false witness" who transgress the VIII Commandment are heretics like the Waldenses; the Schoolmen with their four-fold sense of Holy Scripture who find that it teaches salvation by works; the lawyers who seek not truth but victory in the labyrinth, and prolong strife instead of making peace;<sup>44</sup> those who teach the great Greek, Aristotle, and are serious about it; the tellers of legends, especially the preachers; the fawners and flatterers at court, and those who sue for their real or supposed rights in courts. That is allowed only for the protection of others.<sup>45</sup>

The IX and X Commandments, like the spiritual interpretations of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>46</sup> show that no man keeps the Law who does not keep it in thoughts, words and deeds, and out of love for God. The practice of the age of listing and grading sins "makes people more concerned about the divisions than about the sins." . . . Some divide them into two classes, omission and commission; some into three, of heart, word and deed; others according to the five senses, the six works of mercy, the seven sacraments, the

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<sup>43</sup>Flick, op. cit., II, 316, 378-382, 440 f. See also Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., IV, 610.

<sup>44</sup>Supra: Chap. VI, n. 27. Geiler said the same thing about "lawyers."

<sup>45</sup>Luther's Works, Weimar Edition, op. cit., II, 151.

<sup>46</sup>Matthew 5-7.

seven deadly sins, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the eight Beatitudes--so on, up to fourteen divisions and grades.

Luther concludes this series on the Ten Commandments with a review of the "Seven Deadly Sins," all of which were characteristic of that age:

Pride is included in the First and Second; Unchastity in the Sixth; Anger and Hatred in the Fifth; Gluttony in the Sixth; Indolence in the Third, and all the Commandments. The Alien Sins are also included in all, for it is possible to sin by bidding and advising and helping others to sin. The Crying and Mute Sins are those against the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Commandments.<sup>47</sup>

In three letters addressed by Luther to Pope Leo X, the progress toward reform, the Pre-Reformation age, its characteristics in all human relations, political, social, economic, moral, intellectual and spiritual, as well as the difference between Luther's preaching and that of so many pre-reformers, are beautifully set forth and summarized as follows:

In his first letter, 1518, Luther threw himself at Leo's feet, as an obedient son of the vicar of Christ; in his second letter, 1519, he still addressed the Pope as a humble subject, while refusing to recant his convictions; in his third and last letter Luther addressed Leo as an equal, speaking with great respect for his personal character even beyond his deserts, but denouncing in severest terms the Roman See, or Curia. . . . Luther writes as a father confessor: "In the midst of the monsters of this age with whom I am waging war for the third year (1520), . . . I am compelled to tell thee the truth, because I wish thee well. If

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<sup>47</sup>Works of Martin Luther, op. cit., II, 351-367.

Bernard (of Clairvaux, 1091-1153) pitied his Pope Eugene III (1145-1153) at a time when the Roman See, even then most corrupt, yet ruled with better prospects, why should not we lament who have for three hundred years had so great an increase of corruption and worthlessness? . . . Thou knowest well, these many years there has flowed forth from Rome, . . . like a flood covering the world, nothing but a laying waste of men's bodies, souls and possessions, and the worst possible examples of the worst possible things. . . all this is clearer than the day to all men.<sup>48</sup>

I believe it has now become clear that it is not enough nor is it Christian, to preach the works, life and words of Christ as historical facts, as if the knowledge of these would suffice for the conduct of life, although this is the fashion of those who must today be regarded as our best preachers. Far less is it enough to say nothing at all about Christ and to teach instead the laws of men and the decrees of the Fathers. . . there are not a few who preach Christ and read about Him that they may move men's affections to sympathy with Christ, to anger against the Jews and such like . . . nonsense.

Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in Him may be established, that He may be not only Christ, but Christ for thee and me, and that what is said of Him and what His Name denotes may be effectual in us. Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what He brought and bestowed and what benefit it is to us who accept Him. This is done when that Christian liberty which Christ bestows is rightly taught, and we are told in what way we Christians are all kings and priests and so, lords of all, and may firmly believe that whatever we have done is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God.

What heart is there which, hearing such things, will not rejoice to its very core, and in receiving such comfort grow tender so as to love Christ, as it never could be made to love by any law or works? Who would have power to harm such a heart or to make it afraid?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 298, 301, 303, 305.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 326 f.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY

In this study we have not looked back to Luther, but back of Luther. For our purpose we have studied what we termed a Pre-Reformation period, or age of approximately three centuries before Luther. If eras can be dated, the Medieval world ended in April, 1521, and the Modern world began.

Before the brilliant and august assemblage at Worms a humble, but dauntless monk told the potentates of Church and State who had called upon him to recant what he had said and written: "My conscience is bound to the Word of God. Unless convinced by clear arguments of reason based upon the Scriptures, I cannot and will not recant. God help me! Amen!"

Up to that time there was an authority in the world that all men thought immovable: pope, council and emperor. Since that time there is a force in the world that all men know to be irresistible: Scripture, reason and conscience.<sup>1</sup>

We have cited some great, swelling words of a pope

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<sup>1</sup>William K. Anderson, editor, Protestantism--A Symposium (Nashville, Tenn.: Parthenon Press, 1945), p. 48.

under whom the Papacy reached its climax of power and dominion. We have cited many words of warning and condemnation of those who, before Luther, saw the hierarchy and the world of that day deteriorating and moving morally on a downward curve.

The preaching of this Pre-Reformation age mirrors a world bound under a sense of sin, knowing largely only a frowning, far-away God. The life of the average person was full of fear--fear of plague, pestilence, Turks, death, judgment and an angry God. To be sure, it was not all corrupt. It is possible to describe any era of history in bright or dark colors simply by confining attention to one body of facts.

If, in our view of the Pre-Reformation age, we dwell upon the evidence of the growth of learning and education, the reforms of a few monastic orders, the faithfulness of a few preachers, the interest in religion on the part of some humanists and of some of the people, the creative power of the Renaissance art, the increasing literature of piety for the lay reader--we learn that some forces were at work from which men took hope. We gladly welcome all evidence of good found in that untoward generation, and acknowledge that some reformers were disposed to overlook such evidence. Yet, so far as the Church of that age was concerned, these things were largely incidental. . . . Modern historians who enlarge upon these promising aspects of the times as if they offered proof that the Reformation was needless and wicked, deceive themselves and their readers.

None of us thinks the reformers, even Luther, to have been infallible. While we recognize their greater familiarity with the details of the scene, we have, or ought to have, a somewhat clearer view of the historical causes and background of the Reformation than they were able to acquire. . . .

The world moves, however, and they served their day. The Church is never so wrong as when she declines to be changed. . . . The attempt to reform the hierarchical church was as old as its formation. . . . It was through the medium of preaching that the reformers exerted their greatest influence.<sup>2</sup>

In every field of Western Christian life the harvest was ready for Luther. The roots of life were all religious, and in every area of disaffection the Church was involved. The Pre-Reformation age had had its reformers. Now a prophet of God was needed--a man who himself felt a commanding sense of pardon, one who knew from experience that they who worship God must worship Him with heart and life, one who could communicate his experience to his fellowmen in terms they could understand.

The main lines of the picture that Luther drew of his time were sketched in before his time. Complaints about laxity, greed, corruption and immorality which prevailed in the ecclesiastical and social systems, were increasingly numerous in the Pre-Reformation centuries which we have studied. In his early sermons Luther voiced these complaints anew. But he soon also introduced a new note which was foreign to the Late-Medieval preachers of Germany. They had leveled their censures not at the Papal system, but at the abuses in the system. Luther became more and more convinced that the system

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 6 ff., 26, 40.

itself was to blame. The Pope, whom he criticized for the first time in a sermon on February 15, 1517, became the symbol of both the system and its corruption, the true Antichrist.<sup>3</sup> The Church of the Pre-Reformation centuries, modeled in all respects like the State, was a hierarchy confined by very tight little bands. It was no longer a community of brothers, governed by the Spirit of its Invisible, but Ever-present Head. To such a Church the Papacy was indispensable, but it was far removed from its first love, insufficient for that day, and without life and vigor for the future. That this was so is proved not only by its adversaries but by its most zealous sons, as well as by the fact that between 1294 and 1566 Rome had no pontiff who later qualified for canonization.

For centuries the nations of Europe gave the hierarchy ample time for amendment and self-reformation. From every quarter, also by Luther, it was admonished, warned and even implored.<sup>4</sup> All was to no avail.

Two ways of reform were possible: upon the existing basis of the Church, or in defiance of it. The

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<sup>3</sup>Elmer Carl Kiessling, The Early Sermons of Luther and Their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), p. 129.

<sup>4</sup>Supra: Chap. VII, n. 48.

former would affect a part only of the existing state of things; the latter struck at the root, was more radical and produced schism. The former had been tried and had failed; the only alternative was a general warfare with all that was corrupt. The breach was inevitable. The new stream, mighty, flowing together from all directions to form the great flood, could not continue in its old bed. It was dammed out and formed its own bed.

For everything there is a time.<sup>5</sup> There was a time for influence quietly exercised by the forerunners of the Reformation. There was also a time for heroic action. The rent which the Reformation could not but cause, was made contrary to the original will of those who were its authors.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Eccles. 3:1.

<sup>6</sup>C. Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1855), II, 617-636.

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