Educating Pastors at the Time of the Reformation

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The Lutheran Reformation was centered in a university with a theological professor as its prime mover. Although the Reformation contributed to social and political changes, Luther's efforts were aimed at reforming the church doctrinally. He was primarily concerned with the salvation of sinners by God's grace alone through faith alone. He taught that the Bible reveals Christ as our only Savior and proclaims his sacrifice as all-sufficient for the sins of the world. The Holy Scriptures reveal all we need to know for faith and life. There is no other infallible source of divine revelation. He wanted these truths taught to everyone. Christian education was essential to his reforming activities.

Luther is well known for his emphasis on the careful instruction of the youth. His work at reforming his university is no less impressive. This essay will focus on the Reformation's impact on ministerial education, particularly as it relates to the theological requirements for the office of pastor. We will briefly consider pastoral training at the dawn of the Reformation, Luther's own theological training, key emphases of the Lutheran Reformation, the transformation of the University of Wittenberg, and Luther's suggestions for ministerial education to see how pastoral education changed. We will note that the essence of the Reformation's educational program for pastors remains in our synod's ministerial education system today.

The Training of Parish Priests in the Middle Ages

For centuries priests received their training for the parish ministry either in monasteries or in cathedral schools. The latter were the forerunners of the European universities.

The monastic system historically played an important role in preserving ancient manuscripts and classical learning. The monasteries also served as a source of bishops, pastors, and teachers. In the Augsburg Confession Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) lamented the change that had occurred over the centuries.

> What happened later on in the monasteries? In former times they were schools of Holy Scripture and of other subjects useful to the church; bishops and pastors were taken from there. Now everything is different, and it is unnecessary to present an account of what is

well known. In former times they were suitable places for learning. Now people pretend that this kind of life was instituted to merit grace and righteousness.[1]

The cathedral school was an equally important institution for the training of priests. These schools emphasized the seven liberal arts as the basis for a good education. The trivium included grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The quadrivium was comprised of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The schools were also intended to acquaint students with Christian doctrine and to enable them to participate intelligently in worship. By the dawn of the Reformation this system of training parish priests was in serious decline. The nineteenth century historian, August Neander (1789-1850), made this observation:

> The majority of the clergy who came in immediate contact with the people, possessed no other qualification for their office than a certain skill and expertness in performing the ceremonies of the Church. The liturgical element would thus of necessity tend continually to acquire an undue predominance, suiting as it did the prevalent idea of the priesthood; while the didactic element—an element so important for promoting the religious knowledge which was so neglected among the people—would, on the other hand, retreat more and more into the background.[2]

Recent Roman Catholic sources echo Neander's observation.

> With the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of the universities, this ancient system of clerical formation [cathedral schools] became either impoverished or generally abandoned. As a result, a large segment of the late medieval and pre-Reformation clergy received inadequate training and were very often ordained for an office they were not sufficiently equipped to exercise.[3]

While rural and village priests received minimal training for the pastoral ministry, court preachers and church prelates could be university trained. Scholasticism was dominant in German universities in the late middle ages, but the attitudes and approaches of the Renaissance were moving northward. Humanism, and particularly biblical humanism, was on the rise.

<u>Theological Training in Medieval Universities</u>

As in the cathedral schools, the seven liberal arts were basic also to the university curriculum and to preparation for university studies. The liberal arts were taught in a very elementary way in grammar school with an emphasis on learning Latin and Latin grammar. In the university special stress was placed on Aristotelian logic. The university included the arts, law, medicine, and theology departments.

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[1] Augsburg Confession, XXVII, "Of Monastic Vows," 15-16. Kolb-Wengert edition, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

[2] Quoted in F.V.N Painter, *Luther on Education*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928 reprint of *Luther on Education*. Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889) 79.

[3] New Catholic Encyclopedia. (Detroit: Thomson/Gale Group; Washington, D.C.: in association with the Catholic University of America, 2003) vol 12, 893.

The first academic level one could achieve, was the Baccalaureate. When the preliminary university education was finished, one received the title "Magister Artium" (Master of Arts). At this point, he could choose a specialized field of study—law, medicine, or theology for advanced degrees.

The scholastic method dominated the universities. Scholasticism, however, was not monolithic. Each school seemed to have its own emphasis and direction. Yet there were commonalities. At the risk of oversimplification, permit this definition: Scholasticism was the attempt to comprehend, harmonize, and prove doctrine rationally, to reconcile Christian doctrine and human reason. It involved the adoption of a common method of inquiry: the method of discovering and defending philosophical or theological truth by means of Aristotelian logic or dialectic. The method consisted in the posing of a question, followed by arguments for and against answers proposed by earlier authorities, ending in a conclusion that was logically warranted. The early scholastic, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), described himself as "one who strives to raise his mind to the contemplation of God and seeks to understand what he believes."[4] This description of Scholasticism in popular parlance has come down to us as "faith seeking understanding." The method was not an attempt to arrive at "new" truths. Rather it was meant to penetrate, analyze, and defend a body of truth revealed in Scripture and the authoritative teaching of the church.

Nevertheless, at least in some universities there was not much emphasis on the Bible itself. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486-1541), Luther's colleague at Wittenberg, "did not even own a Bible when he earned the Doctor of Theology degree or for many years thereafter, and yet apparently he was no exception."[5]

When the Bible was studied, the medieval fourfold approach to biblical interpretation prevailed—the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. The literal interpretation was to teach what was done. The allegorical expressed what one should believe. The moral indicated what should be done. The anagogical taught what one should hope. The literal had priority over the other three, and, in fact, nothing was to be believed unless it was already established by the literal.[6] Nevertheless, this approach basically ignored the context and grammar of the passage of Scripture under consideration, with few scholars having a knowledge of Greek and even fewer the ability to work in Hebrew.

Beginning in Italy and slowly moving north with the Renaissance was a movement which has come to be known as Humanism. Like Scholasticism, Humanism was not monolithic. There were at least "a half dozen different kinds of humanism, the common denominator of each being a *Heimweh*, or homesickness for something in ages past."[7] Although within the various types of humanism there were also differences between individual scholars, we can use the slogan *ad fontes* – back to the sources – as a convenient summary of the spirit of the movement.

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[4] Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, Preface. English translation in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*. ed. by Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956) 70.
[5] Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. trans. by James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985) 84.
[6] Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*. (New York: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1987) 153.
[7] E.G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950) 275.

For our purposes, "Biblical Humanism" was most significant. Biblical Humanism demonstrated a different spirit from Scholasticism.

> The appeal to the New Testament and the fathers as sources of a reformed and renewed church was an appeal to return *ad fontes.* This celebrated slogan must not be misunderstood: the New Testament, and writers such as Vergil and Galen, had been known for centuries—what was new was not so much these sources themselves, as both the method and the spirit in which they were approached. Commentaries and glosses were to be bypassed, in order to engage the text itself—whether the text in question was the Justinian *Pandects* or the New Testament.[8]

The humanists emphasized and advocated for the study of the original languages of Scripture and classical Latin. They also provided tools for studying the ancient texts. However, they were concerned more with producing men of culture who were eloquent in speech and writing rather than producing theological understanding leading to salvation. Although the New Testament was of prime importance, it was not the only authoritative source of doctrine and ethics. The early fathers also had authority not because their teachings necessarily agreed with Scripture but because of their eloquence and antiquity. Humanism prepared the way for the Reformation by opposing Scholasticism and stressing the study of the original sources rather than relying on layer after layer of commentary and glosses. However, the aims and goals of Humanism differed from the aims and goals of the Lutheran Reformation.[9]

Luther's Theological Training

Luther was a product of his times. As an undergraduate he was trained in the liberal arts. When he entered the monastery, his life revolved around the canonical hours,[10] worship at set times throughout the day. Prayers and Psalms were recited. As he participated in the daily offices he came to know the Psalter by heart. He spent hours reading the Bible and other religious books. However, the monastic life did not contribute to edification; it was meant to be a way of achieving a holy life. Monastic worship often involved rote recitation without thinking or understanding.[11] Luther's studies in the monastery undoubtedly included Peter Lombard's (1100-1160) *Sentences*, the standard textbook on theology.[12] His training for the priesthood involved the study of Gabriel Biel's (1420-1495) *Sacri canones missae expositio*, an exposition of the entire celebration of the mass. [13] Biel was a scholastic. He was also a Semi-Pelagian whose teaching Luther later would wholeheartedly reject.

Shortly after he was ordained, Luther began theological studies at the University of Erfurt. The typical course of study included four steps. A student received the title of *Biblicu*s or *lector* after the first course of study. This permitted him to give basic lectures on the Bible. The

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[8] McGrath, 40.
[9] McGrath, 41-42.
[10] The canonical hours included matins, lauds, prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline.
[11] Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. 64. Luther lodges this complaint not only of monks but also of priests, LW, 25, 470.
[12] James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986) 67.
[13] Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. 71.

second degree was *Formatus*, indicating a mastery of medieval theological terminology. Those who completed the next course of study were called *Sententiarius*. They were permitted to lecture on Lombard's *Sentences*. The last step was the *Licentiatus*, enabling the candidate to become a regular lecturer in theology. After successful participation in a public debate the individual was awarded his doctorate.[14]

Johann von Staupitz (1460-1524), Luther's superior and the Vicar General of the Augustinians in Germany, insisted that Luther pursue a doctorate in theology, even though Luther protested mightily. Because of Staupitz' many responsibilities, he needed someone to take over his teaching responsibilities at the University of Wittenberg. He had taken note of Luther's academic gifts and understood his spiritual struggles. In Staupitz' opinion, Luther's theological studies would be a win-win situation. Wittenberg would gain a capable scholar and Luther might find the peace he was looking for. Luther began his theological studies in Erfurt and received his doctorate from the University of Wittenberg while serving on the faculty there. The great Reformer had advanced rapidly. In March 1509 he received his Bachelor of Biblical Studies. In October 1512, he became a Doctor of Holy Scriptures. Erfurt was dominated by the *via moderna* of William of Occam (ca 1285-1347) and Biel. Wittenberg had representatives of both the *via moderna* and the *via antiqua* of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Duns Scotus (ca. 1266-1308). Luther was familiar with both of these scholastic schools.[15]

Humanism seems to have entered the universities, including Wittenberg, through the liberal arts faculty. After Luther received his doctorate, his drive to understand Scripture led him to the linguistic and textual aids being provided by the humanists for the study of the Bible and the early church fathers. He learned Greek and Hebrew. He wanted to study the Bible and the fathers for himself, without the layers of scholastic commentary. He was well read. He knew Aristotle, the scholastics, the more recent theologians (e.g., Jean Gerson 1363-1428), the classics, and the humanists.[16] He also eventually became acquainted with the German mystics.

It appears that Luther did not know much Greek or Hebrew when he earned his doctorate. When he began his lectures on the Bible, he wanted to enhance his understanding and improve his lectures. He began learning Greek in 1514 from his colleague on the faculty, Johann Lang (ca. 1487-1548). Lang later transferred to Erfurt. It seems probable that Luther began his study of Hebrew about the same time. For his lectures on the Psalms (August 1513- October 1515) he used Johann Reuchlin's (1455-1522), *Rudiments of Hebrew*, although this work was still difficult for him.[17] In time he became a master linguist.

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[14] Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*. 148-149.

[15] The development of Scholasticism was accompanied by a discussion about the nature of "universals", that is, about the existence of genera and species. Three main positions were taken. The extreme "realists" following Platonic influences asserted that universals exist apart from and antecedent to the individual objects, ante rem. That is, the genus "man" is anterior to and determinative of the individual man. The moderate "realists" under the guidance of Aristotle taught that universals exist only in connection with individual objects, in re. The "nominalists", holding that only individual things exist, maintained that universals are mere words or abstract names (nomina) for the similarities of individuals and have no existence other than in thought, post rem. The adherents of the *via antiqua* were realists; the adherents of the *via moderna* were nominalists.

[16] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II *The Reformation as a University Movement*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 448-451.

[17] Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*. 282-284.

Key Emphases and Distinctives in Luther's Teachings

Luther differed from both the scholastics and the humanists in his approach to theology and his understanding of the purpose of theology. His theological activities won over the theological faculty in Wittenberg, brought about changes in the curriculum, and shaped his suggestions for the training of pastors. His distinctive emphases were crucial for the course of the Reformation and distinguish Lutheranism from the work of the scholastics, the humanists, and the radical reformers.

The Importance of Doctrine

The reformers who preceded Luther (including the humanists) were moral or ecclesiastical reformers. Luther believed that the reformation the church needed was primarily doctrinal.[18] Doctrine is the source of life. Therefore, doctrine is more important than the Christian life or Christian love. Doctrine shows the way to heaven and consequently cannot be treated as unimportant or uncertain. In his lectures on Galatians (1535) he explains,

> With the utmost rigor we demand that all the articles of Christian doctrine, both large and small—although we do not regard any of them as small—be kept pure and certain. This is supremely necessary. For this doctrine is our only light, which illumines and directs us and shows us the way to heaven; if it is overthrown in one point, it must be overthrown completely. And when that happens, our love will not be of any use to us. . . Therefore there is no comparison at all between doctrine and life. "One dot" of doctrine is worth more than "heaven and earth" (Matt. 5:18); therefore we do not permit the slightest offense against it. But we can be lenient toward errors of life.[19]

The importance of doctrine for Luther can be seen in his refusal to give the Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1481-1531) the right hand of fellowship at the Marburg Colloquy (1529). Luther refused fellowship with Zwingli because the two parties were not agreed as to whether the body and blood of Christ are truly present with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.[20] From a military standpoint it would have been advantageous for the German and Swiss to present a united front against the forces of the Holy Roman Empire. However, for Luther doctrine was not to be compromised even if it meant physical danger or harm. Doctrine was not to be compromised because it was God's doctrine, not Luther's. He warned, "In theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching. . . Doctrine belongs to God, not to us; and we are called only as its ministers. Therefore we cannot even give up a dot of it (Matt. 5:18)."[21]

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[18] Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation.* The Penguin History of the Christian Church, vol. 3 (London: Penguin Books, 1972) p 13-14. Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil.* (New York: Image Books, 1992) p 56-57.

[19] Martin Luther. *Lectures on Galatians(1535)*, in Luther's Works, American Edition (55 vols.; ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann; (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-86), 27:41. Hereafter the citation of this series will be LW.

[20] Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532*. trans. by James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 333.

[21] LW, 27:37.

Luther's answer to the deplorable conditions found during the Saxon church visitations in 1528 was to write the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism as statements of basic doctrine for the instruction of children and the laity. He considered it important even for children to understand the teachings of Scripture. Luther's Small Catechism has never been surpassed for simplicity and clarity of expression. We should not underestimate the significance of the Catechism for today. If one knows Luther's explanations to the three articles of the Apostles Creed, he has a simple and clear answer for many, if not most, of the false teachings that are currently challenging orthodox Christianity.

Philip Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* of 1521 was written as a book of doctrine for the more learned. It was intended to "communicate Luther's evangelical religion efficiently and effectively. . . They were not intended for the classroom but rather as introductions to biblical study."[22]

Proper Use of Reason

Luther was not a systematician nor did he try to harmonize apparent paradoxes in Scripture. Rather he gloried in them. Luther believed that the Christian should not use his reason to try to eliminate seeming contradictions in the Bible. Luther's own thought in many ways is characterized by his use of paradox based on what he saw in Scripture. He noted that Scripture teaches that God both punishes sin and forgives sin. Luther used a paradox when he taught that we must always flee from God to God, *i.e.*, from the wrath of God to the mercy of God.[23] One of Luther's better-known paradoxes is his teaching that "a Christian is righteous and a sinner at the same time" (*simul justus et peccator*).[24] Although a Christian remains a sinner after Baptism, his sins are not imputed.[25] Luther's teaching of justification by faith alone involves a paradox: We are justified not because we are righteous, but because Christ is righteous. By nature, people think in terms of rewards for proper behavior and punishment for improper behavior. Luther's teaching involves a rational paradox for human beings in that "in the place of the logical equivalence of morality, reward and punishment He (Christ) puts forgiveness."[26] This recognition of paradoxes in Scripture can also be seen in Luther's teaching on law and gospel.

Both the law and the gospel are God's Word. Each has its own purpose and is to be used as God intended. The chief purpose of the law is to show us our sins. The law does not show us what we are able to do, but what we ought to do. The law makes us recognize our inability to do what God commands.[27] The law is like a mirror which reveals our sin, but it does not have the power to free us from our sin.[28] If the law had not revealed our sin and our inability to do what

[22] *Luther and Learning*. ed by Marilyn J. Harran (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1985) 108-109.
[23] Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. trans. by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 171.
[24] LW, 26:232.
[25] LW, 32:19-29.
[26] Werner Ehlert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*. trans. by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962) 98.
[27] LW, 33:137-138.
[28] LW, 22:143-144.

God commands, the gospel would be meaningless. Nevertheless, only the gospel reveals that all of our sins have been forgiven for Christ's sake. We obtain that forgiveness by faith.[29]

Reason has to be taken captive to the Word of God because human reason finds the truths of God's Word to be foolishness. The Christian must let God be God and believe what God says whether it makes sense to human reason or not.

> For faith speaks as follows: "I believe thee, God, when Thou dost speak." What does God say? Things that are impossible, untrue, foolish, weak, absurd, abominable, heretical, diabolical—if you consult reason. For what is more ridiculous, foolish, and impossible than when God says to Abraham that he is to get a son from the body of Sarah, which is barren and already dead?[30]

Attitude toward Aristotle

Luther was generally critical of the use of Aristotle because the great philosopher was an unbeliever whose use of reason therefore could not be trusted in religious matters.[31] Luther complained that Aristotle did not know the true God but had devised a god who only contemplates himself and will not look at suffering or injustice.[32] Aristotle denied that God had created the heavens and the earth and asserted that the world existed from eternity.[33] In "Against Latomus" Luther calls the philosopher the "twice accursed Aristotle."[34] He faults Thomas Aquinas because he believes Thomas is responsible for the "reign of Aristotle, the destroyer of doctrine."[35] Luther did not necessarily reject everything Aristotle wrote,[36] but he faulted the use of Aristotle by the scholastics in theology and condemned the impression these theologians gave that there was complete agreement between Aristotle and the teachings of Christ and Paul.[37] He rejected the scholastics' claim that no one could be a theologian without Aristotle.[38]

Sufficiency of Scripture

For Luther, the Scriptures are all we need for faith and the Christian life. No other source is necessary or possible. He declares, "The Word of God—and no one else, not even an angel—should establish articles of faith."[39] Commenting on Galatians 1:9 he writes,

> Here Paul subordinates himself, an angel from heaven, teachers on earth, and any other masters at all to sacred Scripture. This queen must rule, and everyone must obey, and be

[29] LW, 22:146-148.
[30] LW, 26, 227.
[31] LW, 51:64.
[32] LW, 33:171, 291.
[33] LW, 37:30-31.
[34] LW, 32:217.
[35] LW, 32:258.
[36] e.g., Aristotle can be used to improve temporal life, to learn a trade or civil law, but not for the edification of the soul. LW, 52:39.
[37] Siegbert Becker, *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther.* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982) 7. See LW, 51:64-65.
[38] LW, 52:178.
[39] Smalcald Articles, II, 2, par. 15.

> subject to her. The pope, Luther, Augustine, Paul, an angel from heaven—these should not be masters, judges, or arbiters but only witnesses, disciples, and confessors of Scripture. Nor should anything be taught or heard in the church except the Word of God. Otherwise let the teachers and the hearers be accursed along with their doctrine.[40]

Centrality of Christ and the Gospel

The purpose of Scripture is to point to Christ. The Bible reveals God's plan of salvation. Without Scripture the way to salvation would remain a mystery. Without Christ Scripture is meaningless.

> For what still sublimer thing can remain hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seals have been broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulcher [Matt. 27:66, 28:2], and the supreme mystery brought to light, namely that God is three and one, that Christ has suffered for us and is to reign eternally? . . . Take Christ out of Scripture and what will you find left in them?[41]

In a sermon on the Gospel for the Festival of Epiphany Luther emphasized the centrality of Christ and the gospel.

> For the gospel teaches nothing but Christ, and therefore Scripture contains nothing but Christ. Whoever fails to recognize Christ may hear the gospel or he may indeed carry the book in his hand, but he lacks understanding, for to have the gospel without understanding is to have no gospel at all. And to possess Scripture without knowing Christ, is to have no Scripture.[42]

Since Christ is at the heart of the Scriptures, it follows that justification by God's grace through faith alone is the central teaching of Scripture. All theology is meaningless apart from Christ and justification.

> Of this article [justification] nothing can be yielded or surrendered nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same, even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. "For there is no other name under heaven, given to men by which we must be saved,": says Peter, Acts 4:12. "And by his wounds we are healed," Is. 53:5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.[43]

Hermeneutics and Theological Method

[40] LW, 26: 57-58.
[41] LW, 33: 25-26.
[42] LW, 52: 207.
[43] SA, Part II, Art. I, 5.

Luther rejected the fourfold approach to understanding Scripture. "The Holy Spirit is the most simple writer and speaker in heaven and earth; therefore his words have only one sense, the most simple one, which we call the literal sense."[44] The Bible is not open to private interpretation but the interpretation must be given by the Holy Spirit in Scripture itself.

> You shall not give your own interpretation. The Holy Spirit himself must expound Scripture. Otherwise it must remain unexpounded. Now if anyone of the saintly fathers can show that his interpretation is based on Scripture, and if Scripture proves that this is the way that Scripture should be interpreted, then the interpretation is right. If this is not the case, I must not believe him.[45]

Luther recognized human reason as a gift of God.[46] However, he was suspicious of human reason because reason is corrupted by sin. Reason is always to serve (ministerial use) rather than be exalted above Scripture (magisterial use) and stand in judgment over God's Word. We are "to be content with the words of God and believe quite simply what they say."[47] We are to pay attention to the grammar[48] and the original languages.[49] We are to take the words of Scripture in their ordinary grammatical sense.[50] We are to give attention to "the text itself and what precedes and follows it, from which the meaning should be sought"[51] and to the subject matter and intention of the speaker.[52] These are all proper uses of reason.

Efficacy of Scripture and Necessity of the Means of Grace

Luther believed in the efficacy of Scripture. In fact, he not only believed in the efficacy of Scripture, he also asserted that God does not give his Spirit or impart his grace to anyone apart from or before contact with the external word.[53] The external word is the word that strikes the senses. One cannot separate the Holy Spirit from the written or spoken Word of God. Where God's Word is read or proclaimed, there the Holy Spirit will be doing his work of creating and sustaining faith. Luther was so certain that God's Word would never return without accomplishing God's plan and purpose that he wrote,

> Now wherever you hear or see this Word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that . . . "a Christian holy people" must be there even though their number is very small. For God's Word "shall not return empty" . . . .And even if there were no other sign than this, it would suffice to prove that a Christian, holy people must exist there, for God's Word cannot be without God's people, and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's Word.[54]

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[44] LW 39: 178-179.
[45] LW, 30: 166.
[46] Small Catechism, Explanation to the 1st Article of the Creed; LC, 1st Article, 2.
[47] LW, 33: 175.
[48] LW, 33: 167.
[49] LW, 33: 216.
[50] LW, 33: 217, 236.
[51] LW, 33: 234.
[52] LW, 33: 239.
[53] SA, III, 8, par. 3-13.
[54] LW. 41: 150.

God is the author of the Holy Scriptures. Lecturing on Genesis 29:1-3 Luther addressed the inclusion of the mundane on the pages of Scripture. He concludes, "If we believed firmly as I do, even though I believe weakly, that the Holy Spirit and God, the Creator of all things, is the Author of this book and of such unimportant matters, as they seem to our flesh, then we would have the greatest consolation."[55] He says that the Holy Spirit himself composed Psalm 90.[56] Since the Holy Scriptures are God's Word they cannot lie to us.[57] The holy teachers of the church can err, but Scripture has never erred.[58] For that reason one cannot give preference to human authority over the Holy Scriptures. "Human beings can err, but the Word of God is the very wisdom of God and the absolutely infallible truth."[59]

Luther also believed in the basic perspicuity or clarity of Scripture. He vehemently disagreed with Erasmus (ca. 1469-1536) and others who claimed that the Bible was obscure. Scripture claims clarity when God's Word is called a "lamp to my feet and a light for my path."[60] The Bible brings light for believers, but blindness and shame for unbelievers.

> God's Word has to be the most marvelous thing in heaven and on earth. That is why it must at one and the same time do two opposite things, namely, give perfect light and glory to those who believe it, and bring utter blindness and shame upon those who believe it not. To the former it must be the most certain and best known of all things; to the latter it must be the most unknown and obscure of all things. The former must extol and praise it above all things; the latter must blaspheme and slander it above all things. So does it operate to perfection and achieve in the hearts of men no insignificant works, but strange and terrible works. As St. Paul says in II Corinthians 4 [:3]. If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing.[61]

Luther's Transformation of the University of Wittenberg

As Luther became increasingly dissatisfied with the scholastic method and the medieval fourfold approach to biblical interpretation and began to formulate his "new" theology on the basis of careful study of the Scriptures, he sparked a transformation of the University of Wittenberg. Scholasticism had dominated (although there were some who were sympathetic to Humanism and Hebrew and Greek were being taught before Luther arrived). Now Luther's evangelical theology began to win over members of the theological faculty.

In December of 1516 Luther prepared theses for one of his students, Bartholomaeus Bernhardi, to defend in a disputation for the degree of *Sententiarius*. Karlstadt and another Thomist on the faculty participated in the debate. Luther had schooled his student well with the result that the debate had a profound impact on the faculty and the student body. Karlstadt and his colleague could not match Bernhardi's knowledge of the Bible and Augustine. Luther's

[55] LW, 5:275.
[56] LW, 13:81.
[57] Large Catechism, V, 76.
[58] LW, 32:11.
[59] LW, 1:122.
[60] LW, 33:92ff.
[61] LW, 45:146-147.

evangelical theology was victorious over Thomism. Karlstadt was so embarrassed that he purchased a set of Augustine's writings to study the church father for himself. After some discussions with Luther, he was won over from Thomism to Luther's theology.[62]

In 1517 Luther wrote theses entitled "Disputation against Scholastic Theology" for Franz Günther to defend, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Holy Scripture degree.[63] These theses were aimed not only at the followers of Duns Scotus, but also the followers of William of Occam, and the Semi-Pelagianism of Gabriel Biel. The theses threw down the gauntlet against the scholastics and demonstrated how far Luther had come in his theological development. Allow these selected theses to illustrate the point.

> 6. It is false to state that the will can by nature conform to correct precept. This is said in opposition to [Duns] Scotus and Gabriel [Biel].
>
> 25. Hope does not grow out of merits, but out of suffering which destroys merits. This is in the opposition to the opinions of many.
>
> 29. The best preparation for the reception of grace and the sole reason for obtaining grace is the eternal election and predestination of God.
>
> 30. On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except ill will and even rebellion against grace.
>
> 40. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This is in opposition to the philosophers.
>
> 41. Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This is in opposition to the scholastics.
>
> 44. Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle.
>
> 50. Briefly, the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light. This is in opposition to the scholastics.
>
> 56. God cannot accept man without his justifying grace. This is in opposition to Ockham.
>
> 76. Every deed of the law without the grace of God appears good outwardly, but inwardly it is sin. This is in opposition to the scholastics.[64]

As the previous disputation had an impact on the Thomists, this disputation had a profound impact on the Occamists on the faculty. Nicholas von Amsdorf (1483-1565), was won over to Luther's theology[65] and became a friend and enthusiastic supporter of the great Reformer for the rest of his life.

Luther proposed changes to the theological curriculum in Wittenberg in 1518. Greek. Hebrew, and Latin were to be taught regularly. There were to be lectures on Quintillian (35-

[62] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 452-453.
[63] Harold J. Grimm, "Introduction." LW, 31: 6.
[64] LW, 31: 9-14.
[65] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 456.

100), whose volumes on rhetoric and educational theories were highly regarded by the humanists. Some courses on Aristotle and medieval logic were dropped.[66]

1518 also saw the arrival of Philip Melanchthon. He more than anyone else helped Luther transform the university. Melanchthon came highly recommended. Frederick the Wise approached the great Hebraist, Johann Reuchlin, to suggest a candidate to teach Greek and Latin. Reuchlin recommended his great nephew Philip. "'I know of no man among the Germans,' he wrote, 'who is superior to Master Philip Schwarzerd [Melanchthon] except Erasmus Rotterdamus, who is a Hollander, and surpasses all of us in Latin.'"[67] Melanchthon's brilliance in Greek and Latin and his knowledge of Hebrew helped Luther and contributed greatly to the university's reputation. "The two burning points of his pedagogy were 'back to the sources' and 'knowledge of Christ.'"[68] Although he had earned the *Biblicus* degree in theology, he preferred to remain on the liberal arts faculty teaching Greek and Hebrew and supervising the preparation of theological students for advanced degrees.[69]

With Melanchthon's arrival everything was in place to complete the transformation of the University of Wittenberg. Philip was won over to Luther's theology and the spirit of evangelical humanism triumphed over scholasticism. He taught a variety of subjects including lecturing on books of the Bible. For a time, he also served as professor of Hebrew. Students streamed into Wittenberg to study under Melanchthon and Luther and the younger generation was won for the Reformation.[70]

Melanchthon wrote the *Statutes of 1533* for the Wittenberg theological faculty. These were included in the new foundation of the University of Wittenberg under the direction of Elector John Frederick (1503-1554) in 1536. The new foundation emphasized liberal arts training, including Greek and Hebrew, for those who wished to pursue a theological degree. Theological students "no longer needed to quote Lombard's *Sentences* but could use the original Greek and Hebrew texts of Holy Scripture to defend their religious beliefs through their own biblical exegesis."[71] The University of Wittenberg, in spite of opposition from some prominent European faculties, became the model "of reforms of Christianity within the Roman church."[72]

Melanchthon put Luther's suggestions for educational reform into practice. Philip's educational contributions, including textbooks, curricular reform, and educational organization were so great that later ages have called him the *Praeceptor Germaniae*.

Luther's Suggestions for Ministerial Education

A number of factors undermined schools in the first couple of decades of the sixteenth century. Economic conditions led to materialism. Parents were only interested in education that

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[66] McGrath, 63.
[67] Philip Schaff. *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1970) vol; VII, 188.
[68] Clyde Manschreck. *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1958) 45
[69] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 463.
[70] Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. 279-282.
[71] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 488; see 485-489.
[72] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 490.

would give their children economic advantage. It often seemed wiser to them to put their children to work to increase the family's fortunes than have them waste time in school. The Reformation itself led to a decline in school attendance. People reasoned that if the church was teaching erroneously and most schools were operated by the church, they shouldn't send their children to school. Princes, nobles, and city councils for their own purposes had seized the church endowments used to fund the schools with the result that there was little financial support to operate schools. Luther's emphasis on the universal priesthood seemed to some to mean that there was no reason for formal training for the public ministry. The Radical Reformers saw no reason for formal education because they claimed that the Holy Spirit will speak to people directly. Luther addressed these problems in 1524 with a treatise entitled, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools."[73] This treatise offers some insight into what Luther saw as essential to pastoral education.

Luther stressed the importance of the languages—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew for the sake of the gospel. He wrote, "Formerly no one knew why God had the languages revived, but now for the first time we see that it was done for the sake of the gospel, which he intended to bring to light and use in exposing and destroying the kingdom of the Antichrist."[74] He was convinced that the preservation of the languages was essential for the preservation of the gospel.

> And let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit [Eph. 6:17] is contained, they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the gospel itself points out [Matt. 14:20], they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid), we shall not only lose the gospel, but the time will come when we shall be unable to speak or write a correct Latin or German.[75]

He notes that Augustine and other church fathers who did not know Greek or Hebrew often erred in their exposition of Scripture. Even when they were correct in their exposition, they were never quite certain whether their interpretation was actually in the passage or not.[76] Preachers who do not know the languages often fall flat in their sermons, but those who know the languages exhibit a freshness and vigor in their preaching with a continual variety of words and illustrations in hand.[77]

Luther was an advocate for teaching the liberal arts and history to children.[78] He wrote, "How I regret that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them! Instead, I was obliged to read at great cost, toil, and detriment to myself, that devil's dung, the philosophers and sophists, from which I have all I can do to purge myself."[79] Besides the languages and history, Luther wanted children instructed in "singing and music together with the

[73] Walter I Brandt, "Introduction." LW, 45: 341-345.
[74] LW, 45: 359.
[75] LW, 45: 360.
[76] LW, 45: 361.
[77] LW, 45: 365.
[78] LW, 45: 368-369.
[79] LW, 45: 370.

whole of mathematics."[80] Abler students should continue their education to become pastors and teachers.[81]

In his "Sermon on Keeping Children in School" (1530) he stressed the need for training the young so that there would be pastors in the future. He encouraged the education even of boys of "lesser" ability. For there was the need not only for learned doctors of theology who could do battle with heretics but also for "ordinary" pastors, who would preach the gospel, teach the catechism and administer the sacrament. "Even though a boy who has studied Latin should afterward learn a trade and become a craftsman, he still stands as a ready reserve in case he should be needed as a pastor or in some other service of the word."[82]

Good libraries should also be established. Luther had some suggestions as to what they should contain.

> First of all, there would be the Holy Scriptures, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German, and any other languages in which they might be found. Next the best commentaries, and, if I could find them, the most ancient, in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Then, books that would be helpful in learning the languages, such as the poets and orators, regardless of whether they were pagan or Christian, Greek or Latin, for it is from such books that one must learn grammar. After that would come books on the liberal arts, and all the other arts. Finally there would be books of law and medicine; here, too there should be careful choice among commentaries.
>
> Among the foremost there would be the chronicles and histories, in whatever languages they are to be had. For they are a wonderful help in understanding and guiding the course of events, and especially for observing the marvelous works of God. [83]

As the Reformation progressed, some practical problems developed. The laity were not willing to support their pastors voluntarily and there were few pastors who understood how to apply the Reformation doctrine in their pastoral work. Already in 1525 Luther suggested to Elector John that it would be good to look into what was happening in the parishes. He instructed Luther to come up with a plan for visitation. The visitation began in February 1527. Unfortunately, the visitors did not have clear instructions. After their preliminary work, the visitors made some suggestions and Luther added his observations. Melanchthon authored articles to guide the visitors in 1528 and Luther added a preface.[84]

"The Instructions for the Visitation of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony" is a manual of Christian doctrine and pastoral advice according to which pastors were expected to conduct their ministry. They were intended to foster unity in doctrine and consistency in pastoral practice. A glance at the table of contents will give a hint at what pastors were expected to know.

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[80] LW, 45: 369.
[81] LW, 45: 371.
[82] LW, 46: 231.
[83] LW, 45: 376.
[84] Conrad Bergendoff, "Introduction." LW, 40: 265-267.

> The Doctrine [repentance and the forgiveness of sins]; The Ten Commandments; True Christian Prayer; Tribulation; The Sacrament of Baptism; The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord; True Christian Penance; True Christian Confession; True Christian Satisfaction for Sin; The Human Order of the Church; Marriage; Free Will; Christian Freedom; The Turks; Daily Worship in the Church; The True Christian Ban [church discipline]; The Office of Superintendents; Schools—the First, Second, and Third Division.[85]

Since there were no longer bishops in the evangelical territories, the office of superintendent was established. The articles contain this advice:

> This pastor [*Pfarrherr*] shall be superintendent of all other priests who have their parish or benefice in the region, whether they live in monasteries or foundations of nobles or others. He shall make sure that in these parishes there is correct Christian teaching, that the Word of God and the holy gospel are truly and purely proclaimed, and that the holy sacraments according to the institution of Christ are provided to the blessing of the people. The preachers are to exemplify a good life so that the people take no offense but better their own lives. They are not to teach or preach anything that is contrary to the Word of God or that contributes to rebellion against the government.[86]

The superintendent was also responsible for examining proposed candidates when a pastoral vacancy occurred. "The superintendent shall question and examine him as to his life and teaching and whether he will satisfactorily serve the people, so that by God's help we may carefully prevent any ignorant or incompetent person from being accepted and unlearned folk being misled."[87]

Luther's proposal for the three divisions of parish schools emphasized basic literacy, knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and basic Christian doctrine, the study of Latin and the reading of classics.[88] Such an education would prepare the young for advanced study.

A perusal of the Visitation Articles suggests that pastoral training should be aimed at the knowledge of doctrine, trust in the gospel, evangelical practice, and moral integrity.

Melanchthon drew up new statutes for the theological faculty in Wittenberg in 1533. The revised version of 1545 served as a model for other universities. The emphasis quite naturally was on the Bible but also on the ancient creeds. The courses to be taught in Greek and Hebrew were prescribed. Particularly courses on Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Romans, and the Gospel of John were to be offered regularly. To show that the Lutheran Church was in historic continuity with the early church a course was offered in the Nicene Creed and other courses on Augustine's

[85] LW, 40: 273-274.
[86] LW, 40: 313.
[87] LW, 40: 313-314.
[88] LW, 40: 315-320.

De spiritu et litera. The theological faculty was also responsible for the moral development of the students.[89]

Pure doctrine was important. The Bible was not to be taught just for mastery of facts but for the sake of evangelical teaching. Doctrine was to be drawn from the Bible on the basis of careful exegesis. One scholar offers this description of the classroom procedure:

> In the classroom evangelical theology must be communicated through scriptural exegesis. The loci method was employed once again. Through an interesting syllogism one can easily see why it should be so. All proper treatment of any subject considered the commonplaces of the subject. The Scriptures are authoritative in all matters essential for salvation. Therefore, they must speak clearly to all the topics or commonplaces of evangelical theology. Consequently, as a method of teaching, a professor was obligated to lay out for his students what each book of the Bible pronounces with respect to each of the basic evangelical doctrines. Certainly the exegete would employ the ancient languages, history and grammar to understand and communicate the vitality of the text, but it was equally certain that the text spoke clearly to the principal theological concerns of the time.[90]

In the course of time Melanchthon's *Loci* was used as a foundational work for dogmatics. For instance, Martin Chemnitz repeatedly lectured on the *Loci* for pastors and theological students.[91] The Augsburg Confession and even Luther's Small Catechism served a similar purpose. Dogmatics, however did not become the dominant theological discipline in the universities until the mid-seventeenth century.[92]

For theological degrees at the University of Wittenberg knowledge of Scripture based on the exegesis of the original Greek and Hebrew texts was necessary. To become a Doctor of Theology, a candidate needed to complete four years of prescribed exegetical courses. When he demonstrated that he was a mature exegete and could defend his exegetical conclusions before the faculty, he received his doctorate. [93]

By the end of the sixteenth century Rostock University professor, David Chytraeus (1530-1600), produced a guide to the study of theology that proved quite influential. It was a time of religious turmoil and students had to be prepared to defend the faith and offer biblical answers to the questions of the day.

> Bearing in mind the climate of theological controversy, every student had to acquire a special competence that qualified him for the profession. To this end a solid schooling in rhetoric and dialectic, best taught by using suitable texts of Melanchthon, was indispensable. (The actual *'Sitz im Leben'* of the exercise itself was the academic disputation.) Special

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[89] Thomas Kaufmann, "The Clergy and Theological Culture of the Age: The Education of Lutheran Pastors in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe*. ed. by C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 123-124.
[90] Harran, 109
[91] J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin: The Life and Theology of Martin Chemnitz*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994) 108; see also 14, 15, 18, 347 and 352.
[92] Kaufmann, 124.
[93] Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation.* vol II. *The Reformation as a University Movement*. 487-488.

> importance was based on exegetical study; in addition to the interpreters of the old Church, the commentaries of Luther and Melanchthon were particularly important. This did not exhaust the range of subjects. Church history, philosophy, mathematics, geography and natural history were included, usually as part of the teaching offered by the liberal arts faculty. These fields of study were considered useful and desirable as well, particularly as they could benefit an understanding of Holy Writ; but when set against the intensive preoccupation with the Bible and the interpretation of the Wittenberg reformers, all other subjects were of lesser importance. The benchmark of all intellectual endeavor should be determined by the *experientia christiana*, for this finds its critical point of reference in its locus on the cross as the locus of consolation.[94]

However, in spite of the Reformation transformation of universities and the strong emphasis on education, men did not need a university degree in order to become a pastor during the Reformation era. Some pastors spent time in theological studies at the university, while others had no advanced academic training. From 1535 on, by decree of Duke John Frederick, candidates for the ministry were sent to Wittenberg to be examined and ordained by the theological faculty. From 1537 until Luther's death 738 men were ordained in Wittenberg. These men came not only from Electoral Saxony, but from many areas of Germany and as far away as Transylvania. This provided some uniformity of theological standards throughout the evangelical world. The candidates were certified as to their good moral character and their adherence to orthodox doctrine.[95] A university degree was not required for pastors until well into the seventeenth century.

The examination of the ordinand was considered essential and seemed to be quite thorough, if the *Enchiridion* of Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) is to be considered. It contains questions and answers covering over 130 pages in English translation. The Preface offers this suggestion for its use.

> It is decreed in the Christian church order of our illustrious prince and ruler, Lord Julius of Brunswick and Lüneburg, that the examination be held not only when someone is to be accepted and received into the church ministry, but that the superintendents twice a year examine the pastors assigned to their supervision, so that it might be at one and the same time an indoctrination and instruction regarding the basis and meaning of pure doctrine, and how less-learned pastors might arrange their studies, guard against false doctrine, and set the doctrine before their hearers in plain and simple terms, so that through such examinations the whole church, both preachers and hearers, might be edified under divine blessing with great profit and blessing.[96]

The *Enchiridion* was intended to prepare a person for the examination as well as be the basis for the examination. Pure doctrine and evangelical pastoral practice were the heart of the manual.

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[94] Kaufmann, 126-127.
[95] Martin Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church 1532-1546*. trans. by James L. Schaaf. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 124-136.
[96] Martin Chemnitz. *Ministry, Word and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*. trans. by Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981) 16.

In the Reformation era university training for pastors was the ideal. Yet, in spite of well laid out programs for theological degrees, there were no fixed qualifications for entrance into the university nor was the length of time in the theological course for future pastors specified, although there often were required practical exercises including the preaching of trial sermons. Academic requirements varied from territory to territory and whether one served a rural parish or an urban parish or served as a court preacher, superintendent, or theological professor. Pastors with a master's degree were quite rare in many areas.[97]

Nevertheless, providing competent clergy was the goal of the educational program of the Reformation. It accomplished its purpose.

> One of the most common complaints about the pre-Reformation parish priest was that he was an ignorant lout, little different from the rude peasant he served. The most recent research suggests that there was in fact some truth to the complaint. By the end of the sixteenth century a very different situation prevailed. In the territory of Sponheim, for example, the proportion of university educated clergy rose from 22.5% in 1560 to 78.1% in 1619. In Zweibrücken the figures are 33.3% and 92%. Later the figures continued to rise. In the Palatinate the proportions increased between 1590 and 1619 from 85.9% to 94.3%. . . As might be expected, given its strong schools, Strassbourg also illustrates the change. During a twenty-three year period at the end of the century, a total of 132 persons were nominated for parish posts. Of these, 97 or 73.5% were Masters of Arts—no "ordinary pastors" these! It is true, as one scholar recently put it, that Lutheran pastors became "intellectuals. . . close to the people."[98]

No doubt the educational success of the Lutheran Reformation in training parish pastors prompted the Council of Trent (1545-1563) to decree the establishment of a seminary in every Roman Catholic diocese for the formal training of priests.[99]

Luther once offered a description of an ideal pastor. He stressed intellectual, practical, and personal or moral qualifications. We look for similar qualities in seminary students today.

> First, a good preacher ought to be able to teach well, correctly, and in an orderly fashion; secondly, he should have a good head on his shoulders; thirdly, he should be eloquent; fourthly, he should have a good voice; fifthly, he should have a good memory; sixthly, he should know when to stop; seventhly, he should be constant and diligent about his affairs; eighthly, he should invest body and life, possessions and honor in it; ninthly he should be willing to let everyone vex and hack away at him.[100]

Ideally, at the end of the Reformation period, pastoral education included a liberal arts background, knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, a thorough knowledge of the biblical doctrine based on careful exegesis, an understanding of history, and the ability to preach and teach. Even

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[97] Kaufmann, 124-126.
[98] Haran, 105.
[99] *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Twenty-Third Session. Reform. Chapter XVIII. July 15, 1563.
[100] Cited by Harran, 110. From a citation in Hermann Werdermann, *Der Evangelische Pfarrer in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Leipzing, 1923) 17. I have not been able to track down the original quote in Luther's Works.

when a candidate for the ministry received little or no university training, he was expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of biblical doctrine, an evangelical spirit, and the ability to communicate scriptural truth simply and clearly.

Historically, the Lutheran Church has been the healthiest when the Reformation ideals for pastoral training are approached. Some later developments tended to undermine Reformation principles, while others denied key aspects of the Reformation altogether. Toward the middle of the seventeenth century independent exegesis had little place in the university curriculum. Instead of doing a fresh exegetical study of Scripture some were content merely to quote the formulations of the orthodox Lutheran fathers. The knowledge of history waned.[101] Problems in the established church in Germany gave rise to Pietism. The pietists tended to downplay doctrine in favor of subjective experience. Rationalism raised human reason above God's Word and tended to deny anything in Scripture that seemed unreasonable. Liberalism held that for Christianity to survive Christian doctrine had to be changed to accommodate Christianity to the prevailing philosophical, scientific, and historical thought. Neo-orthodoxy attempted to regain some key Reformation doctrines, yet refused to equate the Bible with the Word of God and made truth subjective rather than objective. Much of Lutheranism today is spiritually bankrupt as a result of these departures form Luther's principles and distinctives in their theological schools.

Our synodical forefathers recognized the shortcomings of the mission house training that so many of them had received. They developed a ministerial education system that reflects the Reformation ideal. From the Lutheran elementary school through the seminary students are grounded in the Bible and biblical doctrine. Pre-ministerial students are trained in the liberal arts, the biblical languages, music, and history. The solid education that pastoral ministry students at Martin Luther College receive enables them to do seminary level work from their first day on our Mequon campus.

At the seminary biblical exegesis reigns supreme. Dogmatics is taught on the basis of biblical citation and exegesis. Church history courses are offered to provide a general understanding of the history of Christianity from Pentecost to the present. Practical courses in preaching, teaching, counseling, evangelism, etc., are intended to help future pastors to proclaim the timeless truths of God's Word clearly in our contemporary society and across cultures.

The Reformation ideal in pastoral education by God's grace has been preserved in our synod. This has enabled us to address contemporary issues on the basis of careful exegesis, knowledge of Christian doctrine, and a good understanding of church history. Nevertheless, there have been pressures over the years to cut ministerial training short.

The continuing need for pastors during the late nineteenth century resulted in the establishment of a "practical" course mainly for second career students alongside the "theoretical" course at the re-opening of the seminary in Milwaukee in 1878.[102] Other students

[101] Theodore G. Tappert, "Introduction," Philip Jacob Spener. *Pia Desideria*. trans., ed. by Tappert (Fortress Press, 1964) 6.
[102] Im. P. Frey, "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary 1863-1963," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, vol. 60 #3 (July 1963), 191; J.P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minn., Sentinel Publishing Co. 1970) 149.

were called into the active ministry before completing their full seminary training.[103] The future president of the synod, Gustav Bergemann, was one such seminarian who entered the ministry before completing his seminary course. In his later years he decried the practice as unfair to both students and the congregations.[104] In the fall of 1897 five first year students enrolled in the "practical" course.[105] No new students are listed as enrolling in the practical course thereafter. The decision had been made that year to do away with the "practical" course and to offer only a "theoretical" course at the seminary. The decision demonstrated that the synod recognized the importance of a full theological training for its pastors, including exegetical training based on the careful study of the biblical languages. When there was a move to reinstate the "practical" seminary course some seven years later, the 1897 decision was re-affirmed.[106] Our seminary remains a "theoretical" seminary to this day. But there will always be pressure to move away from the Reformation ideal.

Perhaps some today wonder about the length of the educational program for future pastors. Others may not recognize the value of learning Greek and Hebrew. Americans often don't see the usefulness of the study of history. Doctrine has become a dirty word in our society. The social sciences seem to some to offer much more benefit for the contemporary pastoral ministry than does a thorough grounding in the teachings of God's Word. There are pressures to offer more practical training at the expense of core theological courses.

With the passage time there will be changes to curriculum in our ministerial education schools. Courses will be tweaked. Educational methods, classroom procedures, and delivery of subject matter will not stay the same. Many of these changes are good and appropriate.

I pray, however, that the Reformation ideal in pastoral education will remain in our circles. With Luther we will continue to stress the importance of pure doctrine and proper hermeneutics and approach to theology. We will preserve the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew so that pastors can mine the Scriptures for themselves and be confident in the message they proclaim. We will recognize the value of studying history for understanding our roots, for learning from the successes, mistakes, and failures of the past, for recognizing God's guiding hand in spite of human weakness, and for spotting trends that involve old errors appearing in new forms. We will continue to see how a broad-based education in the humanities (liberal arts) prepares future pastors for dealing with people who come from various walks of life.

Luther's suggestions for pastoral education that were so important for the progress of the Reformation still have much to offer his heirs in the twenty-first century.

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[103] e.g. during school year 1896-1897 five students received calls into the parish before graduation, (1897 *Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, p. 78).

[104] Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) p. 134.

[105] 1897 *Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, p. 78.

[106] *Continuing in His Word*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951) 146. The question of whether to begin a "practical' course has periodically arisen since that time. See the 1955 Wisconsin Synod *BoRaM*, p. 53.