

Carl Axel Aurelius

The Heart of the Faith

The Use of the Gospel as the Key
to the Augsburg Confession



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Contents

1	Thoughts behind the Disposition	5
2	A Different Perception of God.	12
2.1	The Reformation Discovery	12
2.2	The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.	22
3	The Use of the Gospel and the Fellowship at the Lord's Table	26
3.1	The Renewal of Worship	26
3.2	The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.	37
4	The Great Assembly.....	44
4.1	The Church between Easter and the Parousia of Christ	44
4.2	The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.	54
5	A Gospel close to Home.	57
5.1	Renewal in Daily Life.....	57
5.2	The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.	64

Abbreviations:

WA Luthers Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe

WA Br Weimarer Ausgabe, Briefwechsel

WA DB Weimarer Ausgabe, Deutsche Bibel

AWA Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe

BELK Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche

1 Thoughts behind the Disposition

The Augsburg Confession is a political document. The Chancellor's preface shows clearly that the Diet (Reichstag) of Augsburg had a political origin. The Turks were at the borders. It was obvious to all parties that a united front was necessary. The political situation was however complicated because of the power struggles between the North European Principalities and the South European State of the Emperor and the Pope respectively. Unitary as well as separate interests were supported and played against each other at Augsburg. It is important to take note of all this in order to understand the intention behind the Augsburg Diet (Reichstag) as well as its proceedings and results - but that does not explain the meaning of what was said.

In order to grasp the meaning, we must consider the Augsburg Confession as a document of the worshipping community of the church. Such documents may be of various kinds. Let us therefore begin with an attempt to define confessional document more precisely.

As far as the Church of Sweden is concerned, the most obvious reference is perhaps to that anthology of texts which is usually called *The Confessions of the Church of Sweden*. Since 1993 the confessional foundation has been enlarged and is now referred to as *The Foundational Documents of the Church of Sweden*.¹ The inclusion of the liturgical books, e.g. *The Service Book*, *The Lectionary* and *The Book of Prayers* is one of the additions. The opening paragraph speaks of 'the faith, the confession and the teaching of the Church of Sweden as expressed in its worship and daily life...'.¹

The previous confessional corpus (which has not been exchanged but extended) already testifies, although less obviously, to the close connection between doctrinal formulation and worship. The writings included differ with regard to their intended function and they represent different literary genres. Even so, they very definitely belong together, and I will try to describe the difference between them as well as their close connection. There are three main groups of texts:

a. Baptismal creeds:

Both the Apostolic and the Nicene Creed have emerged from, and belong to, the worship of the church. Originating in the celebration of baptism, this is

¹ *Svenska kyrkans författningssamling* 1992:9. Cf Persson, P E, Svenska kyrkans grundläggande dokument - från 1983 till 1993 in: *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 1994:1.

still their primary function today, although the creeds are also used in response to the proclamation of the Gospel and its exposition in the sermon. In summary: the creed is the public song of praise of the congregation gathered for worship. Its function is not primarily the presentation of a written content, but a liturgical response of faith in a dialogue of worship.

b. Catechisms:

The word 'catechism' is Greek and means 'teaching' or 'message'. In this context it refers primarily to the oral teaching on the Christian faith and life, surrounded by prayer, fasting and works of charity, for the purpose of the formation of mature and committed Christians. In the Early Church, catechism meant baptism preparation. This was also the view at the time of the Reformation, but then it was connected to admittance to Holy Communion. However, the purpose was the same. The books, e.g. Luther's *Small* and *Large Catechisms*, were written as aids to this oral training in the life and faith of the church.

What, then, is the relationship of these catechisms to the previous texts, i.e. the confessions used in worship? A few lines from Luther's *German Mass* give a hint of how this link was conceived by the reformers:

Greetings, in the Name of God! The German Service requires first of all a good catechism, clear, simple and easy to understand. Catechism, after all means teaching about everything they need to believe, do, avoid and know about the Christian faith. Therefore those disciples who had been accepted for this teaching, and who were thus learning the faith, were called 'catechumens' before their baptism. I know of no simpler or better arrangement of such teaching and training than that which was practised in the early Christian community, and which has remained to this day, namely choosing as your starting-point, these three main subjects: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. These three topics contain almost everything a Christian needs to know.²

This catechism, or teaching, should, according to the same source, be provided in the German Service as well as at home, and always for the purpose of leading people deeper into the faith and life of the Church. The Creed is an essential part of the content of this teaching. Consequently, the catechism must also be considered in the perspective of worship.

c. Confessional documents:

To this group belong the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology*, the *Smalcald Articles*, *On the Power and Supremacy of the Pope* and the *Formula of Concord*. These are confessional documents in the proper sense. They are written

² WA 19, 76, 1-11

texts, originated in specific historical circumstances for the purpose of clarifying and / or safeguarding the identity of the worshipping community, e.g. everything that takes place within the service: preaching, teaching, pastoral care, liturgy etc. at a time when this identity was seen as ambiguous or was questioned.

The third group, the proper confessional documents, have been formulated as clarifications and defence of the practice reflected in the first two kinds of 'texts', e.g. of the life and worship of the churches of the Reformation. By formulating the confessional foundation anew, this intention has become even more obvious.

One might object that the division into three groups of documents is inappropriate, for example with regard to the Nicene Creed. Even though this creed is used in worship, it was undoubtedly formulated by two Ecumenical Councils (Nicea 325AD and Constantinople 381AD), which had both been called by secular authority, in order to deal with the threat of Arianism. The Nicene Creed is therefore more like the Augsburg Confession. Should it not then be numbered among the proper confessional documents?

This hypothetical objection does in fact support what has been said above, underlining as it does, the close connection between the texts of the three groups. The origin of the Nicene Creed is widely discussed, though not regarding the aspect which is of interest to our discussion. The form of the text was based on one or several baptismal creeds. The defence of the church's faith and life was, in other words, based on the practice of worship. And having thus been clothed in a new formula, the text reverted to its original function as the public confession of faith and as the baptismal creed.

The Trinitarian structure of the creed can be discerned also in the first articles of the Augsburg Confession. This, however, was and remained a purely confessional document. Even though it is founded on the liturgical confession of faith and it defends the orthodox order of worship, it has never been used in the service itself. This fact is particularly pertinent to its interpretation.

First of all, we must neither consider, nor treat, the Augsburg Confession as an 'independent' text. The articles provide a summary of what took place and must be interpreted from that practice. The doctrinal formulation (*articulus*) reflects a particular practice (*usus*).

Already the reformers' use of the term 'teaching' indicates the connection with worship. The 7th article states that 'the teaching of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments' is a sufficient foundation for the true unity of the church. The Latin version of the Augsburg Confession use the word '*doctrina*'

for the concept of 'teaching'. The German version has 'the preaching of the Gospel'.³ The concept of 'teaching' clearly includes an activity which takes place within a public service of worship. The same is emphasised in a few lines which link the two parts of the Augsburg Confession:

'This is mainly a summary of the doctrine which is preached and taught in our churches for the purpose of proper Christian instruction, for the consolation of consciences and for the improvement of believers.'⁴

The teaching includes everything that may be contained in words which 'console, teach, warn and admonish' e.g. in one side of that dialogue between God and man which the service establishes and sustains.

The close connection between article and usage is also expressed in *The Smalcald Articles* from 1537. There the article on justification is put in sharpest contrast to the sacrifice of the mass, e.g. to the central event of the medieval service.⁵ The contrast is meaningful only if the article on justification is linked to a usage other than the sacrifice of the Mass, e.g. to the 'usus Evangelii'. And that is precisely how Luther speaks of the reformed celebration of the Eucharist, for example in his Latin order of service, the *Formula missae et communionis*.⁶ This means that the traditional division of the Augsburg Confession into 'articles of faith' (1-21) and 'articles of misuse' (22-28) is somewhat misleading.

Secondly, the interpretation must do justice to the distinction made by the reformers between 'articles' and 'opinions' (*opiniones*). This distinction is also due to the connection of these articles to the worship. An illuminating example is found in the Luther's debate with Johann Eck in Leipzig in 1519.⁷ During the debate on purgatory, Luther had the opportunity to expound his principal views on the relationship between theological opinions (*opiniones*), articles of faith and sermons. Luther is aware of the fact that several famous Fathers of the Church have defended the teaching on purgatory. At the same time, it was of course well known, that this doctrine had never been embraced by the Eastern part of Christendom. Luther takes the following position: God

³ Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, 6. Aufl, Göttingen 1967, p. 61 (BELK 67, p. 61).

⁴ BELK 67, p. 83c

⁵ The Schmalcald Articles, Part II, Articles 1 and 2. BELK 67, p. 415f.

⁶ WA 12, 211, 9f.

⁷ WA 2, 254-383.

did not reveal anything about purgatory. Since the matter lacks support in Scripture, it is only a plausibility and cannot be considered an article of faith:

'Opinions should be discussed in schools, but the Word and Works of God should be preached to the people, Psalm 18 (19): The heavens proclaim the glory of God' etc. Thus I do not condemn the opinions of those prominent Fathers, but I do oppose these dextrous people who concoct articles of faith for us out of various human opinions; this is not the task of a good theologian.⁸

Thirdly, the Augsburg Confession is not a programme, presenting ideas desirable for the future. The reformers are attempting to give an account of how things are 'among us' (apud nos) and why. The Augsburg Confession is a narration, a descriptive document (a 'Bericht'). That was after all what the Emperor had asked for. And this, in Luther's view, was the main advantage of the confessional document:

'The great advantage of our confession lies in the fact that it quite simply describes what is going on and how things are in our church, like a report, rather than a decree or an edict. If the confession had been formulated first, who knows when, whether or to what extent it would ever have been realized?'⁹

As a fourth point, the Augsburg Confession should not be regarded as a complete documentation of doctrine and lifestyle of the parishes where the Reformation had taken root. Not everything was questioned (even though the accusations in the end exceeded 400!). The decisive influence came from Melancthon, even though all the champions of the Evangelical movement were unanimously supporting it.

Some details would almost certainly have been put differently, had Luther himself held the pen. We know, for instance, that he advocated an article against purgatory - and he compensated for the lack of this at Coburg by writing a whole treatise with the well-chosen title *The Cancellation of Purgatory*.¹⁰ Maybe the priesthood of all believers would also have been discussed in a separate article rather than, as is now the case, being only implied and indirectly hinted at? That we shall never know. We do however know that the Augsburg Confession, in the shape in which it was presented at the Diet, enjoyed the support of the entire Evangelical wing, including Luther. It was obviously considered to give a true and fair account of what went on in the Evangelical areas.

⁸ WA 2, 329, 18-22.

⁹ WA Br 8, 653, 34-38.

¹⁰ WA 30 II, 360-390.

The articles state the marks of Evangelical identity on significant points. This was and remains an absolute requirement for conversations and negotiations, quite regardless of what these might lead to. The function of the Articles as a basis for further conversations may be illustrated by reference to some previous negotiations on a smaller scale, entered into by Luther and the Bohemian Brethren. One of these Brethren had written a Catechism which attracted Luther's attention. Luther criticised it as being unclear on certain issues, particularly on the teaching on Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, and he had reason to ask the Bohemian representatives in Wittenberg 'to clarify this article in a small treatise.' At the same time he gave an account of the Evangelical understanding in a treatise addressed to the Bohemian Brethren, *On the Adoration of the Sacrament of the Holy Body of Christ (Von Anbeten des Sakraments des heiligen Leichnams Christi)*.¹¹ In the Introduction Luther suggests the way forward for these talks:

In order to reach an agreement, and to soften the offence caused by the little booklet which you have published in German, I wish, for your and for everybody's sake, to set out this article as clearly and explicitly as I can, in accordance with our German belief, which is also the faith according to the Gospel. In what I write you may consider whether or not I state your faith correctly, or how far apart we stand, and whether my German language is more clear to you than your German and Latin is to me.¹²

In other words, Luther says that he wants to give a more precise account of the Evangelical teaching on the Eucharist, in order that the Brethren may compare their own understanding with his. He is obviously interested not only in stating the differences, but also in finding the points of agreement. Luther continues in this way:

'I also asked your representatives if there were any other articles on which we were not in agreement, in order that your people should not feel any enmity against us, nor we against them, but that we may discuss with each other as brothers, and perhaps reach a common mind. However, I shall now go on to point out what I lack in your exposition as well as what I admire therein.'¹³

The fraternal atmosphere was surely not always apparent during the talks in Augsburg, even though it sometimes prevailed. This is obvious from the discussions in the Committees. In any case, the reformers seems to have assumed that such a process would take place, and that at best it might result in agree-

¹¹ WA 11, 431-456.

¹² WA 11, 431, 20-26.

¹³ WA 11, 431, 27 - 432, 4

ment.

What conclusions then can be drawn for the disposition of a commentary on the Augsburg Confession? At least the following items must be included:

A description of Evangelical parish life, as developed in the period immediately prior to the Diet in Augsburg is necessary. It seems useful to let such an account precede the marks left by this experience in the wording of the articles themselves (e.g. the other way round to the hitherto prevailing custom).

Evangelical parish life went through a period of intense development in the 1520s, during the years between the Diet of Worms and that of Augsburg, which is also the period between Luther's stay at Wartburg and at Coburg. A few texts which show the intentions and goals of the reformers will provide the main basis for the exposition of the various articles of the confessional documents. Whether the articles are considered and commented on in a slightly different order than that in which they appear in the Confession itself is, in the light of what has been said above, without importance. Some aspects, which did not have an immediate impact on the Confession may also, on these grounds, be discussed.

It is worth emphasising that texts by Luther himself will be used, and especially those which were written for the pastoral purpose of building up parish life. It is in fact Luther himself who, after his return home from Wartburg, takes the lead in the work of renewal. That means that Luther's thoughts will be used to illuminate Melancthon's texts. This is, against the background of our discussion above, quite appropriate.

The entire work of restructuring parish life is basically a fruit of a change of the conception of the relationship between God and man, e.g. of what has been called 'the reformatory discovery'. This gives us reason to begin by analysing this break-through before discussing its consequences; the renewal of worship as well as of daily life. Some reflection will also be offered on the manner of self-understanding and of the conception of the restructuring, to which the Evangelical movement gave expression. The authors of the Augsburg Confession had no desire to change this new form of parish life, nor Luther's way of expressing this self-understanding. They only wanted to give an account thereof. The confessional documents should therefore be interpreted as such a report on the conception of this new order, which is already in practice, and of what Luther has already spoken and written.

Later generations, using this Confession as a touch-stone, must therefore remember the original intention behind it.

2 A Different Perception of God.

2.1 The Reformation Discovery

Luther has himself described what is commonly called 'the Reformation discovery', although not until quite a while later, in the prolegomena to the 1545 edition of his Latin treatises.¹ He does not give any exact date for this discovery, and this has led to a lively discussion among scholars. Any date between 1513 and 1518 has been suggested, and there is no reason to make any further contribution to this debate here. There is no certainty about whether or not the discovery did in fact take place on a particular date, even though it was experienced as a sudden occurrence. Great discoveries are seldom made without preparation. In any case, the issue of the content is more important than determining its exact date. However, let us begin with a few words on what preceded this overwhelming experience.

It has often been suggested that this discovery provided the answer to the question which Luther had struggled with ever since his youth, namely 'How can I find a gracious God?' That is a strange approach. There is, as far as we can see, nothing 'reformatory' in that quest. Rather, it is typical of the contemporary spirituality, as it had sprung from the anxiety characteristic of the late Middle Ages - a time when much which had previously been considered certain and beyond doubt began to be questioned and contradicted. That applied, for example, to the legitimacy and authority of the established church. It also applied to the synthesis between faith and science. And it applied to the view of the structured world order, in which everything and everyone had its own appointed place within a universal hierarchy.

Within the more mobile society, which began to emerge in this period, people were increasingly obliged to shape their future themselves. Luther's own family is a good example. He was born within an old family of farmers, but the family moved away from Eisleben to Mansfeld, where Luther's father took up copper-mining. A society undergoing fundamental changes breeds anxiety, then as now. The old familiar patterns of thought and action no longer function, and can no longer be taken for granted. In the ensuing confusion, individuals must seek out new models by which to interpret reality. The late Middle Ages was indeed such a breaking-point, a period in which tendencies of

¹ WA 54, 179-187.

dissolution as well as of recreation were apparent. The anxiety showed up indirectly through the flourishing trade in indulgences, by which mercenaries like Tetzl took advantage of people's fears and made a fortune on pastoral advice. It was possible to buy shares in that treasure of the accumulated merits of Christ and the saints, which the church believed itself to be in charge of. An indulgence applied these merits to the penitent and cancelled the debt he would otherwise be obliged to pay off.

The prevailing anxiety of the day is most urgently expressed in contemporary art, for instance by Dürer or Bosch, who frequently chose the themes of the dance of death and other apocalyptic images, or of purgatory and hell.

Against this background Luther's quest, and his choice of lifestyle, his entry into the monastery, does not seem particularly strange at all. The question was not only his. There is no need for us to construct an explanation, by which we might assume that Luther's psyche was formed by a particularly severe upbringing, or by any kind of 'black' nurturing. Such an assumption has no support in the sources. Most children were probably given a severe upbringing in those days, but there is nothing to suggest that Luther would have been brought up in any particularly extreme manner. The sources rather suggest that his childhood was happy in many ways. While at school, he met some of the most excellent aspects of the devotions current in the late Middle Ages. He was familiar with the spirituality of Franciscan influence, popular among the upper-class families of Cotta and Schalbe in Eisenach, as well as with the devotions of the supporters of the society called 'The Brethren of a Common Life' in Magdeburg. This was a Society formed on monastic principles for the purpose of contravening the decline of religious life.

Nor is there any need to interpret his embrace of the monastic life as an extreme action. In a period of great anxiety Luther, like many other young men and women, chose the way recommended by the church, the perfect way (via perfectionis) for the practice of the Christian life.

Luther was in fact a child of his day. Maybe one might suggest that he put the question more sharply, that he was less prone to compromise in his search for an answer, than many of his contemporaries. However, his anxiety found no rest in the monastery, but was rather heightened by severe attacks. The reason was not in any failure of Luther's in being a monk. His own testimony, as well as that of his superiors, suggests that he was very successful in his monastic endeavour. The reason was rather that, according to the current theology, it was the duty of man to prepare properly to receive the grace of God, the gift of justifying grace. Luther did not doubt this, but he was plagued by uncertainty about the sufficiency of his own efforts. The problem was impossible to solve within the given framework. The basis for a satisfactory solution was a

fundamentally new conception of the relationship between God and man.

It was not only an anxiety-laden issue that Luther brought with him to the monastery. He also brought a strong expectation. At the University of Erfurt Luther had mixed in Humanist circles. And from the Humanists he had learned something to which he adhered all through life, namely the possibility of making valuable discoveries in the Scriptures when read in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek beyond the Latin translations.

The curiosity awakened by the Humanists explains Luther's choice of monastery - the Monastery of the Augustinian Hermits at Erfurt, known as 'the black monastery'. According to the common view of scholars, there was a link between Luther's difficult childhood, formed by the 'black' teaching-methods, and his choice of the 'black' monastery. The severity of observances was however not the only characteristic of this monastery. Luther chose a monastery of education and scholarly research. At Erfurt, the Augustinian Hermits collaborated with the University, and the Order provided one of the fellows of the theological faculty. Luther was, in other words, given the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity awakened by the Humanists concerning the content of the Bible when studied in its original languages. That expectation was fulfilled. Luther made many discoveries. One of them was more overwhelming than all the others, since it helped him to overcome his anxiety. That discovery - rather than the anxiety-laden quest - was truly 'reforming'.

In the *Preface* from 1545 Luther describes how he struggled particularly with a verse in St Paul's Letter to the Romans, 1:17: 'God's justice is revealed in the Gospel'. The expression 'God's justice' was translated in the authoritative Latin edition of the Bible, the *Versio Vulgata*, as 'iustitia Dei'. The Latin expression gave, and still gives, associations, not so much to a gracious God, but to a superior power, justly punishing the sinner, e.g. the person who defies the accepted norm. In that perspective the Gospel cannot be contrasted to the Law. Rather, it must be seen as the extension of the Law and to its utmost pinpoint:

Is it not enough that the poor sinners will be eternally condemned because of original sin, and that they have to suffer all kinds of misery because of the Law and the Ten Commandments? Would God really, through the Gospel, add misery to misery and threaten us with his wrath and justice as well? That is how I raced in my crazy mind, as I continued to work on this passage by Paul, gripped by a peculiar longing to know what Paul actually meant.²

Then he describes the break-through itself:

² WA 54, 185, 25 - 186, 2.

Night and day I brooded on this until God took pity on me and I became aware of the connection between the words. The context says: 'God's justice was revealed in the Gospel, as it is written: The righteous shall live by faith'. Now I began to understand that God's justice is the justice which means that man can live righteously only by God's gift, namely through faith.³

What was it that Luther discovered? In order to understand him, we must choose another starting point. From the 1545 *Preface* it is clear that it was in fact not the Letter to the Romans but the Psalms that Luther was studying at the time of the discovery.⁴ His meditation eventually resulted in *The Second Large Commentary on the Psalms, (Operationes in psalmos)* 1519. Psalm 5:9 ('Domine deduc me in iustitia tua...') gave Luther a reason to consider 'God's justice', just as St Paul did in Romans 1:17. Luther's exposition of this verse lacks the personal references from the *Preface*, but the content is largely the same:

Here we must reflect on the little word 'justice'. We need to reach and hold fast to a correct grasp of it, so that we may thereby understand (the term) 'God's justice'. It is not a matter of the justice by which God deems himself just and condemn the godless, as is usually suggested. The reference is rather, as St Augustine says in his little treatise on the Spirit and the letter, to God's justice, by which he clothes human beings when He makes them just, e.g. to his goodness and mercy, or to his justifying grace, by which we are considered devout and righteous before God. About this St Paul says in Romans 1:17 'In the Gospel a righteousness was revealed, through faith for faith, as it is written (Habakkuk 2:4) He who through faith is righteous shall live'. And later in chapter 3.v.21: 'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.' Now God's righteousness is called our righteousness, because it has been given to us solely out of God's grace and mercy. The same applies to (the term) 'Gods Work'. It is about the work which God works in us, and 'God's Word', which is the word which God speaks in us, and 'God's Power', which is the power by which he strengthens us and works in us. etc.⁵

In Western terminology 'righteousness' / 'justice' refers to a legal relationship. God is righteous, since God fulfils the legal requirement of righteousness. A man is just if he behaves in such a way that his actions is in accordance with the agreed legal standard of justice. If not, God, in his righteousness will punish the unjust.

In the Old Testament, for example in Psalm 5:9, the Hebrew word for 'justice'

³ WA 54, 186, 3-8.

⁴ WA 54, 185, 12ff.

⁵ WA 5, 144, 1-11.

is 'sedaka'. That is not a legal term, but a community-term,⁶ which, in the language of Martin Buber, does not describe an 'I - it' relation but an 'I - Thou' relation, e.g. not the relationship of man to justice, but an inter-personal relationship between people, of which openness and mutuality are the characteristic marks. A person who acts in that way attracts other people's trust and establishes friendships. The word is used in the same way to describe the relationship between God and man. God's righteousness is God's community-creating action towards his people. The justice, in other words, refers to what happens between God and man. Gerard von Rad says in his *Old Testament Theology*: 'Jahve's righteousness was not a law, but actions, and particularly saving actions'.⁷

Luther worked on the Hebrew text of the Psalms. He did so, taking for granted that the New Testament provided the key to their interpretation. But it was not only the New Testament that threw light on the Old Testament texts. The opposite also applied. The Old Testament was to influence the interpretation of the New Testament text - of Romans 1:17. The meaning of the word 'righteousness' was coloured by the Hebrew 'sedaka'. 'God's righteousness' became an expression, both in the Pauline text and in the psalm, of what God does when he 'clothes' man in his righteousness (Is.61:10). In a different context Luther can, in a similar way, liken Christ to a coat which the Father puts around people who are freezing in sin.⁸ Justice was interpreted as a saving action. The word lost its extra-biblical link to punishment or reward and became instead associated with the concepts of mercy and trust, and other such notions which describe the relationship between close friends. Since human righteousness comes from God, Luther names this 'alien justice' (*iustitia aliena*). It is however given as a free gift, and therefore Luther can also, at the same time, speak of 'God's righteousness and ours'. In Jesus Christ God encounters man as a 'Thou', who wants the best for him. By 'what happened to Jesus of Nazareth' (Luke 24:19) God has restored his covenant of friendship with man. In Luther's 'Hebrew' reading, justice (*iustitia*) and mercy (*miseri-cordia*), which at first seemed to be each other's opposites, become instead different expressions for the same thing: God's justifying grace. Surely, there are good reasons to interpret his discovery in this way.

Of the immediate consequences of his discovery Luther says:

⁶ Cf Siegfried Raeder, *Grammatica Theologica, Studien zu Luthers Operationes in Psalmos*, Tübingen 1977, p. 119 ff.

⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I*, München 1966, p. 384.

⁸ WA 5, 165, 23ff. Cf Isaiah 61:10.

I felt completely born again, and through wide-open gates I entered Paradise itself. The whole of Scripture seemed to have a totally different face.⁹

The discovery brought with it a new light, not only on specific biblical passages, but on the whole of the Scriptures. To Luther, everything seemed to be focused on 'what happened to Jesus of Nazareth', as God's saving and community-creating work. This is the Gospel, and the Gospel does not know an unreconciled God. The various books of the Bible - in spite of their individual differences - all make the same point. On this major theme, the Scriptures are entirely lucid. At a later date Luther used the image of a market square to illustrate this fact. The medieval market square has a central focus, usually the water-well of the town. In the surrounding streets and alleys, one or two things may well be hidden away in darkness, but the well of the town is bathed in clear light:

Could anything more important possibly be hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seal has been broken and the stone rolled away from the grave, and the deepest of mysteries has been proclaimed, namely that Christ, the Son of God, was made Man, that God is Three and yet remains One, that Christ has suffered for us, and that he shall reign for ever? If you take away Christ from the Scriptures - what will you find therein?

Everything that the Scriptures contain and wish to say is clear and obvious, even though some passages are obscure because we know we no longer know the words..... And now that the content itself has been brought into light, it does not matter at all if some expression thereof is still hidden in darkness, as long as there are other expressions which are illuminated.¹⁰

Another example of Luther's way of describing the unity in diversity of the Bible is found in the *Collection of Sermons on the Church* which he started already at Wartburg, following the Diet at Worms. In a section entitled 'A short teaching on what to seek and expect in the Gospels', Luther writes:

'The Gospel is, and ought to be, nothing other than a chronicle, a history, a story of Christ, about who he is and of what he has done, spoken and suffered, which one evangelist tells in one way, and another in another way. Because, in short, the Gospel is a proclamation of Christ, that is the of Son of God, who for our sake was made Man, died and rose again and who is enthroned as Lord of the universe.'¹¹

This story is, as Luther says in one of his treatises against indulgences, 'the true treasure of the church' (as against the treasure of superabundant merit

⁹ WA 54, 186, 8ff.

¹⁰ WA 18, 606, 24-37.

¹¹ WA 10 I, 9, 15-20.

which the system of indulgences pre-supposed), a story proclaimed from pulpit and altar, at the baptismal font, at the celebration of holy communion, at daily devotions of the household, and in the sacrament of private confession.¹² It is a word which will not otherwise be spoken. However, when it is proclaimed, it is, according to Luther's firm conviction, able to awaken hope and inspire courage.

Luke Cranach, the painter of the Reformation, has caught the activity of preaching in the painting on the 'predella', the bottom piece of the reredos in the parish church at Wittenberg. To the right, Luther is seen in the pulpit, one hand on the open Bible and the other pointing to the person in the middle of the picture, the crucified Christ. To the left the congregation is seen gazing at the cross. The painting represents very well Luther's constant admonition to pastors, namely to draw the image of Christ as an antidote to the images of death, law and wrath which are the curse of the affected soul.¹³

The manner in which hope is awakened, including in the person most deeply affected by anxiety, is described by Luther in his *Second Commentary on the Psalms*, in the exposition of Psalm 6 and of Psalm 13.¹⁴ In both these psalms there is a sudden change in the middle of the text, from lamentation to praise, from the minor to the major key. The psalms show the praying person sinking ever deeper into despair. It is not clear what the external cause of suffering is, but the manner in which he or she accepts the suffering, becomes obvious. To the affected person, no other interpretation seems possible than the assumption that God, in his wrath, has abandoned him, despised him - and therein lies the very sharpness of the pain. This chaotic darkness is total. Luther knows what that means. He refers to two biblical passages - Gen 1:2 and Rom 8:26. The thought is clearly this: The darkness surrounding the suffering person corresponds to the darkness 'over the abyss' before the dawn of creation. The Spirit who then 'hovered over the waters' is the same Spirit who is now at work in the sufferer and who 'intercedes for him with sighs too deep for words'. The cry of anguish, the first eight verses of the 6th psalm, should not be interpreted as a last gathering of strength by the sufferer, but as an assurance that the Spirit dwells and prays within him, and helps him to wait in patience - for what? For the Word which creates and restores him, for the Word of the mercy of God, for the Word which is Christ, the justice in which the

¹² Thesis 62: "The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God."

¹³ WA 2, 691, 22 - 692, 21. "Ein Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben", 1519.

¹⁴ WA 5, 199ff and 384ff.

Father clothes man. And thus the song of praise arises.

For Luther, the overcoming of anxiety is a total act of creation. Just as in the Book of Genesis, it takes place out of the darkness of chaos, out of nothing, through the Word. The simultaneous exposition of creation and salvation typical for the Bible is obvious in Luther's thought. When God saves, he begins anew from the beginning. Salvation means new creation.

The saving act of creation is also described as a Trinitarian act. The wrathful God is replaced by the merciful Father, who, through the intercession of his Spirit and by his Son's embrace of the suffering person, creates and forgives, sustains and restores life - a God who is benevolent towards man. Or, as Luther put it:

Instead of a wrathful Judge I have received the most gracious God.¹⁵

All this means that the doctrine of justification is not a side-issue besides others, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, Christology or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. None of these can be taught in isolation. When Luther speaks of God and God the Holy Trinity, he does so against the background of the passion story as God's 'embrace of' the world.

God's history with the world is a story open to the future. It is still unfinished; it continuous in the present. Luther's 'view of history' may, to advantage, be illumined through his exposition of those psalms which he interprets as Christological, namely Pss. 2, 8, 16 and 22. In the commentary on Ps. 8 he summarises Christ's work under four headings: The suffering Christ (*Christus passus*), the crowned Christ (*Christus coronatus*), the preached Christ (*Christus praedicatus*) and the Christ received in faith (*Christus creditus*).¹⁶

To Luther, the suffering is central to the image of Christ in the psalms. His understanding of the suffering of Christ is perhaps most clearly put in the exegesis of Ps.22:2, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'. This was, according to New Testament witnesses, one of the words of Christ on the cross. In contrast to earlier interpretations, Luther emphasises that Christ really suffered in the totality of his being, and that he was also affected internally. And more so than anyone else, since the depth of his anxiety corresponds to the weight of his burden - the sin of all the world. Through his suffering Christ achieved a turning-point in history. This turning-point is already hinted at in the heading of the psalm (which Luther, in accordance with tradi-

¹⁵ WA 5, 388, 19ff.

¹⁶ WA 5, 284, 9f.

tion, interpreted as the key to the psalm) in the expression 'the hart of the dawn' (*cerva matutina*). Christ is the hunted hart, but why the hart of the dawn? Rom.13:12 provides the key to Luther's interpretation. The evening becomes the time for the Law, for sin and death, for the old covenant, and for the synagogue, when the works of sin overflow through the Law. The dawn is however the time for the Gospel, for grace, for the church and for the new covenant, which gives life. Luther continues:

But Christ is the hart of dawn, since, through his suffering he has overcome the Law, taken sin away, overcome death and called forth a new era and a new day, in which grace, life and salvation has begun. The meaning is this: The psalm is written with reference to Christ as the author of the renewal of everything, since the old has passed away through his suffering. Thus the night disappears. The dawn is coming and the day is at hand.¹⁷

The dawn is a time of both darkness and light, but the crucial turning-point has taken place. The darkness fades and the light increases. In Luther's perspective, the future has already begun.

Having deliberated on the suffering Christ, Luther now proceeds to consider Christ crowned with glory and splendour and present today. He does so taking his starting point in two images from the Christological psalms, e.g. the image of the crowned king in Pss 2 and 8, and the image of the seed of the patriarchs which shall 'serve him' in ps.22. In both passages Luther stresses that the suffering and resurrection mark the beginning of Christ's continuous work. Just as in the image of the dawn, there is a tension between the 'already now' and the 'not yet'. Christ is already enthroned as Lord. But all the enmity has not yet been overcome.

The link to the third and fourth description of Christ is this: Christ now exercises his Lordship by being preached and received in faith. That means that it is Christ himself who acts in the present. He has not left it to his people to fulfil and perfect his work of renewal. But this also means that Christ acts through external human instruments, in and through the Word proclaimed by men. This Word awakens faith and creates a kingdom of faith. The Church, in this perspective, becomes the people who receive the Word / Christ, a people of faith and a people of the dawn. Luther can also use the attribute 'the new creation of the Gospel' of this people, which the present Christ now gathers and forms in a hidden, mysterious way, and which, shall be revealed at the end of time, when he shall hand over everything to the Father.

Luther's conception of the Word shows both Old Testament- and Johannine

¹⁷ WA 5, 600, 23-28.

characteristics. The Word is both the Word of creation and of salvation, the Word is the Son, who was with the Father, and who acted in the creation of the world, who became flesh and dwelled among us. When the Word is now voiced, that meeting between man and Christ, which restores the friendship, takes place through the Spirit. In order to clarify the link between what happened then and what happens now Luther, as in the debate with Karlstadt, can make a distinction between the fact of Christ's passion (*factum passionis*) and the use thereof (*usus passionis*):

We speak in two ways of the forgiveness of sin, On the one hand (we speak of) how it has been achieved and won, and on the other hand of how it is distributed and given. That Christ has conquered sin on the cross is true. But he has not distributed it or given it on the cross. In the sacrament of holy communion he has not won the forgiveness, but there he distributes and gives it through the Word, and this also takes place when the Gospel is preached. Forgiveness has been won once for all upon the cross, but the distribution thereof takes place again and again, in the past and in the future, from the beginning of the world until its end.¹⁸

If the Word is not proclaimed, or if it is only used to describe an event in the past, nothing is distributed. The Word is a promise and a gift, addressed to the gathered congregation. Hence Luther puts stress on the 'pronouns': - 'Given for you, for the forgiveness of sin' - 'Given for you' - 'Shed for you'.¹⁹ In public worship the Word is proclaimed and offered as a gift which restores, sustains and embraces the receiver in God's covenant of friendship. Everything takes place in and through the Spirit, and nothing takes place without the Spirit. A renewal of worship must therefore make this more obvious. Consequently, it is no surprise that Luther's work is largely concentrated on the service. From the very beginning his main interest is directed towards the renewal of the liturgy, in order to clarify what happens in the meeting of God and man in worship. Luther's enforced stay at Wartburg, having been excommunicated and outlawed, afforded him at least the opportunity to engage in such work. He swiftly undertook the work of translating the New Testament into German (the so called *September Testament*), of writing a preface to the various books of the Bible and of composing sermons. All this was done for the purpose of improving the preaching, of clarifying God's personal call and gift through the service. We shall return to this in the next chapter, but first it remains to explore the marks which this Reformation discovery have left on the Augsburg Confession.

¹⁸ WA 18, 203, 28-35.

¹⁹ WA 18, 202, 37 - 203, 2.

2.2 The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.

The first article of the Augsburg Confession considers the Holy Trinity in relation to the decision by the Ecumenical Council in Nicea (and Constantinople):

Our parishes unanimously teach that the decree from the Council of Nicea on the unity of the One Godhead and the Three Persons is true and shall be firmly believed...
²⁰

Why this beginning? The doctrine of the Trinity was not the focus of debate (although the reformers were put under suspicion on this point as well). The groups which are named and condemned in the latter part of the article belong primarily to earlier centuries, e.g. the Arians, the Valarians etc.

An easy answer would be to assume that the reformers are herewith aiming to clarify that they stand on the foundations from the Early Church, and that they do not diverge from, but rather hold fast to, the faith of the Fathers. To stress the continuity with the past was, for several reasons, most probably not without importance. In this way the reformers were able to defend themselves against the charge that they were introducing 'new doctrines'. At the same time the reference to the heritage from the Early Church was very likely more than strategic politics. The Scriptural principle of the Reformation is misunderstood if it is interpreted in a perspective void of tradition. The reformers saw themselves as the defenders of tradition against a traditionalism, which ascribed to the Fathers an authority which they had never claimed for themselves.

The meaning of the first article becomes even clearer when we consider it against the background of what we have so far established about the reformer's concept of God. A distinguishing mark was the close connection between the concept of God and the passion story: It is impossible to speak of God correctly without telling the story of 'what happened to Jesus of Nazareth', and it is impossible to tell that story as salvation history except by speaking of God as a Trinity. In this, the Reformation really did mean a resuscitation of the heritage from the Early Church, which during the Middle Ages had tended to be lost. There was a tendency in scholastic theology to consider the relations between the divine persons (the so called 'immanent Trinity') apart from God's relationship to the world (the so called 'economic Trinity'). The reformers thus brought together all thought of God as a Trinity, and they

²⁰ BELK 67, p. 50.

attached the sign of the cross as a key to this doctrine.

The characteristics of the Reformation is however not found in the first article of the Augsburg Confession - if this is read on its own. If, on the other hand, the perspective is widened and the reading continued, then the first article appears to be an introduction of fundamental importance for what follows, namely the article on the situation of man, on the story of the passion of Christ, on justification, and on the Word and the Spirit. The five first articles set out the basic structure of God's history with the world, as the Bible, interpreted by the reformers, present it. Melanchthon's words show obvious similarities with Luther's *Confession concerning Christ's Supper (Von Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis)* in 1528.

Later on, during the period known as 'the modernity', this Trinitarian approach disappeared again from the history of theology, though not from worship, which caused a division between theology and liturgy. In the tomes of doctrine, the teaching on the Trinity reverted to a side-issue, an unimportant article without connection to the rest, placed either first, as a remaining but isolated remnant, or, as in Schleiermacher's work, at the end, on the grounds that it cannot be immediately related to the devout conscience. Today, when 'the modernity' is no longer taken for granted, theology begins once more to use Trinitarian terms to describe God, and now with a clearly cross-marked approach. If one is satisfied by finding a contemporary correspondence to the pattern exhibited by the first five articles, the following few lines by the Swedish scholar Olov Hartman provide a good example:

'This existence, and the reservation of the souls, this freezing of beings and things, has been saved by a break-out of love, an extension of the Trinity to breaking-point, to the darkness of abandonment. The Father gives the Son, in order to permeate the world with love, and by his Spirit to draw the world back to himself. For this Holy Trinity is history, salvation history.'²¹

Hartman's first couple of lines would correspond to the second article, the one on original sin. That may seem farfetched. Hartman, in line with the Early Church, connects sin and coldness. The reformers, as we have seen, did the same, even though that image is not used here. This passage speaks instead of sin as 'being without the fear of God, without trust in God and full of evil desire.' The emphasis is, not unexpectedly, on the broken relationship to God. Here, as in other places, the reference is not to any kind of fictional man as such, whose 'nature' is more or less damaged. Sin concerns man as a person, e.g. his creaturely but broken relationship to God, his position 'before God'

²¹ Olov Hartman, *Treenigheten i dogm och mystik*, in: *Vår Lösen* 1976, p. 521.

(coram Deo). This means that 'the evil desire' (concupiscentia) cannot refer only to some aspect of the emotions, for example to human sensuality. Used by the reformers, the term rather implies a fundamental perversion, in which man is forever seeking his own. Such a use of the term was unusual but not totally unique; examples can be found in medieval mysticism.²²

The third article is mainly a reiteration of the second article of the creed and its characteristic concentration on the paschal event, the turning-point in God's history with the world. The article is introduced by a statement on the two natures of Christ, which reminds us of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedone, Our observations on the doctrine of the Trinity apply here as well. The doctrine of the two natures is not considered in isolation, but together with Christ's work from the incarnation to the second coming.

The fourth article expounds the teaching on justification by faith alone. A somewhat wider exposition of this main theme might have been expected. However, the article does not stand alone. It should be read and interpreted together with the other articles. Together they tell the story of God and the world. The peculiar stress in this article is on unconditional grace as the only and the sufficient foundation for a restored, trustful relationship between God and man.

Through the fifth article the point is brought home that God's history with the world is open towards to the future, that it continuous in the present:

In order that we may receive this faith, the ministry of preaching of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments has been instituted. Because, through Word and Sacrament as instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, he who brings forth faith in those who hear the Gospel, wherever and whenever it pleases God. ...²³

This continuous salvation history is linked to worship, e.g. to what takes place 'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. Through the action of the liturgy, through Word and sacrament, man is drawn into God's history with the world.

This focus on worship, within the framework of the Trinitarian history, throws light on an often misunderstood passage in the *Loci communes* by Melanchthon, where he says: 'It is better to adore the mysteries of the Godhead than to research them'.²⁴ This passage has sometimes been interpreted as evidence

²² Gustaf Ljunggren, *Synd och skuld i Luthers teologi*, Uppsala 1928, p. 17.

²³ BELK 67, p. 58.

²⁴ Ph. Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, 1521, in: Melanchthon, *Werke* II, ed. R. Stupperich, Gütersloh 1952, p. 7.

that the reformers were in fact not really interested in the doctrine of the Trinity. That is an impossible interpretation. The text is not evidence of Melancthon's lack of interest, but shows his rejection of a speculative search for knowledge of God apart from through the cross. The adoration encouraged direct our thoughts to the service, in which the Trinitarian Name of God is proclaimed inseparably linked to the sign of the cross.

3 The Use of the Gospel and the Fellowship at the Lord's Table

3.1 The Renewal of Worship

In the service, that meeting of God and man, by which the covenant of friendship is restored, sustained and deepened, takes place. That is the intention of the service against the background of the Reformation discovery - the principle of justification by grace alone through faith. The service becomes, as Regin Prenter says, 'justification in practice'.¹ Luther describes what happens between God and man in this meeting as 'a joyful exchange'² Christ gives what is his in exchange for what is ours. That kind of exchange only takes place between friends. The term 'covenant' must therefore be more precisely defined as a 'covenant of friendship', since otherwise the term is too easily associated with legal bonds. And that would take us back to where we started, before the Reformation discovery was made. Maybe the word 'friendship' is too weak in this context? The word does not match exactly the language of the reformers, but, in my view, it corresponds very adequately to their own description of the life of faith. Even though we sometimes use this word in a superficial manner, hardly anyone lacks an experience or an intimation of true friendship, of what it means to live in communion with someone deeply trusted, and from whom only goodness and benevolence can be expected. It is also undoubtedly a biblical concept with a deep meaning (Luke 12:4, John 15:13-15 et al.).

The church building is a room reserved solely for the meeting between God and the worshippers. The introductory words of Luther's sermon on the occasion of the dedication of the palace chapel at Torgau articulates this view:

My dear friends, we shall now bless this new house and dedicate it to our Lord Jesus Christ. That is not only my task. You, too, must co-operate, in order that nothing else may take place in this new house, except that our dear Lord himself may speak to us through his holy Word, and that we, on our part, may speak to him in our prayers and praise.³

¹ Regin Prenter, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis und die römische Messopferlehre*, in: *Kerygma und Dogma* 1955, p. 45.

² WA 7, 25, 34.

³ WA 49, 588, 12-18.

This introduction spells out several aspects of the service and its theology, which I shall try and explore further. First, we note that the worship is the concern of the entire congregation. It is 'liturgy' in the literal sense of the word, e.g. it is the work (ergon) of the whole people (laos). There is a dialogue in the service between two parties, between Christ, who is present, and his people. This dialogue is arranged as address and response (versicles and responses). Luther began early on to 'Germanise' these essential parts of the dialogue.

The first part, the Word as personal address, I have already discussed above. We mentioned that Luther translated the New Testament into German already at Wartburg, that he composed prefaces to the various books of the Bible, and that he wrote commentaries and model sermons - all for the purpose of serving the breakthrough of the Word to the congregations. It is the living Word that is at the forefront, e.g. that is what should be voiced through the readings and the sermon. Luther's view of the sermon is clear from a few lines in his *Collection of Sermons on the Church*:

'To preach the Gospel is nothing other than to allow Christ to come to us and to draw us to himself.'⁴

Such a conception of the role of the sermon must necessarily lead to a prominent position for the sermon in the service. That is exactly what happens in Luther's first treatise on the Order of the Service. *Von der Ordnung des Gottesdienstes in der Gemeinde*, 1523.⁵ Apart from that, the order contains no surprising features. Luther stresses in the introduction that he has no intention of abolishing or replacing the order of service currently celebrated. Why not? Because the service celebrated is, after all, a proper service. 'Something is not nullified because it is badly performed'.⁶ The order of service proposed by Luther is therefore not a radical break from the structure of worship which has been current in the West since the Early Church onwards.

The restoration of the sermon is a necessary requirement in the process of restoring to the liturgy its original power and clarity. Luther names three abuses which have damaged worship: First, the Word of God has largely been neglected. Secondly, the empty space left by this neglect has been filled by various fables and legends. And thirdly, because of the absence of the Word of God, the service has become a human effort, designed to ensure God's grace

⁴ WA 10 I, 13, 22 - 14, 1.

⁵ WA 12, 35-37.

⁶ Luther's letter to Lambert Hemertus from the 12th of June 1527, WA Br 4, 213, 9f.

and eternal blessing. In order to combat these ills, Luther lays down the following principle: whenever the Christian congregation is gathered, the Word of God should always be preached and prayed on. This is, in his understanding, the original order, not only for the celebration of the liturgy on Sundays, but also for the daily acts of worship. Both morning and evening a portion of Scripture should be read and expounded in the language of the respective mother-tongue. Luther prescribes the 'lectio continua', e.g. the method of reading through an entire biblical book in order. The devotions in the morning are given to the Old Testament and the evening worship to the New Testament. On Sundays, portions of the Gospel (the pericopae) should be used. The Gospel should be expounded during Mass, and the Epistle at Vespers.

In the same year (1523) Luther's Latin Order of Service, *Formulae missa et communionis*⁷ was also published. Luther's desire to preserve a form of worship in Latin, when so much worship should be celebrated in German, may seem like a contradiction. This was however not as inconsequent as it may seem. Worship in the vernacular was for Luther not an end in itself. For him, the importance lay in clarity on what actually took place in the service, and on the opportunity for the congregation to participate fully. That is why it was important to purify the service and to celebrate it in German - but also in Latin. In his third and most extensive treatise on the liturgy, *The German Mass*, published in 1526, Luther insists that the Latin Mass is important for the sake of the young, so that they are trained in this international language.⁸ This enables them to worship abroad 'And who knows how God will use them in the future?' In this context Luther criticises the Bohemian Brethren 'who have clothed their faith in a language of its own, so that they cannot speak intelligible thereof to outsiders'. He even suggests holding services in the biblical languages, in Greek and Hebrew! That was probably never done, but, against the background of his experience of the importance of the original languages for the understanding of the Bible, this proposition is hardly surprising. The sermon should of course always be preached in the vernacular, even though the service may be held in Latin or in any other foreign language.

Luther does not propose uniformity in worship. He carefully stresses that the order of service in Wittenberg should not be seen as an obligatory pattern for other places. If anyone can do better, let him do it. Christians are free in this matter. The principle behind every service is however firmly hammered home: This freedom should be used for the glory of God and the improvement

⁷ WA 12, 205-220.

⁸ WA 19, 70-113.

of man.

The distinction between 'necessity' and 'freedom' determines Luther's reasoning about worship. There are certain items which must be included in every service in order that it may qualify as worship, i.e. as a meeting at which the gifts of Christ are distributed and received in faith. Otherwise there is complete freedom to include everything which enhances the proclamation of the Gospel, but nothing which obscures or opposes the Gospel is permitted. That which neither helps nor hinders the Gospel is irrelevant and may be either kept or discarded. Luther's letter to his friend Buchholzer in Berlin can be read as an illustration of this point, applied to a single case. Obviously Buchholzer had some difficulties in agreeing with his Chancellor about the order of service. Luther replies:

Concerning the things you complain about, i.e. the use of an alb and a chasuble, and processions around the churchyard on Sundays and holidays, I would give the following advice: If your Lord, the Count, and the Chancellor allow you to preach the pure Gospel of Christ without any human additions, and if they allow the celebration of sacraments of baptism and of the altar according to the institution of Christ, but do not require the adoration of the saints as mediators and intercessors, nor the carrying of the host in procession, and if they do not insist on daily masses for the dead, nor on the use of holy water, responsorials and canticles - whether German or Latin - during the processions, then, in God's name, join in them and carry a cross of silver or gold and wear an alb and a chasuble made of velvet, silk or linen. And if one chasuble is not enough, do as Aaron, the high priest did: put on three of them, one more beautiful than the other. And if your Lord the Chancellor is not satisfied with one procession, then make seven circuits, as Joshua did around the walls of Jericho while the children of Israel blew the trumpets; and if it pleases the Chancellor, let him walk at the front, jumping and dancing to the sound of harps and cymbals, trumpets and bells, as David did when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. I have no objection to these practices. If these things are not misused, they can neither add to, nor take away anything from the Gospel, but they must never be regarded as necessities, nor be made into a matter of conscience.⁹

Both the sermon and the communion were considered from the same perspective: 'How Christ comes to us'. In the *Formula missae* the sermon is placed immediately before the eucharistic prayer on the grounds that it is 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, who calls the faithful to the mass, which is the practice of the Gospel and the communion around the Lord's table'.¹⁰ When the Word is not proclaimed and the mass is presented as sacrifice, the practice of the Gospel, i.e. the distribution and reception of that which Christ has

⁹ WA Br 8, 625, 7 - 626, 2.

¹⁰ WA 12, 211, 8ff.

achieved and won, is obscured and gainsaid.¹¹ In such cases the service becomes only a human activity, and the perception of God different from that of the Gospel. The God of the Gospel has been replaced by a not quite reconciled god. In addition, the character of the service as a corporate act is endangered. In order to offer the sacrifice of the mass, no communicants are necessary, not even the presence of the congregation. That can happen 'privately', i.e. through the action of priests, ordained for that purpose, on behalf of other people, living or dead. And that is just what happened.

Against that background, Luther's strong polemics against the sacrifice of the mass becomes understandable. That view threatens the very basis of the structure of the service as a meeting between Christ, present in Word and sacrament, and his people, a meeting at which gifts were distributed and received in faith and thankfulness. It may be argued that Luther misunderstood the theology of the sacrifice of the mass. That was said already by his contemporaries. It is interesting to see how Luther responded to that criticism. He points throughout - not to one or other theological view of the eucharistic sacrifice - but to the practice of its celebration. Such masses are performed without the participation of the congregation, and the eucharistic prayer frequently includes phrases like 'we offer', 'receive as a sacrifice' etc.¹² Luther says it is a divine mercy that this prayer was usually read so quietly that the words could hardly be heard by the congregation. Unfortunately the same applied to the parts which really should be proclaimed, namely the words of institution, so that the worshippers might take hold of the promise by faith. 'They have hidden the words of the covenant for us' says Luther. His criticism of the sacrifice of the mass shows similarities with his criticism of indulgences. His pastoral concern led him to react strongly against what he perceived to be poor pastoral care. Things which have such consequences can hardly arise from good theology based on the foundation of Holy Scripture.

Not only the address by the Word and its gift needed clarification, but also the response of the congregation by prayer and praise, so that worship might again become a corporate act. It was for that purpose that Luther wrote prayers in German. The order of baptism was revised so that parents, godparents and the whole congregation would be able to participate in the praise and thanksgiving. In addition, he also began to compose hymns in German. All this took place in the early 1520s.

Singing in German certainly happened already in the churches of the Middle

¹¹ WA 10 II, 29, 19ff.

¹² Cf "Von Greuel der Stillmesse" from 1525, especially WA 18, 24, 8ff.

Ages, but from the Reformation onwards, this became a necessary and important part of the service. In a letter to Spalatin, the adviser to the Chancellor, Luther comments on the work he has begun. Here I only need to quote a few lines from the letter, as he so clearly states his purpose and the principles underpinning his work:

My dear Spalatin! I have in mind, in accordance with the example of the Prophets and the Early Fathers, to make available to the people German psalms, i.e. spiritual songs, in order that the Word of God may remain with the people also through their singing. I search everywhere for poets. Since you are talented in the matter of the use of the German language and very experienced in writing it, I beg you to join with us in this work of re-writing one of the psalms from the Psalter into a song in the manner of my enclosed attempt. Expressions from the court and other unusual forms of speech should be avoided. The people shall sing in accordance with their own powers of comprehension, words as simple and common as possible. At the same time they must be prudent and without offence, and they should express a clear thought, as close to the psalm as possible.¹³

Then Luther mentions a number of possible psalms from which Spalatin might choose. He also refers to his exposition of the seven penitentiary psalms as an aid to understanding the content of the psalms.

But why the Psalms? The answer may seem simple: The Book of the Psalms is the one which both Jews and Christians have used throughout the centuries when addressing God. However, a question attends that answer: Why is this particular biblical book so useful? Luther gives an approximate answer in his *Preface to the Psalms*.¹⁴ There he considers the psalms in contrast to the legends of saints and martyrs, and to other books of examples. The Psalter, he says, has many advantages compared to these other stories, which mainly narrate the deeds of holy people but say very little about their words. The psalms, on the other hand, recount 'how they have prayed to God and how they still speak and pray'. But the psalms do even more. The words of the psalms are such that they admit insight into the hearts of the saints under very varied circumstances. The psalms of praise reveal a joyful heart, whereas the psalms of lamentation show a heart in despair. Both states correspond to circumstances familiar to every Christian:

And therefore the Psalter is the book for all the saints; and every person, whatever his circumstances, he can find therein verses or complete psalms which fits his situation perfectly. They fit him so well that it seems as though they were written for him alone. He could not have thought or imagined or desired anything better. And this is

¹³ WA Br 3, 220.

¹⁴ WA DB 10 I, 88-105.

good even in another sense. Whenever anyone feels an attachment to these words, and sees that they suit his situation exactly, he is convinced that he himself belongs to the communion of saints. Life must have turned out the same for all the saints as it now does for him, since they all sing the same song - especially as he can speak to God through the same words as they did.¹⁵

It was not only the psalms of the Psalter which were re-written by Luther and his companions. Other hymns written at this time recall stories from the Gospel. Or biblical quotations from various sources may have been woven together into a unit. This is obvious to anyone familiar with both Luther's translation of the Bible and with his hymns. A good example is the hymn 'Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gemein', which consists of about fifty different biblical quotations, re-iterated almost verbatim. But Luther's ecclesiastical songs are more than re-iterations. They make present what they narrate. That is presumably the deepest implications in the wish that 'God's Word may remain with the people also through the songs'. In the song mentioned above the little word 'now' is frequently repeated (although not as frequently as in the Swedish translation made by Olaus Petri). The same applies to other hymns written at this time. The Swedish hymnwriter Emil Liedgren has captured this in the phrase 'the wonderful now of the Reformation'.¹⁶ And throughout the, for Luther decisive, words the pronouns 'for us', 'to me', are repeated again and again. Thus even the German hymns becomes explicit promises of the covenant on which the friendship between God and man is founded. A verse from 'Nun freut euch...' may serve as an example of everything typical of the reformer's hymn-writing: the present moment, the personal and the biblical (- from the third line onwards there are quotations from Galatians 2:20, Luke 22:44, The Song of Songs 2:16, John 17:24 and Romans 8:38):

To me he said:
Stay close to me,
I am your rock and castle.
Your ransom I myself will be;
For you I strive and wrestle;
For I am yours and you are mine,
And where I am you may remain;
The foe shall not divide us.¹⁷

Luther's persistence in clarifying the service's character of corporate worship was founded deeply on theology. The most obvious evidence of his underpin-

¹⁵ WA DB 10 I, 102, 23-31.

¹⁶ Emil Liedgren, *Den svenska psalmboken*, Uppsala 1914, p. 13.

¹⁷ AWA 4, 154-159. Lutheran Book of Worship 299:7.

ning thought is found in his first proper pamphlet on the Eucharist, entitled *A Homily on the most holy, true and worthy Sacrament of Christ's body and on the Brotherhoods*, published in 1519.¹⁸ This little pamphlet has often been presented as among the most outstanding of Luther's works on the Eucharist. Seeberg mentions its closeness to the Early Church, and Brilioth asks whether the sacramental mystery of communion has ever been more brilliantly expounded.¹⁹

This work on the Eucharist is early, but its content belongs very clearly to the Reformation. Its terminology, however, is old. Luther takes the Augustinian distinction between 'sign' and 'meaning' (*signum et res*) as his starting-point. The sign refers to a spiritual and invisible reality, which is the 'meaning' of the sign, and of which it is the carrier and mediator. Faith is directed towards the hidden meaning, and through the outward sign, the spiritual reality is received. In the Eucharist, that means communion with Christ and with all his saints. This language was soon enough abandoned by Luther in preference of the distinction between the word of promise and the sign. Faith embraces the words of institution as an audible promise. However, what he says about communion (*communio, synaxis*) as the gift and fruit of the Eucharist does not change, even though this theme is less developed in his later works. The Roman doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice and the symbolic interpretation by the Spiritualists often led to a realignment of the accent in Luther's continuing writing. The pamphlet from 1519 is fairly non-polemic - at least in its main thrust. In an appendix Luther makes a fierce attack on Brotherhoods and Guilds which by their exclusiveness threaten the community established through the Eucharist.

The real meaning of community is developed by the use of various images which Luther finds in the Bible, in the Early Church and in daily life. St Paul's analogy of the body and its members in 1 Cor 12 is employed, as is also the prayer quoted in the *Didache* that the many seeds may be kneaded into one bread, and the grapes squeezed into one cup of wine. The analogy of citizenship is used as an illustration of eucharistic fellowship. Whoever receives communion in faith is compared to the person who, when admitted to citizenship, receives a sign of his belonging to that particular city. As a citizen, he may count on support from other citizens, but he is also obliged to share the burdens of the other citizens himself. The same privileges and obligations apply to the spiritual, invisible city of God. Whoever has been incorporated into

¹⁸ WA 2, 742-758.

¹⁹ Yngve Brilioth, *Nattvarden i evangeliskt gudstjänstliv*, Stockholm 1951, p. 147ff.

that city shares everything in communion with Christ and with all the saints in heaven and on earth:

This communion consists of the fact that all the spiritual good which belongs to Christ and to his saints is shared and becomes the common property of all those who have received this sacrament. Suffering and sin are also made into common property, and thus love kindles love which unites.²⁰

Communion with Christ in the Eucharist is also communion with all the other recipients. Christ's real presence in bread and wine, and our presence with one another, make a unit. That is Luther's basic thought in this early treatise.

In his later works on the Eucharist there is stronger accent on polemics, first against the Roman Catholics and later against the Spiritualists. We shall not here follow that development but turn our attention instead towards a text of later date which, though rich in content, has only attracted little attention, namely Luther's *Admonition concerning the Sacrament of Body and Blood of our Lord*.²¹ This work was written at Coburg, while the Diet of Augsburg took place. On the surface, it does not appear to have anything to do with what was discussed at Augsburg. There are no hints or references in that direction. However, it testifies to the deepest reasons why both teaching and life had been reshaped in the Evangelical areas, and therefore it concerns this Diet very profoundly.

Luther wrote this work on the Eucharist in the form of a sermon in order to help the Evangelical priests to encourage their parishioners to make use of this sacrament. Since the obligation had been abandoned in the Evangelical areas, many people stayed away altogether. Luther does not blame only the absentees for this, but also those who should encourage the use of the sacrament, i.e. the pastors, himself included. Such encouragement can only be given with the help of the Word, which 'shall not return empty' (Is. 55:11).

The sermon is divided into two parts, which correspond to the earlier division made between address and response, between gift and gratitude, but here the order is reversed. The first part deals with our worship as service rendered to God. The Eucharist is instituted by Christ in order to be the service which God desires from each one of us, namely that we should celebrate this in 'remembrance of him'. The entire exposition in the first part is concentrated on this. It says, among other things:

²⁰ WA 2, 743, 27-30.

²¹ WA 30 II, 595-626.

Mark and consider this word 'remembrance'. It will clarify much and encourage you as well. However, I do not yet speak about the usefulness and delight of this sacrament for us, but about how it is useful for Christ and for God himself. It is important for the praise and service of God to reverence and frequently use this sacrament. You hear how he focuses his divine glory and worship in this particular sacrament in order that we should think of him. But what does it mean to think of him other than to praise him and listen to him, to preach and invoke him, to thank him and give him glory for all the grace and mercy that he has bestowed on us in Christ? And to this Christ he has gathered all his glory and worship. Apart from Christ, he does not want anything like that at all. Worship outside Christ he does not acknowledge, and apart from this communion, he does not desire to be anyone's God.²²

Right worship, which is ordained by God, is contrasted to self-chosen services, among which Luther names monastic life, pilgrimages, fasting and ascetic practices etc. To make a pilgrimage to Santiago, Rome or Jerusalem is set against being present at the service 'in your own little town or village, just outside your own front-door', where the service is celebrated, 'where Christ himself is present in his body and blood, alive, remembered, glorified and praised'. The term as such is not abandoned in his vocabulary. True worship, however, is a 'thank-offering', while false worship are described as 'work-offering'. The fault of the latter lies in that they do not allow God to be God, and in that they break the first of the Ten Commandments:

The thank-offering gives me my divine glory. It makes me God and keeps me as God. The work-offering, on the other hand, strips me of my divine glory, turns me into an idol and does not allow me to be God. Whoever does not give thanks wants to earn, and he has no God. He makes for himself, internally in his own heart, and externally by his deeds, a god other than the one true God, although in his name... Preach, praise, laud, listen and give thanks for the grace shown in Christ. If you do this, you confess in your heart and by your lips, with your ears and eyes, with your body and soul, that you have not given God anything at all, and never could give him anything, but that everything you have and are, you receive from him, and especially eternal life and everlasting justice in Christ. Whenever that happens, you have made him your true God, and by such a confession you have upheld his glory and honour. Because it is a true God who gives and does not take.²³

The connection between worship, perception of God and worshipping community could hardly be more explicitly stated. The simple structure of the service is built around the address by God and human response, the gift of God and human thanksgiving. Even the sermon is - seen from one particular perspective - an act of human turning to God. The same applies to the service as a whole.

²² WA 30 II, 601, 25-36.

²³ WA 30 II, 602, 30 - 603, 13.

Right worship 'fills the heart' says Luther. Not least through a recent Luther-study made by the Swedish scholar Birgit Stolt, has the importance of the human heart in Luther's theology received proper attention.²⁴ For Luther, the heart is the centre of man. Both thoughts and feelings spring from the heart. When Luther regards the heart as the seat of faith, it follows that the human person is affected in his/her whole being:

And when the heart is full, eyes and ears, mouth and nose, body and soul and every limb must also be full. Because all the limbs follow the state of the heart, and everything becomes a specific voice, full of praise and thanksgiving to God.²⁵

So far the exposition of the little word 'remembrance', as our thank-offering. The second part is devoted to 'the sacrament', not as an offering, but as God's gift to us. Luther is not very explicit in this part. He refers to what he has already written in the *Small Catechism*, but says that he still wants to expand on this point. Since the sermon is intended to draw people to the communion table, Luther expounds various possible objections and hindrances, which are then refuted. But first of all he reflects on the pronouns of the words of institution:

For these two words, 'ME' and 'YOU' are enormous words. When you think of who he is, who says 'me', when he says: 'Do this in remembrance of me', you will easily find that it is your dear Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has shed his own blood and who died for you. He does not ask anything else by the use of this word 'me'. When you consider to whom he refers by the words 'for you', you will find that it is to you and to me, and to all those people, for whom he has died.²⁶

So far Luther's *Sermon on the Eucharist* from Coburg. Our presentation has mainly touched on the Eucharist and the preaching of the Word. That is where the emphasis must be in a report on Luther's work on the main service of the parish. Of course there were less number of masses celebrated in the Evangelical areas, but that arose from the abolition of private masses, requiems, votive masses etc. Of course there were fewer communicants, but that arose from the abolition of the obligation, which was incompatible with the nature of the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharist as the main Sunday Service of the parish was taken for granted by Luther. Its importance cannot be overestimated.

It has been argued that Luther was not very interested in the service. That is a

²⁴ Birgit Stolt, *Martin Luther, människohjärtat och bibeln*, Borås 1994.

²⁵ WA 30 II, 603, 20-24.

²⁶ WA 30 II, 616, 11-24.

misunderstanding. It may have arisen (and still prevails?) because of the wrong conclusions having been drawn from Luther's obvious reluctance to make changes and regulations about liturgy, particularly when compared to other personalities in the Reformation camp. His reluctance had many reasons, some of which have been indicated above. Luther's starting-point is that the service continues. There is no need to re-create it, but certainly to reform it. Every change must be prepared for by preaching and teaching. According to Luther, only preaching is not enough. 'Many people listen to the sermon for three, four years without being able to answer questions about the faith'.²⁷ That is why teaching the catechism is a necessity. If this kind of preparation of the congregation is neglected, the consideration of the weak is impaired, and their consciences are worried, which would be poor pastoral care. A Christian is free to act as love dictates. Obligations and regulations threaten to change the freedom under the Gospel into a new and binding Law, which ensnares the conscience. That accords badly with the nature of worship as people's meeting with God - with the God who gives and does not take.

3.2 The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.

The service and its parts are treated in a number of articles. They are spread across the entire confessional document and lack explicit references to one another. Occasionally the same point is repeated in two different places. For the sake of clarity, I will bring together the articles into two main groups and comment on each group separately. This disposition corresponds to the distinction discussed above between what is 'necessary' and what is a matter of 'free choice' in the service.

The first group consists of the articles about the sacraments, baptism and communion, their use and abuse. To this group belong the articles number 9, 10, 13, 22 and 24. The articles number 11 and 25 about private confession and absolution may also be considered here.

The second group consists of those articles which deal with the ecclesiastical ceremonies, particularly the articles number 15 and 26, but also article 21 about worship of the saints.

The most extensive article in the first group is number 24 about the mass. It is introduced by a few lines by Melancthon, in which he, somewhat surpris-

²⁷ WA 19, 78, 21ff.

ingly, plays down the changes which have taken place in the Evangelical areas:

Our parishes are unjustly accused of having abolished the mass. The mass is in fact kept carefully by us and is celebrated with the utmost reverence. Almost all traditional practices of the service are also performed with the exception that in a few places there are German hymns besides the Latin canticles, and these have been added for the purpose of educating the congregation.²⁸

In addition, he mentions particularly the abolition of private masses, a practice which had arisen and been widely spread due to unchecked greed. But was this all that had happened?

The passage quoted, and other, similar ones besides, can of course be interpreted as an instance of Melanchthon's placid mind and tactic manner. But the opposite tendency is also obvious; the dividing line with Rome is sharply drawn. That occurs already in the same article, where the polemic is directed towards the sacrifice of the mass and the effect of the sacrament 'ex opere operato' (in and through the performance of the outward action), i.e. regardless of the faith. How should these, apparently opposed, tendencies be understood?

Maybe the various statements are in fact not as discordant as they seem at first. Melanchthon is undeniably right in arguing that the changes made to the liturgy were not particularly great - at least not if the external aspect of performance is considered. The order of service was largely followed as usual. But behind the small but obvious changes in the order of the mass lay a fundamentally different understanding of what happens through the mass. And it is this Evangelical interpretation which Melanchthon is trying to define in the articles of the Augsburg Confession, even though he does not do so in a continuous context.

It seems fruitful to choose article 13 as the starting point, as that article provides an overall perspective on the sacraments, in which the fairly short statements on baptism and communion (articles 9, 10 and 22) can be considered. Article 13 reads as follows:

About the use of the sacraments they teach that the sacraments have been instituted, not only as signs, by which people make a confession of faith before other people, but primarily as signs and testimonies of God's will and intention towards us, given for the purpose of awakening and strengthening faith in those who receive the sacraments. Therefore the sacraments should be used in such a manner that this faith is

²⁸ BELK 67, p. 91.

present, which believes the promises, through which the sacraments are given and revealed.²⁹

That the reception of the sacraments should also be regarded as a Christian act of confession was not denied by anyone, and was often stressed. But the emphasis does not lie there, but on the fact that they are divine actions. As such, they should of course be performed in accordance with the command of the Lord. What that means for the celebration of the Eucharist is clarified in article 22:

At the Lord's table, the laity receives the sacrament in both kinds, because this usage is supported by the Lord's command in Matt 26: Drink ye all of this. There Christ rules in clear words that all should drink from the chalice.³⁰

Melanchthon also argues from church history. He does so for the purpose of showing that the usage of the reformers corresponds to the old order. The malpractice of withdrawing the chalice from the laity is described as a relatively late invention, and one which is in fact opposed both to the Word of God and to the Early Church.

In these divine acts God encounters us as a God whose 'will with regard to us' is our salvation. The terms used are those which soon enough became typical for the reformers: promise - sign - faith. It is important to notice that they are used for the purpose of expressing this particular meeting. The emphasis is on what happens between two partners. The presence of the other is presupposed. The same is expressed in article number 10, which stresses one point alone, namely the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine which is distributed at communion.³¹ At the baptismal font and at the communion table people meet the risen and living Christ, who himself gives the promise and confirms it with a sign. The justifying faith is not directed towards a doctrine of Christ, but towards the living Lord himself.

In order to understand the character of meeting of the sacramental action, we can use our daily experience. When a promise is given between people, it is often sealed with a sign. It could be a common signing of a document, or a handshake, which inspires confidence in the promise. And children 'tamper with' promises made. The same applies to the sacraments. They are instituted for the purpose of 'awakening and strengthening faith'. The Word and the sign are two sides of the same divine action.

²⁹ BELK 67, p. 68.

³⁰ BELK 67, p. 85.

³¹ BELK 67, p. 64.

The description of the reception of the sacraments as a meeting with the Risen Christ also helps us to come to terms with the deliberately 'inconsequent' linguistic use of the reformers. They say not only that the sacraments are given for the purpose of awakening and strengthening faith, but also that they should be received in faith. That may sound contradictory, but, as Leif Grane has pointed out, that is not without a purpose: 'The circle in which we move here is designed to exclude every possibility of placing the arrival of grace outside the meeting between the Word - in preaching and in sacrament - and the faith'³²

What happens between God and man in baptism is described in article 9:

About baptism they teach that it is necessary for salvation that the grace of God should be offered through baptism, and that the children should be baptised in order that, through baptism, they may be presented to God and thus be included in his grace.

They condemn the Anabaptists who dispute that the children are being saved through baptism.³³

The Latin text has 'offeratur', which implies a high degree of activity. The same word was used about the children who were 'presented' to God. What is expressed here is nothing different from that which was stated in article 4 about justification. Baptism is the sacrament of justification. Through the grace of God the broken relationship between God and man (which was treated in article 2) is re-established. The person who is baptised dies to sin and is raised to righteousness. Therefore baptism is 'necessary for salvation'. It is necessary for everybody. Nobody is exempted from the state of alienation which prevails after the Fall, not even the children. From this stems the criticism of the Anabaptists, because, from the perspective of the reformers, their teaching and practice appears as disregard, or even contempt, for the sacrament.

The importance of the sacrament for the person tried by doubts and uncertainty is often stressed by the reformers. Someone who is 'afraid in his conscience' does not necessarily disbelieve grace, but doubts that grace concerns himself. The sacramental action has however a personal address, which makes it possible to overcome the tribulation. The same applies to the use of confession. Confession is normally described a sacrament by the reformers, since

³² Leif Grane, *Confessio Augustana, Orientering i den lutherska reformationens grundtankar*, Stockholm 1967, p. 122.

³³ BELK 67, p. 63.

the Word is not here accompanied by an outward sign, such as the water of baptism or the bread and wine of the Eucharist. The personal address of God's forgiveness according to God's command, is however there. For the person affected by doubt this means that he or she cannot mistake the fact that this gift is for him / her as well. Therefore the reformers ascribe an indispensable value to confession, provided that it is properly taught and practised. This is made clear in, for example, article 25:

Confession has not been abolished in our congregations..... And people are carefully taught about faith in the absolution, about which silence has hitherto prevailed. People are taught to place the highest value on absolution, because it is God's own Word which is given according to God's command. The power of the key is held in high reverence, and people are constantly reminded about the comfort this brings to fearful consciences....³⁴

The emphasis in confession is on the absolution of the individual. The words of forgiveness are preceded by a confession of sin. This part is also commented on, both in articles 11 and 25, and in both places the demand for a complete account of sins committed is criticised.³⁵ Such a demand, which has been in force in the Western Church ever since the Fourth Lateran Synod in 1215, undeniably implies that the emphasis is moved away from the liberating Word to the random ability of the person making his / her confession to make a complete self-examination. And thus the afflicted person could - quite contrary to the purpose of confession - be brought to despair.

The criticism of the order of confession, just as, for example, the use of indulgences, is founded on a pastoral concern, which has proved to be typical of the reformers' way of theological thinking. This pastoral concern is also fundamental to what is said about the ecclesiastical ceremonies in articles 15 and 26. Already the former article contains their principal view of the ceremonies, which is this:

About the ecclesiastical ceremonies (which are of human origin) they teach that such may be kept which can be performed without sin and which promote peace and good order in church, particularly on certain holidays, festivals and such occasions. People are also taught about these things, so that their consciences are not weighed down by the idea that such worship is necessary for salvation. They are also informed about the fact that these traditional human inventions, which have come about for the pur-

³⁴ BELK 67, p. 97f.

³⁵ BELK 67, p. 66 and 98f.

pose of reconciling God, of earning grace and of making satisfaction for sins, contradict the Gospel and the doctrine about faith.³⁶

The logic is clear: the ceremonies are necessary for keeping good order. However, they shall obviously not be such that they obscure or contradict the Gospel, i.e. faith in the forgiveness of sin for the sake of Christ. Then it would not be 'without sin'. But ceremonies and human inventions which have been used for no other purpose than the furthering of true worship could still, in severe cases, be interpreted as a requirement for salvation. What is a matter of free choice has then been turned into a necessity, which binds and weighs down the consciences. Therefore the need for teaching is stressed. The repeated stress on the importance of education may seem somewhat pedantic. Parish life risks becoming a school. Even so, it should be emphasised that the enthusiasm of the reformers in this respect is founded precisely on their concern for pastoral care.

Article 21 about the adoration of the saints is not found in the second part of the Augsburg Confession, i.e. in the part which consists mainly of an account of malpractices. That is a hint that the recollection of the lives of the saints may be fully in accordance with Evangelical worship. A closer analysis of Luther's early pamphlet on the Eucharist from 1519 would also have shown that the 'communio' which Luther pictures includes all the saints 'in heaven and on earth'. A good illustration of this thought is found by the high altar in the Cathedral of Linköping, Sweden. The altarpiece, by the Norwegian artist Henrik Sörensen, with its unique and much discussed image of Christ, has two side panels with rows and rows of prophets, evangelists and saints from the history of the church. Where these rows end, the altar-rails begin. And when the Eucharist is celebrated, the altar-rails are filled and the circle is complete. Through this communion, the saints (those who are sanctified in Christ) in heaven and on earth are united. That is how the reformers think and speak. But they can also refute some of the legends of the saints as 'pure lies'. How can both these perspectives be possible? The answer is found in article 21, which shows that the remembrance of the saints can take very varied forms:

About the saints in worship they teach that they may be remembered, in order that we may learn to imitate their faith and their good deeds in accordance with our vocation... But Holy Scripture does not teach that we should invoke the saints nor ask for their help, because it presents Christ alone as our only mediator, as the only instrument of our reconciliation, as high priest and intercessor. He should be invoked, and he has promised to hear our prayers, and this worship is very pleasing to him, namely

³⁶ BELK 67, p. 69. The words within brackets are not to be found in the Latin version but in the German one.

when he is invoked in all kinds of need. 1 John 2: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, who intercedes for us³⁷

The faith and deeds of the saints are exemplary. But invocation of the saints is refuted because it lacks a biblical foundation and obscures the perception of Christ as the only mediator. Maybe this appears as an overwrought issue? However, during the Middle Ages, one or other of the saints had often taken the place of Christ in the devotions of ordinary people.³⁸ The purpose of this article, as with all the others, is to protect and clarify the worship which proclaims that people are being justified by grace alone, through faith.

³⁷ BELK 67, p. 83b.

³⁸ An illustrative example of the importance of the veneration of saints for medieval piety can be found in the records from the Cathedral of Canterbury. The offerings at the shrine of Thomas Becket was continuously increasing, whereas the offerings at the High Altar diminished.. Cf J. G. Davies, *Pilgrimage yesterday and today: Why? Where? How?*, SCM 1988, p. 97.

4 The Great Assembly

4.1 The Church between Easter and the Parousia of Christ

In the previous chapters the view of the Church, which sprung from the Reformation discovery, has already been indicated. The doctrine of justification through faith alone summarised for Luther all God's activity aimed at drawing the world back to himself. The decisive event, that which had taken place through Jesus of Nazareth, was the beginning of a process, the full realisation of which still lay in the future. The present time is significant as the Christ's liberating presence through Word and sacrament. Christ is 'the author of the renewal of all things'. The church is 'the new creation of the Gospel' in progress, which is the still hidden and the not yet complete, result of Christ's continuing work.

In this perspective the Church of Christ is clearly only one. We could rightly use the phrase 'Evangelical Catholicism', coined by Nathan Söderblom. Luther often expresses his disappointment with the word 'church', because it easily leads the mind astray. He can refer to 'the empty and unclear word church'. He prefers to speak of 'Christendom', 'the kingdom of Christ' or 'the people of Christ', and when doing so, he often refers to St Paul's words in Eph.4:

Christendom is an assembly of those who are faithful to Christ on earth, just as we pray in the Creed: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints'. This communion, or assembly means all those who live in righteousness of faith, hope and love. Thus the character and nature of Christendom cannot be a bodily congregation, but a community of the heart, in one faith, as St Paul says in Eph 4: 'one baptism, one faith, one Lord'.¹

Christendom is not an outward, visible kingdom like other kingdoms on earth, but an invisible, spiritual kingdom of believers. Outward pluralism and distances do therefore not threaten its unity. Believers live dispersed across the whole world, but they are still united in the faith:

Even though they are separated from each other in the body by a thousand miles, it is still called a community in the spirit, because one person preaches, believes, hopes,

¹ WA 6, 292, 37ff.

loves and lives just like another. That is what we sing about the Holy Spirit: 'You who from every tongue gathers and unites the people by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ'.²

The unity of the Spirit which Luther pictures, taking Eph 4 and the medieval antiphon as his starting-point, is 'sufficient in itself'. Differences in outward practices and regulations are not a threat to this unity.

This view of the church was not self-evident. That became clear, not least in the Leipzig-debate in 1519. Luther's opponent, Johann Eck of Ingolstadt, accused him of harbouring heretic views, like those which already Jan Hus had championed, and for which he had been condemned a hundred years earlier. After all, Luther argued that the Church of Christ existed outside the borders of the Roman Primacy as well, for example in Greece, Russia and Bohemia.³ It was, in other words, Luther who defended 'the great assembly' (*ecclesia magna*) against what he conceived of as a false limitation of the church, arising from an unbiblical claim. Luther did not attack the papacy as such. The Bishop of Rome may, for historical reasons and with regard to his actual influence, very well be considered as the primate, but not so because of any 'divine right or according to Christ's ordinance'.⁴ That claim would imply that all Eastern Christians should fall outside the church and salvation, even though they 'preach, believe, hope, love and live' like their Christian brothers and sisters in the West.

In Eck's view, the hierarchically organised Roman Church was formed according to the heavenly model of the invisible, triumphant Church. Luther could say the exact opposite, namely that the Church as such was 'invisible'. If such a statement is read against the background of Eck's reasoning, Luther's ecclesiology appears as very spiritualised. The Church becomes, it has been argued, 'a platonic state' without any anchor in the world of time.⁵ Luther, however, meant only that the existence or non-existence of Christendom is totally dependent on the presence of Christ and his continuing work. This cannot be visibly demonstrated, but remains a matter of faith as said in Hebrews 11:1. The perspective is eschatological. Vision belongs to the future. In addition, Luther can make references to biblical passages about 'the kingdom'

² WA 6, 293, 5ff.

³ WA 6, 287, 4ff.

⁴ WA 2, 196, 14f; 199, 22f; 200, 37ff.

⁵ For the criticism of Luther's ecclesiology, see e.g. Thomas Murner "von den bapstenthum das ist von der höchsten oberkeyt Christlichs glauben wyder doctor Martinum Luther", Strassburg 1520, H.

in the debate about the church, for example to John 18:36 and to Luke 17:20. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world; it does not come in such a way that anyone can see it with their own eyes; the kingdom is internal.

Another characteristic, attributed to the church by Luther, is that she is 'hidden' (abscondita). This terminology is clearly connected with the theology of the cross, which Luther developed early on, and which is found not least in his *Second Commentary on the Psalms*.

In the exposition of the rubric to Psalm 9, Luther meditates on the Hebrew expression 'almuth laben'. The first of these words can be interpreted in two ways. It is either a compound with the meaning 'to death' or it is a declined form of the verb 'alam' (to hide) with the meaning 'the hidden ones'. In the latter case it is, according to Luther, an association to the nurturing and education of the young in hiddenness, in separation from the world. 'Laben' means 'the son's' and is a reference to Christ. Luther combines both these lines of thought: the sons and daughters of Christ are nurtured, hidden under the cross:

It is therefore probable that 'Almoth' refers to the new creation of the Gospel, the children of grace, the youth of baptism, the people of the new covenant and the Son's hidden ones, i.e. those who are faithful and obedient, whose lives are hidden by death, who are saved by the cross, who are honoured when abused. For that is how he hides them away from the world.⁶

That the church is 'invisible', 'spiritual' and 'hidden', that she cannot be identified with the outward, hierarchical institution, does not prevent Luther from speaking of her visible marks (notae ecclesiae):

The marks, which make it possible to notice where in the world the church is, are baptism, the sacrament of communion and the Gospel, and not Rome, nor this or that place. Nobody should doubt that, if only baptism and the Gospel are present, the saints are there as well, even though they might be only babes in cradles.⁷

In other words, the marks are marks of recognition. They tell us where the church is. They are necessary for the identification of the church. However, the marks do not make the invisible visible. The church does not cease to be an object of faith. Anyone might doubt that there really is a holy Christian people in spite of all the organisations and beautiful epithets. But when the confession of the Creed is made - 'one, holy, catholic Church' - then the congregation articulates its own self-understanding, which it has by virtue of faith

⁶ WA 5, 285, 32ff.

⁷ WA 6, 301, 3ff.

in Christ's sanctifying presence. This identity is given and received in faith. Luther can sometimes describe this relationship by comparing it to what is said about the Ark in 1 Kings 8. Just as the Ark was covered and invisible, so the church is invisible. Just as the ends of the carrying-poles betrayed the presence of the Ark, so the marks reveal that the holy Christian people are present.

The marks, according to Luther, are certain, because without them, there can be no Christians and no church. The present Christ acts through these marks to save and to re-create. In this context Luther points to the Gospel as

the surest and most noble mark of the church, because it is through the Gospel that she is born, formed, nurtured and brought up, taught, clothed, beautified, strengthened, armed, preserved - in short, the whole life of the church is embraced by the Word of God.⁸

However, the superiority of the Word is affirmed, although not at the cost of baptism and communion. For Luther, the Word is the same as the promise. It is proclaimed through readings and sermons, and the same word of promise is also spoken at the baptismal font and the communion table, where the promise is confirmed by the water poured over the child's head, and the bread and wine distributed.

Luther develops his thinking about the marks of the church particularly in two fairly late works. One is entitled *On the Councils and the Church* and the other *Against Hans Wurst*.⁹ In the first Luther paints a scene which is typical for him as a priest and pastor: A person in deep anxiety appears. She has only one question, but one of utmost importance. She asks: Where do I find a holy, Christian people?¹⁰ Luther gives a sevenfold answer:

First, the holy Christian people are recognised in that they have the holy Word of God.... Because the Word of God is holy, and it sanctifies everything it touches, yes, it is in itself God's holiness. This is the power of God, which makes everyone who believe and trust therein holy (Rom 1:16; 1 Tim.4:5).¹¹

When Luther develops his first answer to the question put by this confused person, he refers to matters which I have already discussed above. The Word is powerful, creative and saving. It is not a book to which he refers, but to an

⁸ WA 7, 721, 9ff.

⁹ WA 50, 509-653; WA 51, 469-572.

¹⁰ WA 50, 628, 19ff.

¹¹ WA 50, 628, 29ff.

audible Word, 'preached orally by people like you and me'. But it is not only the preaching which is included, but also the 'oral Word, which is deeply trusted and publicly professed'.

It might be argued that Luther ought to have made a distinction between the Word of God and the creedal confession, which is of course human words. But Luther does not do that. And the reason is that he does not put God and man against each other in any simple kind of scheme, which only becomes complicated when trying to decide what and how much should be attributed to one or the other in the process of salvation. Luther begins with a Trinitarian perception of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and from a view of man as simultaneously old and new, as both sinner and justified. That implies that the confession of faith is both the work of the Spirit and of the new man. God and the new man cannot be contrasted to each other. The old man, however, puts up resistance right through life. Such is the underlying perception of God and of man, and this explains why Luther summarises his first answer in the way that he does:

Wherever you see or hear this Word being preached, believed, professed and lived, do not doubt that there you can be certain to find the one, true Ecclesia Sancta Catholica, the Christian holy people - even though there may be very few persons belonging to it. Because the Word of God cannot be fruitless. (Is 55:11)¹²

The two subsequent marks are the sacraments of baptism and holy communion:

Secondly, God's people, or the holy Christian people, is recognised through the sacrament of baptism, wherever that is taught, believed, and rightly practised according to the institution of Christ.¹³

Thirdly, the people of God, or the holy Christian people, is recognised by the sacrament of the altar, wherever it is properly distributed according to the institution of Christ, believed and received.¹⁴

These sacraments are also described as instrument of sanctification, which makes them into sure marks of recognition. Therefore both baptism and holy communion are unthinkable outside the church, just as the church is unthinkable without these marks.

Luther's reasoning contains some polemics, but it is nevertheless his pastoral

¹² WA 50, 629, 28ff.

¹³ WA 50, 630, 21ff

¹⁴ WA 50, 631, 6ff.

concerns which dominate the exposition. The answers may be thought out for a confused, despairing person. Concerning baptism and communion one aspect is particularly stressed, namely that there is no need to worry about who the officiant is, nor his moral standing. The sacraments do not belong to the minister who distributes them, but to the person who receives them. The validity of the sacrament does not depend on the holiness of the officiating minister (- an attitude which we recognise from the controversy with Donatism in the Early Church).

Luther summarises his points in the same way as previously. The despairing person, who sees baptism and the Eucharist being celebrated, taught and believed, can know for sure that there is the holy Christian people.

These three marks were found, as we have seen, already in Luther's early works. But now he goes further. The fourth mark is this:

The fourth mark, by which God's people, or the holy Christian people, is recognised by the (loosing and binding) keys, which they use publicly.¹⁵

Church discipline did not disappear with the Reformation. That would have been impossible, since it was regarded as a commandment of Christ, in accordance with Matt 18:15 et al. Here as well Luther can say that the church is never without its keys, and the keys never without the church. In addition he calls these also an instrument of sanctification and their use a mark of recognition. For Luther, the use of the keys do not aim at creating 'pure' congregations. That would be Donatism. They should rather be used for a pastoral purpose, which is the purpose for which they were given. Whoever lives in flagrant sin without any regrets at all must, for the sake of his / her salvation, be brought to awareness of this by the use of the binding keys. If he regrets his living and becomes a penitent, he shall be set free, e.g. he shall receive forgiveness.

We know that Luther seldom exercised church discipline. This reluctance may also be explained as a result of his pastoral concern. Not to use the keys would be poor pastoralia. So also the misuse of them. To excommunicate someone for the wrong reasons might mean driving a person to despair, and, in Luther's view, that is worst anyone could do to his / her neighbour. The responsibility rests with the pastor.

In his fifth answer Luther refers to the officers of the church, or rather, to the fact that the congregation sets apart some people for certain tasks:

¹⁵ WA 50, 631, 36ff.

The fifth mark by which the church is outwardly recognised is that it ordains, or calls the officers of the church, or in that it has ministers, who should be appointed.¹⁶

Luther regards even this act as an institution of Christ in accordance with the words in Eph.4:11, and thus as a sure mark of recognition. The purpose of the act is to create order in parochial worship and life. Luther stresses here also that the gift which is distributed through these servants and ministers is aimed at the person who receives it. The officers are instruments, neither more nor less. The church is the holy, Christian people, whose identity springs from the gifts which are received in faith. She is the hidden and as yet incomplete result of Christ's presence and still continuing work. Those who are entrusted with these ministries and offices are the particular instruments of this work. Therefore their service is indispensable. But they do not belong to the holy, Christian people by virtue of anything other than what applies equally to other people, i.e. by baptism and by faith.

Maybe Luther's thinking can be further clarified by using an example from the Old Testament; the story of Jonah and the city of Nineve. (This example is not Luther's, but mine). Jonah has been called by God to speak to Nineve. He fulfils his charge, though unwillingly. And the people of the city listen and turn to God. What, in this example, would, for Luther, correspond to the church? Not Jonah, in spite of his high charge, but the new Nineve, which had arisen as a consequence of the preaching of the Word. Which, then, are the marks that there really does exist a new Nineve? The answer must be this: The Word which had been spoken to Nineve, and the new attitude which is noticeable in the city, where people invoke God.

This example leads to the sixth mark of recognition which Luther determines:

The sixth mark, by which the holy Christian people is outwardly recognised by its prayer and its public worship of God by praise and thanksgiving. Where you see that the Our Father is prayed and taught, where psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are sung in accordance with the Word of God and the true faith, and wherever there is public teaching of the faith, the ten commandments and the catechism, there you can know for sure that the holy, Christian people of God is present.¹⁷

With reference to 1 Tim 4:5, prayer is also regarded as an instrument of sanctification. What was said about the credal confession applies equally to prayer. Luther's thinking is Trinitarian, and thus he feels no need of attributing

¹⁶ WA 50, 632, 35f.

¹⁷ WA 50, 641, 20ff.

to one or the other what happens between God and man.

The relationship between these marks has sometimes been described in such a way that the three first would be 'constitutive' but not the latter four. It is true that Luther often stresses these three, but he also regards the rest as 'instruments of sanctification'. The six different answers should either be regarded as different aspects of one and the same process, i.e. of what happens when the church is gathered for worship. It is the act of worship as such which is the sure and certain mark of recognition and the means of holiness!

The seventh mark does not change the impression that all these marks of recognition are united in the service.

The seventh mark, by which the holy Christian people is outwardly recognised is through the holy cross as the instrument of sanctification.¹⁸

The cross stands for both external persecution and contempt, and for internal anxiety and distress. Luther stresses that this refers to 'sufferings for the sake of Christ' (Matt 5:11). This mark belongs together with all the others. It is not possible to draw conclusions about the status of a Christian only from the suffering, which is carefully underlined.

When Luther summarises these seven marks, the stress, as already been indicated, is on unity. He also makes an interesting addition:

These are now the true seven main parts of this exalted means of holiness, through which the Holy Spirit works in us a daily sanctification and a new life in Christ. And by this, we fulfil the commands of first of the two stone tablets of Moses...¹⁹

True worship is that which fulfils the commandments which concern the relationship between God and man. Then there are additional marks, including those of the second tablet of the Ten Commandments, which concern the relationship between people. Luther does not regard these as certain marks, because God the creator inspires good works through all people. The brevity of the answer is probably due to a consideration of Luther's imagined addressee. The confused and despairing person is referred to the situation in which the Word is 'in use'.

So far Luther's work *On the Councils and the Church*. The second text, *Against Hans Wurst*, which follows a few years later, does not have the same pastoral character. Here Luther's aim is rather to defend the Evangelical con-

¹⁸ WA 50, 641, 35ff.

¹⁹ WA 50, 642, 32ff.

gregations against the accusation that they had separated themselves from 'the traditional, true church' and created 'a new, false church'. Luther's defence is structured in such a way as to show that the Evangelical congregations have everything essential in common with the traditional, true church. He also argues that it is the Roman Church which has digressed. He solves his first task by accounting for the marks of an Evangelical congregation and by showing that these all spring from the original church. The marks stated here are largely the same as in the previous work, although they are a few more in number and the order is somewhat different. Obedience and intercessions for those in authority, for example, have been added. The conclusion is: 'In all this we are reminiscent of the old church'.

How does Luther look at the Roman Church in this highly polemic work? He does not deny that the same list of marks can also be found in Rome (as in other places). What is wrong is not that one or another is lacking. Rather, Rome has too much, namely additions which have no correspondence in the Early Church. This may not seem very serious. Luther would agree with that, in so far as it is only a case of outward practices, which may be continued or abandoned, but Luther's reasoning on this is the same as on the issue of the primacy of the Pope. It is not the new things as such, but the claims which attend them, which make them anything but harmless. These claims imply the obscuring of the true means of holiness, and thus people are led to trust, not in the grace of God in Christ, but in something else:

For a start, you do not stay with the first, the old baptism. Rather, you have thought up so many new baptisms and you teach that the first baptism has been lost through sin.²⁰

Luther refers all works of satisfaction to this contempt of baptism. The idea that baptism is insufficient and needs complementing is 'the source and origin of all misuse in the papacy'. Thereafter follows a list of a number of 'new baptisms' such as indulgence, the use of holy water and salt, pilgrimages, brotherhoods, the worship of the saints etc. And after each point there is a refrain:

Who has commanded anything such? Where is it written? Where do you find that in the Early Church?²¹

When reading Luther's very polemical statements, one might object that he exaggerates considerably and does not do justice to the thinking behind these practices. They are of course never intended as a substitute for baptism. At the

²⁰ WA 51, 487, 9ff.

²¹ WA 51, 488, 10f and 15f; 489, 4f, 10f and 16f etc.

same time, Luther's pastoral concern must be understood. Whatever the theologians have thought, these practices threaten to obscure or contradict what really makes a person a Christian, and that in which she must put her trust, not least in times of tribulation. That is in fact what happens when the pilgrimage to Compostella or admission to a Brotherhood is perceived as the turning point in a person's Christian life. Then these practices are not longer harmless. This was precisely Luther's experience when Tetzl, the trader in indulgences, was at work in the vicinity of Wittenberg. To begin with Luther did not attack the theology of indulgence, but its effect on the parishioners. Indulgence obscured the free offer of grace, and as a consequence, people put higher trust in the piece of paper they had bought than in the baptism they had received.²² Later on Luther would also disapprove of the entire theology behind the indulgences, since he saw it as contradictory to the Gospel.

Thus, Luther did not turn against new things as such. It all depends on the claims which attend them, and on how they are related to what has really been commanded, and on their effect on people. His reasoning can be summarised in these principles: Anything that encourages the Gospel and the faith is permitted and desirable. Whatever is contradictory to the Gospel or obscures it is prohibited and harmful. That which does neither the one nor the other may be either continued or abandoned.

Even when the conflict is sharpened and has been confirmed, Luther still defends what might be called 'Evangelical Catholicism'. The stress, it should be noted, is on both words. When the doctrine of the marks of the church is developed in the way that Luther does, the marks are no cause for self-glorification and triumphalism. These marks cannot function only as confirmation of personal excellence and of other people's deficiencies. They do of course have a critical function, but that criticism must be directed towards one's own parish life as well. The marks should encourage self-critical examination. They may also have a heuristic function, in the sense that they may help us to find fellow-Christians in spite of all our outward differences. That is how it must be, if, like Luther, one sees the identity of the church, not as something to possess and dispose of, but as a given identity, as something which the church receives in the meeting with the living God. That is what constitutes her as a holy, Christian people.

²² Cf Luther's letter to the Archbishop of Mainz from the 31st of October 1517, that is the very day when the theses were nailed on the door to the Castle Church. WA Br 1, 111, 17f.

4.2 The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.

Ecclesiology is treated particularly in the articles 7 and 8, which have later been given the rubrics 'On the Church' and 'What the Church is'. These rubrics are somewhat misleading. Article 7 already answers the question of what the church is and also the question of where she is. As usual, this article is introduced by a reference to the common position of the Evangelical congregations:

Further, they teach the doctrine, that one holy church shall remain for ever. But that is the communion of saints, where the Gospel is proclaimed purely and the sacraments rightly distributed. And for the church to be truly one, it is enough to be united on the issue of the proclamation of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments. It is not necessary that inherited human regulations or religious practices, or outward, humanly determined, forms of worship should be the same everywhere. St Paul says: One faith, one baptism, one God who is the Father of us all... etc.²³

Anyone of good memory will notice that I have made a new translation of certain passages, and I will presently explain why. First, we may note that the unity of the church is strongly emphasised. It is not the indefinite article, but the number 'one' (una) that is used about the church, just as in the creeds. That fits very well with the 'Evangelical catholicity' which is a significant mark of the Reformation. The church is 'the Kingdom of Christ', or 'the People of Christ' and it exists and remains 'for ever' only one, even though she is dispersed throughout the whole world.

This one church is further ascribed as 'the communion of saints, in which the Gospel is proclaimed purely and the sacraments rightly distributed'. Here I have made two changes.

First of all, I rather use "communion" than "congregation", since the latter word tends to lead astray. The time of the Reformers was, unlike ours, pre-confessional.²⁴ They did not yet speak in terms of denominations. The word has to be understood theologically. I will return to this.

Secondly, it seems to me that it is more correct to speak of the 'distribution' of the sacraments rather than of their 'administration'. The Latin word is 'administrare'. When that word was used about the sacraments at that time, it had the meaning of 'distribution' or 'giving a share to someone'. The German text

²³ BELK 67, p. 61.

²⁴ Leif Grane, *Confessio Augustana*, Stockholm 1967, p. 76.

clearly means the same, when it says that the sacraments 'are distributed' (dargereicht werden). The first Swedish version of the Augsburg Confession, used at the Synod of Uppsala in 1593, use the phrase 'properly used' (rett brukhade warda)²⁵ The modern word 'administer' has taken on a meaning like 'to be handling', 'to be responsible for', and this association does not give due weight to the mutuality of the activity, i.e. that someone is baptised, or that someone receives the bread and wine of communion is not made sufficiently clear. The structure of the entire seventh article also makes it clear that it is the use of the sacrament which is emphasised, and this use is stressed in contrast to such 'uses or forms of worship' which do not necessarily have to be the same in every place.

In the passage about what is required for the unity of the church, I have chosen the phrase 'the proclamation of the Gospel' rather than 'the doctrine of the Gospel'. My reasons are similar to the previous case. The German text speak of 'the sermon', and the Latin has 'doctrina', which, in the use of the reformers included 'usus', e.g. 'the preaching' of the Gospel. Both words are possible, but the modern concept of 'doctrine' does not imply any activity.

Are these new translations important? Yes, they are, if they clarify the identity of the church as the holy, Christian people, and as a sanctified community, which is totally dependent on God's work. In this perspective, the church is not the 'means' but the result of salvation, the as yet hidden and only partially fulfilled result of the presence of God, of God's continuing work in order to 'draw the world back to himself'. By Word and sacrament the Holy Spirit inspires faith and incorporates a person into that community in which alienation is overcome.

It is also stated that the Gospel should be proclaimed and the sacraments distributed 'purely' (pure) and 'rightly' (recte). How should these attributes be interpreted? And what would be the result of an 'impure' proclamation and a 'wrong' distribution? The attributes must be interpreted against the background of what has been described as Luther's ambition, i.e. to clarify 'the joyful exchange' in the service. This takes place through the proclamation, the voicing aloud, of the word of promise, the use of the crucial pronouns etc. all for the purpose that the gift may be received in faith. The opposite I would describe in agreement with the exposition of Regin Prenter:

'Pure' is contrasted to 'impure', i.e. to what is mixed. The Lutheran reformers warned strongly against a particular mixing, which could easily happen when the Gospel was

²⁵ Confessio fidei, Uppsala mötes beslut 1593 om Svenska kyrkans bekännelse, med kommentarer av P E Persson och L Eckerdal, Borås 1993, p. 28.

proclaimed, namely the mixing of 'Law' and 'Gospel'. The Law is that Word of God which demands everything from us; the Gospel is that Word of God which gives us everything. When the grace of God is made dependent on anything that we do, on our preparations for receiving it, or on 'what we get from grace', then the Gospel is mixed with the Law. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is pure Gospel. Its truth and grace cannot be made dependent on anything which belongs to us, who hear it.²⁶

The Word and the sacraments are means of grace and instruments of sanctification. As such, they are also marks of recognition. That is why the seventh article also answers the question of where the church is, even though Melanchthon was less explicit than Luther in this respect. The risk in Melanchthon's short expressions is that the emphasis is placed on the ordained ministers, since the proclamation of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments depends on them. Luther, as we have seen, could enumerate several means of sanctification, for example prayer and praise. Thereby was included not only the royal priesthood of all believers, all the baptised and all who believe, but the possibility of a Trinitarian interpretation of what takes place when the congregation is gathered for worship was also increased.

In the eight article a, from the perspective of church history, classical issue about the validity of the sacraments when distributed by impious clergy, was debated. The church is certainly the communion of saints and the fellowship of true believers, but she also includes hypocrites and liars. And even priests are among the latter. We recognise the issue from St Augustine's controversy with the Donatists, who refused to recognise a bishop because he had been consecrated by a 'traditor' i.e. by someone who had betrayed the church by handing over holy books during the persecutions. The term 'Donatists' later became a description for every movement which strove for 'pure' congregations. When the Donatists are condemned towards the end of this article, we have reason to interpret this as a reference to the Fanatics of the Reformation period. Melanchthon solves the problem in an Augustinian manner by stressing that the effect of the sacraments does not depend on the quality of the priest but on the institution and commandment of Christ. That fits well with the opinion voiced by Luther (reported on above), namely that the sacraments belongs to the person who receives them and not to the person who conducts them.

²⁶ Regin Prenter, *Kirkens lutherske bekendelse*, Fredericia 1978, p. 81.

5 A Gospel close to Home.

5.1 Renewal in Daily Life.

The reformers' interpretation of the Christian faith and the Christian life may properly be described as 'close to home' in sharpest contrast to all those interpretations of Christianity rich in myths of pilgrimages, where creatureliness was treated with contempt and avoided. Some of these 'close-to-home' features have already been touched on in the previous chapters, especially the obvious tendency to express salvation in terms of creation. The liberating work of Christ is described as a 'new creation', and the church is called 'the new creation of the Gospel'. etc. Luther's language shows an obvious connection between creation and salvation, between worship and everyday life. 'The use of the Gospel' seems to include and give meaning to what takes place in ordinary life as well.

A good starting-point for a closer analysis of the reformer's view of everyday life and its relation to worship is provided by the view of God which is hinted at in the previously quoted phrase: 'That is called a true God, who does not take, but gives'. Luther says that with a view not only to life on earth, but to eternal life as well. Man receives life - ordinary daily life - from the hand of God. And just as God gives and sustains this life, so he also gives 'eternal life and unending righteousness in Christ'. There is also a clear analogy between God's 'distribution' in creation and God's 'distribution' in the service. The God of creation and the God of salvation is the same God, whose nature is distinguished by his self-giving.

The phrase 'the wonderful now of the Reformation' is therefore characteristic also of the view of creation. The process of creation still continues, and according to the reformers' interpretation of the Bible, it cannot be reduced to a completed act in the past. The emphasis is on the actuality of creation, just as in the explanation of the first article of the creed in Luther's *Small Catechism*:

I believe that God has created me and all other beings, that he has given me body and soul, eyes, ears and all my limbs, my mind and all my senses, and that he still sustains me; also that he supports me, richly and daily, with clothes, food, house and home and all the things that I need for the sustenance of life, and also that he protects and keeps me from harm, danger and everything evil...¹

¹ BELK 67, p. 510f.

The feature of the present moment is frequently repeated in the sermons as well, whenever the texts give a reason for it. In a sermon on Trinity Sunday Luther contrasts God's work of creation with the work of a carpenter:

God has not created the world in the same way as a carpenter does who builds a house and then goes away and lets it stand there. No, God remains and sustains everything that he has made as he has made it. Otherwise it would neither be able to stand nor to remain in place.²

The image of God as a carpenter, who leaves the house when he has completed his work, would in time become the normal image in the Europe of the Enlightenment, but that has nothing in common with Luther's perception of God. The distanced god of the carpenter-image might possibly be useful as an explanation of the origin of creation, but it also leaves the field open for modern man to rummage around in the house himself.

In Luther's perception, God is present in creation - in life, in all its rich variety. This understanding of life is pre-supposed in everything he writes, even though it is not always clearly stated. The most obvious development of this thought is perhaps the work on the Eucharist (!) against Zwingli from 1527, where Luther has reason to interpret the meaning of the biblical and creedal references to 'the right hand of God'³. These words are here understood as an allusion to God's almighty power and omnipresence. God's powerful presence cannot be limited to any particular place. That would imply God's absence from other places. God is at work in everything and everywhere, creating and sustaining. In the work on the Eucharist Luther refers to a number of biblical passages, from both the Old and the New Testament, for example Act 17, where it says that 'in God we live and move and have our being', as a basis for this interpretation of life.⁴

God's presence in creation does not mean that man can learn to know God only from creation. God hides himself in creation. This thought also runs through Luther's exposition, for example in his lectures on the Book of Genesis:

The whole of creation is God's disguise. Here wisdom is required in order to distinguish God himself from such a disguise. The world does not possess this wisdom. Therefore it cannot distinguish the Lord from such a disguise.⁵

² WA 21, 521, 20-25.

³ WA 23, 133, 19ff.

⁴ WA 23, 135, 12-33.

⁵ WA 40 I, 174, 12ff.

Already early on, in the Heidelberg-disputation in 1518, Luther dismisses, in a few pregnant phrases, every attempt to draw sensible conclusions 'from the works' (ex opera) to God in his invisible majesty.⁶ He calls such a theology 'theologia gloriae', a speculative theology of glory, which attempts to find God 'apart from the cross' (sine cruce). It is an instance of human self-assertion and leads astray. God is present everywhere, but God does not let himself be found everywhere.

The true theologian is however, says Luther, the one who begins with 'posteriora Dei' i.e. with 'that which is behind God'. That is a strange expression. Luther finds it in the story of how Moses asks to see the Glory of God, but is only allowed to see 'the back of God', (Ex 33:17ff). For Luther, this is a reference to the cross of Christ. On the cross, God reveals himself, although under a contrast (sub contrario). There is nothing about the cross that people normally associates with God. There power is hidden in weakness, wisdom in foolishness. And yet, that is the only place where man can get to know God. When that happens, man speaks rightly of God: he is a 'theologus crucis' a theologian of the cross, whose message about God is the Word of the cross.

The theology of the cross may seem as a denial of the life of creation, but the truth is in fact the very opposite. It is only in the light of the cross that creation is also properly illuminated. The God who reveals himself as self-giving love is the same God from whose hand I 'richly and daily' receive my life. Thus, Luther can say:

Whoever knows God also knows, comprehends and loves creation.⁷

These lines are found in Luther's *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. His interpretation of the stories of creation and of the fall provides opportunity to gain further insight into his thought about the connection between creation and salvation, worship and daily life.

The interpretation of man's situation before the fall moves mainly around the concepts of 'image' and 'original justice'. The latter, like the term 'original sin' is not a biblical concept. With this phrase Luther does not really mean anything more than what is already included in his interpretation of the biblical word 'image'. Both these expressions refer to man's original excellence, and Luther describes this in quite a naive manner as perfect sight, perfect hearing etc. However, Luther does not puts the emphasis on that, but rather on what he sees as a perfect relationship to God. Two quotes from his lectures on the

⁶ WA 1, 353-374.

⁷ WA 43, 276, 27f.

Book of Genesis may serve to illustrate his thought:

Therefore, I understand the (concept of) the image of God thus, that Adam possess it by nature. He has not only known God, and believed that God was good, but he has also lived a completely devout life. That means that he lived without the fear of death or of any other danger, and that he has been content to rest in the grace of God...⁸

But if you want to follow Moses, we could say that the original justice refers to the fact that man has been righteous, true and honest, not only outwardly in his body, but primarily inwardly in his soul, that he has known God, joyfully obeyed him and has understood his work by himself, without the instruction of anyone else... It also belongs to this original justice that Adam loved God with all his heart and out of pure inclination; just as he lived in peace among all the other creatures....⁹

Even in this state of paradise, worship was offered. Luther describes 'the tree of knowledge' as 'Adam's altar and pulpit'.¹⁰ There man should pay God due reverence and obedience, learn to know the Word and Will of God, offer his thanksgiving and invoke God against all temptations.

Luther's interpretation of the fall should be understood against the background of the main point of his interpretation of the original state and of 'original sin' as loss of 'original justice', which was a reference to the close and perfect relationship between God and man. It is not the case that damage has been done primarily to human 'nature'. For the concept of nature does not structure Luther's way of thinking and speaking about human life. He speaks in terms of relationships between God and man and between human beings. He does not speak of man 'as such', simply because no human being 'as such' exists. A person's identity cannot be described regardless of his / her surroundings and of what is brought into his / her life from outside, from God and through other people. Adam's 'loss of identity' is consequently described as a transformation because of his alienation from God:

Because sin is itself a real departure from God...¹¹

Thus it follows, that he is no longer the same Adam as he was before, but he has been transformed and has become another man.¹²

To Adam's disbelief belongs fear, which Luther underlines again and again,

⁸ WA 42, 47, 8-11.

⁹ WA 42, 86, 3-13.

¹⁰ WA 42, 72, 20ff.

¹¹ WA 42, 129, 33f.

¹² WA 42, 130, 17ff.

and often with reference to Matt 26:36 about 'a rustling leaf which is blown about by the wind' and which causes fear, which in turn leads to flight. Or to evil. Fear nurtures evil inclinations and alienation becomes enmity. That means that the fall caused by man affects the whole of creation. The fear of God has been exchanged for fear of that which there is no need to fear, and trust in God has been exchanged for self-made certainties. All this is implied in the saying that 'Adam has been transformed and has become another man'.

If we want to do justice to the nature of the damage and its extensiveness, the definition of some particular aspect of man as especially lacking or damaged, is insufficient. Luther sharply criticised the interpretation of the 'sophists', who reduced original sin to something mainly associated with sexuality, namely to 'fornication and licentiousness'. That, like other such things, is an expression of the perverted attitude of 'seeking one's own in everything'. The basic damage is the alienation which marks human life as a whole. Therefore the fall can also be described as the cessation of worship.

The story of creation and of the fall affirms Luther's interpretation that life is continuously given and always under threat. God sustains his creation by defending and restoring it in the fight against the destructive powers which threaten to destroy it. In this context Luther speaks of a spiritual and a worldly government. Both - it should be noted - are God's governments.

In the spiritual government God works through the preaching of the Word and the distribution of the sacraments for the restoration of 'the image' and of the original relationship between God and man. This cannot happen by anything less than man's becoming yet again 'another' and his being sustained as such. That is what happens through the new birth of baptism and through the communion at the Lord's table.

For in baptism we become Christ's brothers and sisters and the children of God, and we are given a share in everything that belongs to Christ our brother, both in his eternal kingdom and in his perfect priesthood.¹³

Nobody can become anything more than that. Before God there are no distinctions - no superiority nor any subjection.

That is however not the case between people in the worldly government. There variety and differences prevail. Here God acts through the worldly authorities, in order that, through their legislation, the effects of evil may be limited and the life which has been given protected. That which is achieved by these means Luther calls 'civil justice', i.e. a decent life, shared between peo-

¹³ WA 49, 609, 29ff.

ple in society. For this, more than governors and legislators is required. The good life is promoted by all those tasks which God, as creator, puts before a person at work and in the family. Life is quite simply such, that one person must serve another and vice versa, in order that life may continue. 'We are each others' daily bread' says Luther. That sounds like a devout wish, but he probably intends his phrase as a statement of fact. Mutual dependence belongs (literally) to the given contingencies of life.

When Luther speaks of all the humdrum tasks of daily life, in which one person is always dependent on another, he calls them 'vocations', 'states' or 'ministries'. The word 'vocation' (vocatio, Beruf) was traditionally reserved for the monastic vocation. Luther's language must therefore have been perceived as a profanation, but he himself intended the exact opposite. The daily tasks are certainly 'worldly', but from his perspective they are equally 'spiritual' concerns:

First make sure that you believe in Christ and are baptised. Then you should consider your ministry and your vocation. I am called to preach... If you are a father or a mother...take good care of the tasks at home and in the kitchen. All these are holy deeds, because you are called to that. That is a holy life which is lived according to the Word of God and to one's vocation.¹⁴

Times have changed. the word 'vocation' or 'calling' has again been dismissed to the sphere of the church (and maybe of nursing). And Luther's statement is perceived today as no more than a divine legitimisation of a static society. And maybe that is how it seems, unless the link between life 'according to the Word of God and to one's vocation' is further clarified.

The variety and difference in status and vocations corresponds to different human needs and has as its purpose the promotion of the mutually good life. People serve each other in different ways and thereby contribute to each other's course of life. If the deeds are done in love, there is always an aspect of variation. Love's actions find manifold expression, even some which break old and familiar patterns, since love masters all laws. Basic trust in the restored friendship with God sets a Christian person free to allow the details of his / her calling to be ruled by the actual needs and requirements of his / her neighbour. This gives a dynamic aspect to the living out of one's vocation, which does not exempt from, but rather underlines, mutual responsibility.

Thus the reformers can describe the connection between worship and service of one's neighbour. Faith is made incarnate in the actions of one's vocation. However, faith, as distinct from vocation, does not reside with every person,

¹⁴ Cf. Gustaf Wingren, *Luthers lära om kallelsen*, Lund 1942/Artos 1993.

does it? What is the implication of that? It is true that vocation is 'a worldly matter' which does not require the faith. The creator inspires good works for the preservation of life, even in those who lack the faith. Wherein, then, does the difference consist?

One difference we have already mentioned, i.e. the difference in the interpretation of daily life as vocation which springs from faith and lack of faith, respectively. 'Whoever knows God also knows creation and loves it', Luther could say. Faith recognises and rejoices in the presence of the Creator and in the work which takes place. God hides himself in his action as behind a mask, which faith, but not the lack of faith, penetrates.

Another difference concerns the interpretation of all the difficulties and worries of life as vocation. A life of responsibility for other people is not always easy to cope with. Those without faith find no meaning in such a life and therefore want to escape their calling. Faith, on the other hand, interprets the difficulties as 'the cross of the calling', i.e. as through death to life. The old man, who in everything seeks his own, dies away in order that the new man may grow and increase. The life of vocation is, in other words, the baptismal life. The meaning of baptism is realised in daily life in service of one's neighbour.

Luther's criticism of the contemporary monastic life should be understood against this background. It is (once again) not the practice in itself that Luther criticises, but its attendant claim. When monastic life began to count as a more perfect life before God, then an aspect of differentiation has been introduced into the sphere in which all Christians are equal. All together, they make up the royal priesthood, which is holy by virtue of baptism and the faith. As distinct from the world of vocations, there is here no difference of any kind. And nothing whatsoever can be added to that which the Christian receives as a gift from God. Still to want to add something becomes for Luther an instance of presumptuousness, of a striving after righteousness through good deeds. The deeds in question are always self-chosen as distinct from those which God has prepared for the person following his / her vocation. That means that the neighbour is bereft of that which duly belongs to him/her, while God is given something which he neither needs or nor has commanded.

As a parallel to monastic life, Luther often puts forward matrimonial life. The reason is of course intimately connected with the importance which his opponents attached to the celibate life. Like priests and bishops, the religious also made vows of chastity, and this was accounted as particularly valuable before God. As the biblical basis for such an evaluation, 1 Cor 7 was often quoted. An example is found in the controversial pamphlet of 1522 which the Humanist Johann Faber directed at Luther and his contempt for the spiritual state

and the celibate life. In his reply, which was published the following year, Luther gives his own interpretation of the scriptural passages quoted.¹⁵ He says that he has certainly no contempt for the celibate life, but that he cannot interpret the biblical passages in any other way than that to see that life as a gift, which only a few people have received. Since it is a matter of a gift, such a life cannot be put forward as particularly meritorious before God and it should not be linked to any making of vows. The vast majority, who lack this gift, will only be bound in their consciences through such vows.

Marriage, however, can never be praised enough, according to Luther. In his reply to Faber he laid the foundation for the view of marriage which he later developed, not least in sermons and catechisms. In the commentary to the sixth commandment in the *Large Catechism* he explained that marriage is not only comparable to all other civil states, but that 'it is before and above them all, be they emperors, governors, bishops or whatever'.¹⁶ In a sermon on John 2:1-11 (the wedding at Cana) on the first Sunday after Epiphany, he called marriage 'the wellspring and source' of all other vocations and states.¹⁷

In spite of all his high praise of marriage, Luther does not deny all the worries which comes with this increased responsibility. At the same time he wants to show that even the cares and problems may be a source of goodness. Marriage is 'a school in Christianity' which, because of its attendant difficulties, drives the partners to prayer and work, to hope and trust in God. And precisely in this lay the thought of man as 'the image of God' according to Luther's interpretation.

5.2 The Markings and Clarifications in the Augsburg Confession.

Several articles deal with matters which concern ordinary, daily life. Among these is article 18 on free will. Maybe someone would have expected an article on the opposite - on the bondage of the will? That, after all is the title of Luther's work in the controversy with Erasmus, who argued in favour of the free will. And now from the camp of the reformers, there is talk of the free will. How should that be interpreted. The matter is in fact not as contradictory

¹⁵ WA 12, 92-142 (Das siebente Kapitel S. Pauli zu den Korithern, 1523)

¹⁶ BELK 67, p. 613.

¹⁷ WA 52, 115, 18f.

as it may seem at first. It all depends on the context in which the state of the will is discussed.

For the reformers, the will is bound in relation to God, i.e. in matters of salvation. That argument was Luther's purpose in the debate with Erasmus, who wanted to leave at least a small space for the human will to receive or reject the grace of God. For Luther, this was an impossible position. It would have meant that man would be able to contribute to his salvation, although with a very minor part. Such a view misleads people to trust in their own will and not in unconditional grace alone. Such a person remains - also in his / her devotion - 'incurbed upon himself'. The purpose behind the talk of the will bound in slavery is nothing other than the purpose behind the talk of justification through faith alone for the sake of Christ. So far the context of man's relation to God.

When it comes to relations between people, the reformers can speak of some freedom of the will. Now the ultimate purpose does not concern salvation, but the possibilities of creating a decent society:

About the free will they teach that the human will is to some extent free to achieve social justice and to choose between those things about which the mind can make judgement. However it has no power without the help of the Holy Spirit to achieve the righteousness which God requires, nor spiritual justice, for an 'unspiritual' person does not receive that which belongs to the Spirit of God, but this righteousness arise in the heart, when the Holy Spirit is given through the Word.¹⁸

The difference between a persons relationship to God and to his / her neighbour is also fundamental to everything that the reformers say about faith and actions. If this difference is not borne in mind, the reformer's opinion is (deliberately or unconsciously) misunderstood. And then the reformers may be accused of neglecting good works. That criticism was obviously so common at the time that Melanchthon found it appropriate to refute it already in the introduction to article 20:

Our people are unjustly accused of prohibiting good deeds.¹⁹

It is true that the reformers have nothing positive to say about human actions - in relation to God and for the purpose of salvation. That is the sphere of the Gospel and of faith, and actions do not belong there. But justification by faith alone does not make actions unimportant. I certainly do not need them for my salvation, but my neighbour needs them for his / her life. There place is, just

¹⁸ BELK 67, p. 73.

¹⁹ BELK 67, p. 75.

like the freedom of the will, the mutual life which human beings share with one another. Deeds are good, when they are carried out on God's command and for the benefit of one's neighbour. That is not two criteria but one and the same. What God has commanded is precisely such good deeds which further the good life for other people, and especially for those who lack most things themselves.

Melanchthon does not fully develop this thought either in article 20 or in article 6, which also considers faith and actions. Contention against justification by works dominates to the detriment of what could (ought) otherwise have been said about the rightful place of actions and their value in relation to the neighbour's needs. For probably the same reasons, the dynamics between faith and actions are not very clearly articulated either, at least not compared to Luther's treatment of this theme in, for example, *Preface to the Letter to Romans*. There Luther describes faith as 'a courageous trust in the grace of God' which without any force at all makes man 'willing and inclined to do good to every man, to serve every person and to suffer everything'²⁰ Against that background Melanchthon's wording certainly seems rather more restrained:

They teach further, that this faith should bring forth good fruits, and that a believer should perform good deeds, as commanded by God, because that is the will of God, and not that we should believe that we earn righteousness before God through these deeds.²¹

The love which man enjoys through the Gospel awakens faith and brings to birth good deeds in the service of one's neighbour. That is the connection between faith and actions. But the process meets with resistance, not least from the old man. A Christian is simultaneously both the old and the new man. Maybe it is with this resistance in mind that Melanchthon is so restrained in his wording?

The proper context for the actions commanded by God is the sphere of vocation, in which one person is dependent on another. Life as vocation receives no further exposition in the Augsburg Confession. When it is mentioned, the statements are directly connected to the controversies with both the Fanatics and with Rome.

Melanchthon is keen to stress against the Fanatics that the Reformation does not legitimise an over-throw of the social order. Article 16 underlines that lawful, civil ordinances are 'God's good work' and, as a Christian, a person

²⁰ WA DB 7, 10, 16ff.

²¹ BELK 67, p. 60.

can very properly accept offices in society. The Gospel is an matter of 'purity of heart', which does not undermine the state and the family.²² The fact that groups of Fanatics might argue in favour of a revolution in society from the basis of the idea of the thousand-year-kingdom has probably led Melanchthon to add article 17 about the return of Christ and final judgement, where every hint at 'the masterdom of the devout' is refuted.²³

Nor does the Reformation movement aim at an over-throw of the ecclesiastical order. That is particularly stressed in article 14, which states that nobody 'who has not been properly called (rite vocatus) should preach officially in church or distribute the sacraments'.²⁴ This article met no contradiction from the opponents, probably because it was possible to read the Roman Catholic view of the ordained ministry into this short phrase. Even so, it must be added that there is something deeply significant of the Reformation precisely in the concentration on the sermon and the distribution of the sacraments as part of an article about the order of the church.

There are good reasons to point out to the present-day reader that the vocation referred to here is not what is nowadays often called 'the inward vocation' (vocatio interna) but always the 'external confirmation' (vocatio externa). For the reformers God's calling obviously came through external, human instruments, primarily through the bishop and the congregation. This was, as Luther says, a 'mediated' (mediata) vocation as distinct from the 'immediate' (immediata) vocation of the apostles. The increased emphasis on the internal vocation is a feature of modern life, and it presupposes that God is no longer as clearly connected with external life.

Even Rome is accused of creating 'disorder' both in society and in the church. Here it is not the case, as with the Fanatics, that the orders are dissolved. The criticism is rather directed to the mixing of the spiritual and the worldly governments, which has disastrous consequences:

Previously much has been written about the power of the bishops. Here some people have disastrously mixed up spiritual and worldly power. And this mix up has caused many great wars and tremendous uproar, because the popes have not only introduced new forms of worship... but they have also sought to exercise power over royal crowns and left emperors bereft of their realms.²⁵

²² BELK 67, p. 70f.

²³ BELK 67, p. 72.

²⁴ BELK 67, p. 69.

²⁵ BELK 67, p. 120.

The church has no other 'instrument of power' than the proclamation of the Word and the distribution of the sacraments for the eternal benefit of the people. The primary task of the worldly government is to protect 'the bodies and the bodily things against obvious injustices'.²⁶

The exercise of worldly power by the bishops is however not the only mark of the disorder which emerges when the order commanded by God is set aside in favour of human ordinances and self-appointed tasks. In some articles even other marks of the same disorder are criticised. In article 23 the prohibition against clergy marriages is attacked and in article 27 the making of monastic vows.²⁷ The arguments are similar in both cases; built on references to biblical passages and examples from the order of the Early Church. Marriage is presented as God's good ordinance which 'no human law nor any vow can overturn'. The celibate life is for those who have been given that gift. Monastic vows and devout practices do not provide an acceptable motivation for accounting to the monks a more perfect state (status perfectionis):

For Christian perfection consists of seriously fearing God and still having a great faith and trusting, for the sake of Christ, that we have been reconciled to God.²⁸

To this Melanchthon adds that the Christian also expects God's help in the various tasks of his / her vocation. Christian perfection does not exclude life in the world; rather it includes this life as a life of vocation. All the human rules and regulations for a 'devout' life are therefore not only a threat to salvation, but also to the service of one's neighbour:

But the divine commandments in accordance with their vocation they did not praise; that a father of a family brought up and nurtured his brood, that a mother gave birth to her children, that a governor ruled his country. That was considered worldly and imperfect deeds...²⁹

Not much more is said in the Augsburg Confession about renewal in everyday life and about daily life as vocation. It is at least clearly said that the good life between people belongs to God's will and work - 'to draw the world back to himself'.

The deliberations in Augsburg in the summer of 1530 did not lead to unity in spite of all the efforts, not least on the part of Melanchthon. His worry during

²⁶ BELK 67, p. 122.

²⁷ BELK 67, p. 86ff and 110ff.

²⁸ BELK 67, p. 117.

²⁹ BELK 67, p. 102.

the entire process is a sharp contrast to the carefree, light-hearted attitude to the outcome of the 'Reichtag' which Luther betrayed in his letters from Coburg. One looks in vain for any tactical instructions in those letters. However, Luther is deeply worried about Melancthon's anxiety and distress. He writes as a pastor, hoping to comfort and encourage. Thus Luther saw his own vocation. Early in the autumn the reformers returned home to that life of worship and daily cares which they had attempted, as best they could, to report on, clarify and defend. They had no intention of giving up their thoughts of 'what has so far been proclaimed among us', because they perceived the concern, which they represented, as just and true.

ABSTRACT

In Melanchthon's house in Wittenberg visitors of our days can read the following lines on a sign: "Without a knowledge of history human life is really no more than a remaining childhood, it could also be said that it is no more than a continuous darkness and blindness".

What happened in Wittenberg almost 500 years ago is definitely history. Does it concern us at all?

The history of the Reformation is certainly important for us to know about, as it had such big after-effects, not least for Sweden and the Church of Sweden. It is not the only cause for entering deeply into this part of our heritage, though. Our heritage of belief is rich and may contain unused possibilities for the Church of today, such as may be of help in the basic task of interpreting the Gospel for our time.

This book is an attempt to emphasize the most central part of the evangelical movement - its very core. It refers how this movement was inspired by Luther, how it was expressed in the congregations, and how it made markings in the confession that was read out to the emperor at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530.

Key words:

Christianity, dogmatics, Christ, salvation, faith, history, history of science

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