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A HISTORICAL - RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

OF SELECTIONS OF MARTIN LUTHER'S RHETORIC

(TITLE)

BY

Maynard D. Hilgendorf

B. Th., Concordia Theological Seminary, 1955

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1974

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer of this thesis has been in the public ministry of the Lutheran Church for nineteen years. Every sermon he has written (c. 1200) he has prefaced with three letters I. N. J. This is a Latin abbreviation for the phrase "In the Name of Jesus." His sermons were closed with a Soli Deo Gloria. This writer feels that this thesis can bear no less than that same imprimatur.

Other acknowledgments are in order. Dr. B. F. McClerren who has served as both academic and thesis advisor exercised a special measure of patience, attention, kindness and understanding. Carolyn Wilson served as typist. A special recognition of her professional expertise and a vote of gratitude must go to her. Her husband Dale served as a consultant on the pictures. Besides these two, a number of other parishioners were aware of the project and extended constant encouragement. A special word of gratitude goes to the head lady of the parsonage with whom this writer has spent twenty years of married life. During the research and writing of this thesis he regretfully and knowingly abdicated both husbandly and parental responsibilities to her and our family of eight children. In understanding fashion Adeline picked up the slack.

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## CHAPTER I

### NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### The Introduction

The Protestant Reformation in Europe of the 16th Century was an event that affected the Christian world to an unusual degree. There is hardly a facet of the Christian persuasion that has not felt its impact, both in the old world as well as in the new.<sup>1</sup>

Any significant movement in history has made use of rhetoric in the sense of informed opinion which is to influence choices. The Reformation era was no exception to this general rule. In fact, it could be said that this event had more rhetoric than did many other movements. This can be attributed to a combination of several factors. The Reformation was a religious revolution with deep convictions apparent. The emotions and zeal of people often attained a fever pitch. There was the conviction too, on the part of the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Porterfield Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1871), p. 12. "Great are the legacies of doctrinal, polemical, historical and confessional divinity which that century left us. Immortal are its confessions, its devotional, practical, hymnological and liturgical labors. It was the century of Melanchthon's Loci and of Calvin's Institutes, of the Examen of Chemnitz, and the Catalogus Testium of Flaccius, and of the Magdeburg Centuries. Its confessions are still the centres of great communions, its hymns are still sung by devout thousands, its forms still mould the spirit of worship among millions."

central characters that their work was a divine mission. The word "Reformation" indicates how these men viewed their work. They did not consider themselves as the founders of a new sect or a new church but as the term indicates they were "reforming," "reshaping" it, and in their opinion placing it once more on that original foundation which they were sure had been lost.<sup>2</sup>

There were many people who became involved in the Protestant Reformation from its beginning early in the 16th century and on into the mid-century mark. When one looks, however, for a strong central figure during this time there is one person who towers over all the others. It is that of Dr. Martin Luther, professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, Wittenberg, Germany. The amount of material that came from his pen and lips is truly astounding.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ernest G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ewald M. Plass, This is Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), pp. 291-92. "Note, for instance, the amount of work he turned out in 1523. Nervous headaches frequently made work almost impossible for him, and professional duties called him away from Wittenberg for more than a month during this year. But here is the record of his labors in 1523: He lectured regularly at the University. His exposition of Deuteronomy, much of which was delivered at this time, is 240 pages long. He addressed his fellow monks in the early morning on Sundays and the many festival days of the church calendar, preached a sermon later in the morning and another in the afternoon of these days. These sermons were all newly prepared, as the copies made by some of the auditors prove. They fill over five hundred pages in the large format of the Weimar edition of Luther's works. In addition to these publications the Professor produced a few dozen pamphlets and booklets, totaling six hundred and forty pages in the Weimar edition. During this year he also engaged upon the translation of the Old Testament books from Joshua to Esther. These Biblical books cover about three hundred pages in an average Bible. Nor is even this the full tale of his labors. Luther wrote hundreds of letters during this year. Those that have been preserved in their entirety

Whatever reasons are advanced by scholars, both in history and theology, for the spread of the Reformation during its formative and fruitive years, one item that must stand paramount is the ability of the speaker (and in this case it is the central figure of Luther) to communicate ideas and to abstract on the same level as the listener. It is a matter of public record that the rhetoric of Luther did exert an influence on listeners. Some dearly loved it. Some strongly condemned it. Few were unaffected by it.

His rhetoric was one of the contributing factors that caused the Reformation to be unchecked once it was begun. The purpose of this study is to analyze selected rhetorical contributions of Dr. Martin Luther. The analysis will focus on rhetoric of the Reformer in the classroom, in debate and in the pulpit. The thrust of this paper, however, will not be theological. Such a paper properly belongs to a different forum. The use of theological terms and terminology though, will not be foreign to this project.

#### The Working Hypothesis

Once the problem of research has been defined it is suggested that a working hypothesis be formulated.<sup>4</sup> This hypothesis

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take up more than one hundred pages in the Erlangen edition of his works. There are few who would not find the mere copying of these productions within less than one year an arduous task. But Luther had to create them and had himself to write out most of them long-hand. Nor let it be forgotten that besides the time devoted to this literary work Luther gave many a precious hour to interviews and consultations. No wonder J. Hare speaks of the 'almost superhuman rapidity and vigor' with which the Reformer carried on his work."

<sup>4</sup>J. Jeffery Auer, An Introduction to Research in Speech (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 26.



is described by Auer.

Formally defined, a hypothesis is a proposition (stated categorically or in question form) providing a tentative answer to a question about the nature of the possible relationship between two or more variables. Formulating it anticipates testing its validity.<sup>5</sup>

The particular hypothesis with which the writer worked was this: a meaningful perspective on Luther as a communicator can be provided by analyzing a sampling of his rhetorical efforts.

#### Origin and Limitation of the Study

Throughout the college and seminary studies of the writer of this paper and even during his professional life, he has maintained a keen interest in the study of history and the various events, figures, trends, and movements that can be traced. It has remained one of his regrets that he has not been able to pursue such studies on an in-depth basis. He has satisfied himself in part by private pursuits in specialized areas of history.

The writer of this paper is in the public ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is considered by theologians to be one of the mainline and traditional Christian Churches. As such, he has had more than just a passing interest in biblical and ecclesiastical history. As was the case with history in general so it was with church history, the writer could never study it as much as he would have liked and has had to content himself with private pursuits. Not only has he made use of literary works in church history, studying the origins of church bodies and some of

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<sup>5</sup>Auer, p. 72.

their central figures but he has also traveled what is perhaps a bit more than most parish pastors. He has studied churches on the American scene and also visited many of their shrines. He has also traveled extensively in Europe and the Middle East. Two separate trips were made overseas. The first was in 1962 when he spent five weeks on the continent of Europe and studied church life and conditions, and visited places of significance to church history all across the continent. Among the more important churches visited were the cathedrals in Cologne, Aachen, Ulm and Freiburg, Germany, Notre Dame in Paris, France, St. Mark's in Venice, Italy, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy, the main churches of Florence, Italy and St. Peter's Basilica and others in Rome, Italy. More recently, in the summer of 1972, he led a thirty-three party tour of the Holy Land and visited Christian, Jewish and Moslem shrines in Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus, Italy, and Greece. Included in this trip was a journey into East Germany and the Land of Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Much of this writer's private interests and pursuits of historical studies were satisfied in part in this fashion. It seemed but natural, therefore, that when the opportunity came for the writing of this paper, that he turn to some of those experiences that were so vividly impressed in his mind from recent visits to such places. It seemed natural also to turn to the era of the Reformation history since this relates closely to his own professional task and to some of the settings and scenes he recently relived and revisited.

One of the recognized pitfalls which this writer is keenly aware of would be in the dichotomy of subjectivity as versus objectivity. In the opening chapter of E. G. Schwiebert's Luther and His Times he too, refers to this problem.

It has been said that no one is really qualified to write on monasticism until he has been a monk; and after he has been a monk, he can no longer write impartially on monasticism. So, too, no one can really understand Martin Luther but a Lutheran; but perhaps no Lutheran can maintain a purely academic approach toward Luther. Yet it is encouraging that such scholars as Holl, Strohl, Scheel, and others have been able to approach Leopold von Ranke's ideal of writing history "as it actually was." This aim is well exemplified in James Harvey Robinson's prefatory remarks to Heinrich Boehmer's Luther in the Light of Recent Research: "The author seems to me particularly well qualified by knowledge, temperament and style to give us a fresh and stimulating conception of Luther. He is broadly sympathetic but no hero worshiper. There is no trace of religious partisanship in him. He feels that he can afford to tell all the varied truth without suppression or distortion." To the historian there can be no higher tribute.<sup>6</sup>

The writer of this paper would like to believe that he is able to demonstrate such objectivity.

The limitation of this project has proven to be anything but an easy hurdle to cross. When the writer originally considered writing about Luther he considered using his "Table Talk." This could have been done but it did not suit the writer's envisioned purpose. He then suggested to his thesis committee<sup>7</sup> that he expand this to the other areas of Luther's rhetorical contributions. Such a project was approved but with strong cautions about assuming too large a

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<sup>6</sup>Schwiebert, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Beryl F. McClarren, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University; Jon J. Hopkins, Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University; Calvin N. Smith, Ph.D., Purdue University.

project for a thesis. The advice was some of the wisest that could be extended. The writer realized that help would be needed in isolating and defining the problem. On a trip to his alma mater, Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois (9/28/73) he consulted with several respected names on the theological faculty, two of whom had been his former instructors.<sup>8</sup> All of them cautioned him about assuming too large a project. To ignore the collective advice of seven scholars would be the height of naivete. This writer wishes to acknowledge there the appropriate advice of Dr. Gerhard Aho and the keen insights he extended in isolating and defining the problem and also thereby limiting what otherwise could be a rambling piece of work. By his keen insight Dr. Aho suggested that while still covering a few of the major rhetorical settings of Dr. Martin Luther, that it be restricted to show how the Reformer came across to his hearers in these given rhetorical settings and that even within these various settings that one would have to be selective, choosing a setting which could be considered as typical. Other settings could be mentioned in passing. This paper will, therefore, rely heavily upon the documented testimony of others after having first set the given scene.

#### Significance of the Study

Why should a person wish to write on this given subject?

The answer to that would have to be first of all, that it is under-

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<sup>8</sup>Mark J. Steege, Th.D., Concordia Seminary; Eugene F. Klug, D. Theol., Amsterdam; Henry J. Eggold, Th.D., Concordia Seminary; Gerhard Aho, Ph.D., University of Illinois.

taken for personal reasons. As was stated a few pages before, this writer has had a personal interest in history, specifically church history and still more specifically, his church's history. To study key personnel and their rhetorical contributions is a part of this history and within the scope of this project. There is personal interest in this given area.

Secondly, there is the challenge to "plow new territory" and to "work through some already plowed." This satisfaction comes from developing and producing a certain project of originality and thereby contributing something worthwhile to the study of rhetoric. These thoughts are particularly summarized by Wayne N. Thompson.

The preparation of the thesis can be a rich educational experience, which (1) provides training in research methods; (2) requires the integration of the knowledge and the skills of several fields . . . (3) makes the student an 'expert' within a defined area; and (4) leads to conclusions regarding the theory and practice of rhetoric in our own time.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, it is to be hoped that this study would have a historical significance. Not only does a significant chapter of church history begin to unfold with the Protestant Reformation, but from the repercussions and reverberations of this religious revolution shock waves were sent in many directions. The effects of the Reformation were political, social and economical. These effects were not confined to a section of Germany, nor even to the continent of Europe but have also been felt in the religious and political life of America. Such a study which considers the rhetoric of that period would certainly have significant historical value.

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<sup>9</sup>Wayne N. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXII (October 1947), 277.

Fourthly, this study will have a rhetorical significance. It will be a study that looks at a specific tool of the Reformation, namely rhetoric. It will look even more specifically at the tool (rhetoric) of one central figure, namely, Luther. As the various settings are studied it is hoped that this will make a significant contribution to the discipline of speech and communication.

It would be incomplete not to mention that from a subjective point of view the study will have a religious value. Its use in that manner, however, will be strictly private and subjective.

#### Review of Literature

One of the very first assignments in preparation for writing was to determine what had been done in this area of Luther research. It is a gross understatement to say that this proved to be no small matter and it is doubtful that it could ever be exhausted. E. G. Schwiebert gives one an idea of the volume of material that is available for research.

Of all the periods in German history none has been more diligently studied than that of the German Reformation. The many sermons, letters, political treatises, and polemical tracts employing German, Latin, and some Greek from Luther's pen appeared in nearly a dozen editions between 1546 and 1883. The related source materials, such as court records, church documents, etc., which have appeared in print are tremendous. Over three thousand biographies and treatises have been written about Martin Luther and his work, and still they continue to roll from the presses. Little wonder that few biographers of Luther have had the time or patience to digest this mass of often apparently contradictory materials before approaching their subject. The result is that all too frequently, both here and abroad, there has been a tendency to oversimplify the German Reformation. A true evaluation of Luther's contributions to the world would require the combined talents and training of a linguist, political scientist, historian, sociologist,<sup>10</sup> and theologian, scarcely to be found in a single individual.

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<sup>10</sup>Schwiebert, pp. 1-2.

Still, some effort must be made to check this out. Several indices were checked at Booth Library on the campus of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. These revealed but one significant work in this area.<sup>11</sup>

The library at Concordia Theological Seminary was checked and found to contain about one thousand works pertaining to this study. Much of this material has been incorporated into the American Edition of Luther's Works, several volumes of which will be used in this research.

Much of the literature about the Reformation and Luther is written in the German language. While this writer does have a limited working knowledge of the German language, he made no concentrated and serious effort to check out that huge resource. It is not difficult to imagine that somewhere there does exist indeed, something of the general nature envisioned for this project, but if and where it is could mean years of search, since much of the research material in this area lies in the academic centers of Europe.

#### The Criteria for the Rhetorical Study

The writer of this paper approached his objective from a historical-rhetorical point of view. In order to reach his analytical goal it was necessary for the writer to abstract a number

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<sup>11</sup>Franklin H. Knower, "Graduate Theses: An Index of Graduate Work in Speech," Speech Monographs, I-XXXVIII (1925-1971); J. Jeffery Auer, "Doctoral Dissertations in Speech, Work in Progress," Speech Monographs, XXXI-XXXVI (1964-1969); Clyde W. Dow and Max Nelson, "Abstracts of Theses in the Field of Speech," Speech Monographs, XIII-XXXVI (1946-1969); Lionel Scott, "When Luther Argued," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXVIII (February 1942), 19-23.

of significant questions. The questions will be answered in essay form and will not necessarily be dealt with categorically. The following are such questions.

1. What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? In answering this question he would consider such matters as the time, occasion and the purpose.
2. What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort? Here one would consider such items as the geographical location, the particular place of the rhetorical effort, and the composition of the audience.
3. What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's rhetoric? Here his basic ideas, ethos, pathos, logos, and style will be analyzed.
4. What was the response of the audience to the rhetorical effort? Here the writer would consider such remarks as were made about the rhetoric as well as any resulting action to which the group was motivated.

#### Definition of Rhetorical Terms

The rhetorical terms set forth in questions three and four require definition. This is necessary in that meanings sometimes vary with speech critics and it is well that a common meaning be established. As a basis for these meanings, Speech Criticism by Thonssen and Baird was consulted.

1. Ethos--The ethical proofs a speaker employs to give credibility to his message. "In general, a speaker focuses attention upon the probity of his character if he (1) associates either himself or his message with what is virtuous and elevated; (2) bestows, with propriety, tempered praise upon himself, his client, and his cause; (3) links the opponent or the opponent's cause with what is not virtuous; (4) removes or minimizes unfavorable impressions of himself or his cause previously established by his opponent; (5) relies upon authority derived from his personal experience; and (6) creates the impression of being completely sincere in his undertaking. With certain qualifications varying with the circumstances, it may be said that a speaker helps to establish the impression of sagacity if he (1) uses what



is popularly called common sense; (2) acts with tact and moderation; (3) displays a sense of good taste; (4) reveals a broad familiarity with the interests of the day; and (5) shows through the way in which he handles speech materials that he is possessed of intellectual integrity and wisdom. Finally, a speaker's good will generally is revealed through his ability (1) to capture the proper balance between too much and too little praise of his audience; (2) to identify himself properly with the hearers and their problems; (3) to proceed with candor and straightforwardness; (4) to offer necessary rebukes with tact and consideration; (5) to offset any personal reasons he may have for giving the speech; and (6) to reveal, without guile or exhibitionism, his personal qualities as a messenger of the truth."<sup>12</sup>

2. Pathos--Emotional or pathetic proof includes all those materials and devices calculated to put the audience in a frame of mind suitable for the reception of the speaker's ideas."<sup>13</sup> Some of the criteria suggested by Thonssen and Baird are: "(1) age level; (2) sex; (3) intellectual and informational status with regard to the subject; (4) the political, social, religious, and other affiliations; (5) the economic status; (6) known or anticipated attitude toward the subject; (7) known or anticipated prejudices and predispositions; (8) occupational status; (9) known interest in the subject; (10) considerations of self-interest in the subject; and (11) temper and tone of the occasion."<sup>14</sup>
3. Logos--The orderly and logical use of ideas."<sup>15</sup>
4. Style--"It represents the way in which a language pattern is used, under a given set of conditions, (1) to make ideas acceptable and (2) to get the response sought by the speaker. Style becomes the instrumentality through which ideas are made meaningful; it clothes the reason and emotion of the speaker in such words as will have intelligibility value for the hearers."<sup>16</sup>
5. Audience Reaction--"What people do as a result of hearing the speech."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 387.

<sup>13</sup>Thonssen and Baird, p. 358.

<sup>14</sup>Thonssen and Baird, pp. 361-62.

<sup>15</sup>Thonssen and Baird, pp. 331-56.

<sup>16</sup>Thonssen and Baird, p. 430.

<sup>17</sup>Thonssen and Baird, p. 449.

### Method

It was stated earlier that this would be a historical-rhetorical study. Graduate manuals refer to this as being a common form of approach to the subject.

It will be historical in that it will work within a given segment of world and church history, It will be a study involving a historical and ecclesiastical figure. This historical approach will serve as somewhat of the backdrop, over and around which the study will be made.

About the study of history J. Jeffery Auer points out that this is one of the oldest forms of research. 'More ancient than any other is the historical method of research. This is appropriate, since its object is to provide a memory of the past, to give historical perspective to the contemporary, 'to help mankind understand mankind.'<sup>18</sup> As such this study could aid in an understanding of a significant segment of both church and world history.

While employing a historical approach this research also will be making use of the rhetorical method. The Reformer will be viewed in the midst of rhetorical acts. Observations will be made about ideas, logos, pathos, ethos, and style. Finally, accounts of listeners' responses will be observed. In this manner we hope to learn something of the art of rhetoric of Dr. Luther and how it contributed to the Protestant Reformation.

Searching for hearer reaction is a vital concern for the speech critic. Thomas R. Nilsen said:

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<sup>18</sup>Auer, p. 118.

Speeches are designed to have an effect upon the hearers, usually in the form of an act to be committed or a belief to be accepted. In addition, speeches inevitably foster a way of acting and a way of believing. . . . It is the function of the speech critic to reveal the way of acting and believing fostered by the speech and the possible consequences thereof.<sup>19</sup>

### Materials

It became obvious after initial consultations with advisors and preliminary investigation of the subject that only a sampling of Luther's rhetorical efforts could be used, and that one would have to be very selective in the particular efforts to be studied.

A very obvious question at this point is, what is the basis for this selectivity? The answer will have to come from several perspectives. One will be the historical significance of one scene as compared with that of another. Which scene has the greatest historical significance? Another consideration will have to be that of chronology. In what period of life were these rhetorical efforts offered? Another reason for a given selection may very well be the impact.

The writer recognizes the high degree of subjectivity at this point. The temptation could be present to merely glorify an individual who is dear to you. Lutheran people do not recognize the Reformer as a patron saint of any kind. He was far from a man without faults. His intemperate use of language could be a study in itself.<sup>20</sup> It is a historical fact, however, that Luther did relate well to his audiences. With this study a serious attempt will

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<sup>19</sup>Thomas R. Nilsen, "Interpretive Function of the Critic," Western Speech, XXI (Spring 1957), 70.

<sup>20</sup>Plass, pp. 114-61.

be made to look at those rhetorical efforts which we believe best brings this out. The premise is rejected in part that subjectivity is a negative factor in making the kind of presentation envisioned herein.

One of the first efforts to be considered is the Reformer's stance in teaching. The teaching career of Luther begins with his first days at Wittenberg University in 1508 as the Professor of Moral Philosophy. He was there but a short time when he returned to Erfurt to assist in instructing novitiates. In 1512 he returned to Wittenberg and was groomed to succeed Dr. John Staupitz for the chair Lectura in Biblia. There is evidence that his lectures were always considered popular and well-attended and that this popularity continued throughout his university career. The section selected for analysis here will be those few years just prior to the posting of the Ninety-five Theses. A study of some of these lectures will give one an insight to the scholarship of Luther that led to the winning of the entire Wittenberg faculty to the cause of Biblical humanism. It is his recognized scholarship at this juncture that establishes much of his ethos and that also set the tone for later events.

A second rhetorical effort to be considered is the Reformer's stance in debate. There are several major confrontations that could be considered in this category all of which were significant in the course of world events. The first was Dr. John Eck in 1519. The second confrontation lasted several years (1523-1525) and was with the noted humanist of Rotterdam, Desiderius

Erasmus. This encounter was not a face-to-face meeting as we usually envision debate but rather one that found its outlet in literary form, through correspondence and pamphleteering. A third encounter of significance can be cited and this was between Luther and Zwingli at the Marburg Castle in October 1529. It is called the Marburg Colloquy which means a "meeting of minds," but before it finished a debate took place between the principal parties. Had there been a "meeting of the minds" at this point it is conceivable that we might not see Protestantism divided as it is today.

Not considered here are the academic disputations of the time.<sup>21</sup> A study of these debates would not pertain to the purpose of this study.

It is the encounter with John Eck that is chosen for analysis here for several reasons. It is a debate that occurred as a result of Luther's teaching and his posting of the 95 Theses. It is the debate which did more than anything else to widen the schism which was becoming apparent. It is a debate in the classic sense

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<sup>21</sup>Harold Grimm, ed., "Career of the Reformer: I". Luther's Works, XXX, gen. ed., Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. xx. "The disputations was frequently used in Luther's day. This was a debate in syllogistic form between a person who proposed a set of theses or propositions and one who responded. It was commonly used in medieval universities to sharpen the intellect of students, raise and clarify questions among the learned, and instruct audiences. Luther was so pleased with the weekly disputations held at Erfurt that he introduced them at the new University of Wittenberg. The theses of a disputation were carefully worked out so that the logical conclusion of one would be related to the conclusion of another and that the entire series would clarify the main thesis by a marshaling process."

of the term. There was the agenda, the preparation, the encounter across the dais, the judging and the aftermath. It is a debate which when considered with unfolding events further established the ethos of the Reformer.

A third effort to be studied will be that of Luther's preaching. To attempt a definitive study would be nigh to impossible.

No full-scale monograph on Luther the preacher has yet been written in any language, though there are a number of important studies, both homiletical and hermeneutical, which have prepared the ground for such a monograph. The reason for this lack seems to be the formidable task of studying and analyzing Luther's sermons of which more than two thousand are to be found in the Weimar edition (though it, too, does not contain all of the sermons of which transcripts are available). As Emanuel Hirsch has said, "Every Luther scholar knows that this requires years of labor." Luther's preaching activity was tremendous by any standards since it was carried out in addition to his proper vocation of lecturing to students and his astonishing literary output.<sup>22</sup>

Luther's preaching ministry began in May of 1512. His last sermon preached was on February 15, 1546. In these thirty-four years the amount of preaching was truly astounding. He preached at many different places, for many different occasions. Some sermons were polemical, some doctrinal, some in series, some on Christian education, some for church festival days, some on abuses, for funerals, marriages, baptisms, dedications and anniversaries, as well as for various university functions.

It is to be noted too, that Luther's style and preparation and delivery changed with the different periods of his public life.

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<sup>22</sup> John W. Doberstein, ed. and trans., "Sermons I" Luther's Works, LI, gen. ed., Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. xi.

Where in this variety shall one find the typical Luther? It can scarcely be done.

The sermons analyzed here are eight sermons preached by Luther on eight consecutive days, March 9 to March 16, 1522 at the town church in Wittenberg. These were sermons which were to bring peace to a troubled Wittenberg following Luther's absence of some months while "prisoner" in the Wartburg Castle in the aftermath of the Diet at Worms. This selection is chosen so as to see the man at work with a tremendous task before him. His ethical qualities are evident again.

It was obvious from the outset that materials for this study would have to be of a secondary nature. This can be a poor approach to research. It need not be, however, if one carefully selects the resource materials and relies upon well-documented and recognized secondary materials. The personal library of the writer has much to offer that is considered scholarly. In 1955 there appeared the first volume of the "American Edition" to Luther's Works. When completed the project will encompass fifty-five volumes. This writer has purchased these books as they have become available. At present he has fifty volumes.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Lewis W. Spitz, Jr., "Luther Speaks English," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVII, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 198. "The capable general editors of the American edition are Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan and Dr. Helmut Lehmann. Dr. Pelikan, a graduate of Concordia Seminary, has held professorships at Valparaiso University and Concordia Seminary and is now associate professor of historical theology in the federated theological faculty of the University of Chicago. Dr. Lehmann, who received his doctor of theology degree at Erlangen University, has taught at Hamma Divinity School and Wittenberg College and served as president of Waterloo College and Seminary at Waterloo, Ontario, Canada." Dr. Pelikan is now Titus Street Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale University.

This set of works is recognized as a "respectable piece of theological engineering."<sup>24</sup> "In its coverage, its grandness of design, and its special purpose and style the new 'American Edition' will take its place with the best of the major editions of Luther's works."<sup>25</sup> This will be one of the major resources of this work.

In addition to the foregoing, this writer has in his personal library E. G. Schwiebert's Luther and His Times. This is a well-documented and scholarly piece of work and recognized as such. In the area of history A History of the Christian Church by Lars P. Qualben and volume one of A History of Civilization by Brinton, Christopher and Wolff will be used. The Concordia Theological Monthly is a monthly journal published by the theological faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. It has appeared regularly since 1913 and contains many well-documented essays concerning Luther. Around this core of material will be drawn other secondary sources.

#### Organization

This paper will have six chapters. Each of them will serve a significant part of the whole. It is planned that conclusions and summaries to the material presented will be with each chapter. It is planned, furthermore, that suitable pictures will be incorporated into the entire presentation, such pictures will be of various Luther landmarks appropriate to the given chapter and taken

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<sup>24</sup>Spitz, p. 197.

<sup>25</sup>Spitz, p. 198.



by the writer on his two journeys to Germany.

Chapter I will bear the title "The Nature and Purpose of the Study." It will cover the following subjects: Introduction, The Working Hypothesis, Origin and Limitation of the Study, Significance of the Study, Review of Literature, The Criteria for the Rhetorical Study, Definition of Rhetorical Terms, Method, Materials, and Organization.

Chapter II will bear the title "The Era of the Reformation." It will set the historical scene which will serve as a kind of historical backdrop for the scenes that are to unfold in the ensuing chapters. It will briefly describe the economical, political and social life of 16th century Europe in which the Reformation took place and then offer a brief biography of the Reformer.

Chapter III will bear the title "In the Classroom--A Scholarly Professor." This section will show the scholarly approach of the Reformer to the theological task and the winning of the Wittenberg faculty to Biblical Humanism.

Chapter IV will bear the title "In Debate--A Dynamic Opponent." This section will treat of the debate with Dr. John Eck and the circumstances surrounding that encounter.

Chapter V will bear the title "In the Pulpit--A Popular Preacher." This section will treat of those pivotal days in Wittenberg following Luther's return from the exile created by the Diet at Worms. It will look at the eight sermons he preached to calm a troubled Wittenberg.

Chapter VI will be summary and conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ERA OF THE REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation was not the single-handed effort of one person at one point in history. It was in reality the result of a combination of circumstances that each in its own way contributed to the movement. Nor was the Reformation a movement that was planned and set in motion on a certain day, even though October 31, 1517 is somewhat universally acknowledged as the date of its genesis. If there had not been a Martin Luther there probably would have been someone else who would have assumed at some date in varying degree a similar role. It was the circumstances and the times that brought out the rhetorical qualities of the man. In this chapter we wish to look at the background before which this drama was enacted and to see in a measure how it contributed to it.

#### The Age of the Renaissance

If one were to apply dates to this period of history it would be from the 1300's until the early 1600's.<sup>26</sup> Some historians consider this three-hundred year period as the last of the

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<sup>26</sup>Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, Robert Lee Wolff, A History of Civilization, (2 vols.; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), I;439.

Middle Ages; others consider it as the beginning of the Modern Age. Moreover, historians disagree on a precise definition of the Renaissance and its cause. As soon as one scholar offers the benefit of his work, another scholar challenges it. It is not our purpose here to examine and join in this scholarly debate of historians. It is sufficient for our purpose to note that the Renaissance was a period of transition, awakening and achievement. The word means "rebirth."

It . . . began with the revival of learning along the lines of the ancient languages and Oriental culture, caused the age of Humanism in Italy, France, England, Germany, and Spain, gave a new impetus to the various forms of art along ancient classical lines (particularly painting, sculpture, and architecture), and was a powerful factor in preparing the way for the Reformation, chiefly by arousing men's minds and by causing Greek and Hebrew to be studied extensively in Western Europe.<sup>27</sup>

The Renaissance had its beginning in Italy. In the fertile Italian mind a new impetus was given to the arts and sciences. The movement, however, was not to be confined to Italy, but in the course of time was to spread to the rest of mainland Europe, to wit, France, Germany, England and the Low Countries. The Scandinavian and Iberian Peninsulas were scarcely touched.

#### Fine Arts

The field of fine arts was revolutionized during the Renaissance. Great pieces of art had existed before but with this era a significant direction was taken. This was truly an era of great masterpieces.

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<sup>27</sup> Erwin L. Lueker, ed., Lutheran Cyclopedia, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 904-05.

In the era of the Romanesque and the Gothic, sculptors, the painters of altarpieces, and the superb craftsmen who made stained-glass windows, had all enhanced the glory of the cathedrals and other splendid buildings. . . . In the Renaissance, architecture lost its old aesthetic predominance, and painting and sculpture came into their own, often still closely allied with architecture, but often functioning as "free-standing" arts. The individual picture or statue won fresh importance as an independent work of art rather than as a part of a larger whole.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas the fine arts in time past centered largely in the rendering of religious settings the "new" art depicted secular themes as well. This is the era of such renowned Italian individuals as Giotto, Botticelli, Masaccio, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Titian. In central Europe such names as Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, and Pieter Breughel became prominent.

Hand in hand with the rendering of great paintings during this era, was also to be noted the masterpieces in sculpture. Often the arts of painting and sculpturing overlapped and as was the case with paintings so sculpturing often pursued secular themes. Names of prominent sculptors who also painted well were Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo, but to this list is added Donatello. The talents of Michelangelo extended even to the field of architecture.

### Scientific Discovery

Although the achievements appear to be small when compared with the Modern Era, significant scientific developments occurred during the Renaissance. The Renaissance Era was marked as when

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<sup>28</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 450.

Men of science absorbed, enlarged, criticized, and modified the body of scientific knowledge handed down to them from the Middle Ages, and antiquity. The followers of the old scholastic tradition, the new humanists, and artists and craftsmen of every kind, all contributed to the important work of preparation.<sup>29</sup>

A significant invention of the time was the printing woodcuts that came into use. Paper was imported from the Orient. Moveable type was invented. Printing presses were springing up everywhere in the continent of Europe. This invention would prove to be an important factor in the spread of the Reformation. The rhetoric of the Reformer would find its way rapidly in print.

This era of the Renaissance was the time when gunpowder was introduced to Europe. Advanced methods of navigation came into being with the invention of the magnetic compass. The natural resources of the continent were tapped for greater use. Medicine was developed into a more proficient science. All of this was leading up to the age of Copernicus when a radically new theory of the universe was to be advanced.

#### Communication

The era of the Renaissance saw significant development in man's communication. This too, proved to be an important factor in the rhetoric of Martin Luther. The native languages of the various nations became highly developed. Yet pervading this entire period was the Latin language which remained the main means of communication in the academic and ecclesiastical world. "Scholars worked diligently to perfect their Latin and, in the later Renais-

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<sup>29</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 466.

sance, to learn at least the rudiments of Greek. They called themselves humanists."<sup>30</sup> This interest in the study of the ancient languages and the great men of the past was to be another weighty factor in the rhetoric and ethos of Martin Luther. Prominent names in the field of literature are Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, all of Italy, Chaucer of England, Rabelais of France and Erasmus of Dutch fame. To many of the dedicated humanists of this period the credit must go for discovering, piecing together and preserving the works of Cicero, Tacitus, Lucretius, and other Latin authors.<sup>31</sup> Few, perhaps would disagree with this general definition that is offered:

The Renaissance was one of the great periods of cultural and intellectual achievement in the West, a literary, artistic, and philosophical flowering that filled the centuries of transition from the medieval to the modern world.<sup>32</sup>

#### The Political Picture of Europe

While the Renaissance shows what was happening to men's minds and culture, there were significant political developments underway during this general time span which would in turn also have a bearing on the individual whose rhetoric we shall examine.

The governmental powers in western Europe were all Christian. England, France and Spain had a monarchical form of government that was growing in strength as it moved out of the feudal system and towards a parliamentary form of government. Germany, while knowing

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<sup>30</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 442.

<sup>31</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 446.

<sup>32</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 450.

what monarchs were, did not have at this time a strong central government but was showing signs of an emerging national identity and unity.<sup>33</sup> Italy trailed the above-mentioned nations in that a national unity was not to come until somewhat later.

### England

In England it was The War of Roses (1455-1495) that gave the subsequent kings great power. The power of the feudal lords had been ruined. Henry VII ascended the throne and reigned from 1485-1509. He was the first of a new dynasty. Even though England was under a parliamentary form of government, Henry and the kings who followed him ruled almost autocratically. Henry VII succeeded with strong administration where previous men had failed. His method of strong leadership was carried out through "an administrative court known as the Star Chamber."<sup>34</sup> His contribution to English rule and England's emergence can be seen from the following:

Henry VII left a well-filled treasury and a prosperous country; he had re-established law and order in an England weary of rebellion and civil war. His policies set the stage for the more dramatic reigns of his illustrious successors, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. He restored the prestige of the monarchy, made it the rallying point of English nationalism, and fixed the pattern for the Tudor policy toward Parliament, a policy often called "Tudor absolutism."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1942), p. 205.

<sup>34</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 408.

<sup>35</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 410.

France

A picture somewhat similar to this could be noted in France during this general period. England and France had engaged in The Hundred Years' War from 1338-1453. The French came out of this century old encounter as the virtual loser to England but they lost in other respects in that their monarchy was sadly crippled, having lost respect and the ability to rule. The concluding years of Charles VII's reign (1422-1461) saw France reach a settlement with England and begin to stabilize its institutions. It was his son, Louis XI (1461-1483), who was to continue the father's work, establishing a strong monarchical government that was supported by the National Assembly.<sup>36</sup>

Spain

"The accomplishments of Henry VII and Louis XI, impressive though they were, were overshadowed by those of their great Spanish contemporaries, Ferdinand and Isabella."<sup>37</sup> By means of a royal marriage in 1469 a dynastic alliance was formed between what had been two rival principalities in the Iberian Peninsula. This proved to be the springboard for a strong monarchical form of government for Spain coming at a time also in which Spain was launched into the position of being a world power with explorations in the new world. It was a grandson of Ferdinand, Charles I of Spain, later known as Emperor Charles V who was to play a significant role in the affairs of the Reformation and also the rhetoric of the Reformer.

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<sup>36</sup>Qualben, p. 206.

<sup>37</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 410.



Germany

The political situation in the German lands was somewhat different than that of England, France and Spain. Germany as yet did not have a national monarchy. The German states had their princes and also an emperor that ruled but not with a strong central form of government that we noted in the previous countries. "Germany had a political organization similar to the American union under the Articles of Confederation."<sup>38</sup> A great deal of political wrestling constantly took place because of a country that was not unified and the various princes were to choose the new emperor. It was in 1438 that the crown became a permanent possession of the House of Hapsburg. The most important emperor of this period was Maximilian I (1493-1519). He brought about a greater German consciousness so that within Germany there was a growing national spirit and identity but certainly not to the heights as was in evidence in other nations mentioned before.

Italy

The same can be said for Italy. It did not have a strong central government at this time but rather it consisted of five so-called Great States. There was a difference, however, between Germany's individualism and that of Italy.

In Germany the fifteenth century was the Age of the Princes; in Italy it was the Age of the Despots, power politicians par excellence, brilliant, ruthless, cultivated rulers who did much to set the style of the Renaissance.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Qualben, p. 207.

<sup>39</sup> Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 417.

The Economic Situation in Europe

The economic situation over this general period of time appears to be but one segment of a climate of changes. The economy of Europe might be best summed up as in a spiraling change. There was a new social class that was emerging with the Age of the Renaissance. Prior to this time there was the upper class which consisted of the nobility and the clergy. There was also the lower class which was composed of the poor, the serfs and peasants. But now a powerful economic middle class began to exert a strong economical-political influence. Trade was expanding throughout the Mediterranean and the western European communities. This growth in trade in turn spawned other economic developments. There was more need for industry and the development of natural resources. Powerful economic blocs were formed to protect these expanding interests. One of the most notable of these was the Hanseatic League of northern Germany,<sup>40</sup> although others could be cited as well. The following quotation gives one an idea of its economic impact and influence.

Its ships carried Baltic fish, timber, furs, metals, and amber to London, to Bruges in Flanders, and to other Western European markets. For a time, Hanseatic vessels controlled the lucrative business of transporting wool from England to Flanders. Hanseatic merchants, traveling overland with carts and pack-trains, took their Baltic wares to Italy. The Hanse maintained especially large outposts at Venice, at Bruges, at Russian Novgorod, and at London, where its headquarters was known as the Steelyard. At the Norwegian port of Bergen, the Hanseatic contingent was said to number 3,000 individuals. These outposts enjoyed so many special rights, and they were so largely ruled by their own German officials and their own German laws, that they were Hanseatic colonies on foreign soil.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 427.

<sup>41</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, pp. 427-28.

One prominent name of economic interest during this time was that of Jacob Fugger of Augsburg. His dates are 1473-1523. It is said that this family made the small German town of Augsburg the financial capital of Europe during this time. The Fugger family was one that was to join the Protestant cause. It must be said in all candor, however, that their motives at all times were not the loftiest. There exists in downtown Augsburg even yet today a church by the name of St. Anne's which to this writer appears as much as a monument to the Fuggers as it is to the glory of God. This writer visited the Church of St. Anne in the summer of 1972.

The economic situation of Europe on the eve of the Reformation could well be summed up with these words:

These great merchant companies, with their world trade and their enormous capital, soon superseded the local guilds. A capitalist order, consisting primarily of merchants and bankers, created a proletariat class within the cities, causing a great cleavage between rich and poor. The growing hatred between the rich merchant and the poor was intensified by ostentatious display of burgher wealth, by luxurious living, and by corrupt morals.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Religious and Social Life of Europe

As has been shown earlier, the general period of the Renaissance saw the emergence of stronger national government. There was a genuine need to bring the collapsing feudal-manorial society into something that was easier to control and regulate by means of stronger central authority. The same can be said in a general way of the church during this time. There was a restlessness and an

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<sup>42</sup>Qualben, p. 211.

awakening as was evident by the calls for reform. There was internal struggle and conflict. There was also a much stronger central administration that was to develop that would exercise a stronger authority from the top down.

For whatever else the Renaissance period may be called, one thing that it certainly was, was a religious period.<sup>43</sup> The towns and cities were heavily endowed with beautiful churches and cathedrals that were both objects of pride and objects of use. "The city of Cologne with its 50,000 inhabitants had eleven great churches, nineteen parishes, twenty-two monasteries, twelve hospitals, and seventy-six convents."<sup>44</sup> It could be called an era of pious Christianity especially as far as the common people were concerned.

It is this inner restlessness that commands our attention briefly, for the 16th century Protestant Reformation with Martin Luther as its central figure, was not an isolated incident but a climactic one. It could be called the resulting incident of a number of calls for reform. We would briefly trace the church from the medieval to the Renaissance. This description is offered of the late medieval church:

Simony, or the sale of church offices, frequent and open concubinage even among the clergy, control of church fiefs by laymen (the problem of lay investiture), corruption and decay of the originally strict Benedictine Rule, the loss of papal authority and prestige that followed the subjection of the papacy to local Roman politics--all were phases of the Church's involvement in the worldly scramble for wealth and power in the

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<sup>43</sup>Qualben, p. 212.

<sup>44</sup>Qualben, p. 212.

tenth century. The gap between Christian ideals and Christian practice had become too great for men who were at all sensitive to those ideals to bear. Reform had to come, whether it came from within or from without.<sup>45</sup>

There were numerous efforts made at reform in the following centuries. These attempts were strong for a while but then they seemed to lose momentum. Efforts at reform often perpetuated still other crises. A most notable attempt was the Cluniac Reform Movement which originated out of the Benedictine monastery at Cluny, France. Its purpose was a kind of clerical house-cleaning. "By the 12th century, the Cluniac movement was spent and was itself in need of reforms, which the Cistercians sought to apply."<sup>46</sup>

Efforts at reform were not sustained. Had they been, perhaps different chapters to history would have been written. The church at the dawn of the Renaissance and the era of the Reformation had still not found a method to deal effectively with internal dissatisfaction. This description is offered of the Renaissance Church:

The Renaissance Church as a whole exhibited a low moral tone, although many honorable exceptions to the prevailing laxity and backwardness could be found. Priests were often illiterate and immoral, ill prepared for the effective exercise of their parochial responsibilities. Many bishops--following good medieval precedent, it must be admitted--behaved as politicians, not as churchmen. Perhaps the worst shortcomings existed at the top, in the papacy itself. In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the papacy experienced a series of crises--The Babylonian Captivity, the Great Schism, The Conciliar Movement. It emerged from the ordeal with its power reinvigorated, notably by its victory over the reformers who sought to make the church councils a check against unlimited papal absolutism. The triple crises, however, had greatly damaged the spiritual prestige of the office.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, p. 307.

<sup>46</sup>Erwin L. Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 239.

<sup>47</sup>Brinton, Christopher, and Wolff, pp. 471-72.

To the popes of the Renaissance credit must be given for their interest in art and learning. They made Rome a rich depository of the works of the Renaissance masters. This writer has twice had the privilege of going through the Vatican Museum, St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel. Such a collection of art is truly a sight to behold. Yet at the same time it must be acknowledged that the popes were somewhat obsessed with their collections of art and were indifferent to the spiritual functions of their office.<sup>48</sup> To build such a magnificent structure as St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Leo X additionally burdened an already burdened Empire with heavy ecclesiastical taxes.

Rumblings of reform could be heard in England with a disgruntled priest by the name of John Wyclif. He died in 1384. About one hundred years later John Hus (1369-1415) was active in Bohemia. He was silenced by being condemned to death at the Council of Constance, but the seeds of dissent sown by Hus were not destroyed but merely driven underground to re-surface at a later time. In Florence, Italy, Jerome Savonarola met the same fate in 1498. On May 23 he was hanged and his body burned. This writer had the privilege of visiting the sites of the martyrdom of these two men, for Hus it was Freiburg, Germany and for Savonarola it was Florence, Italy where a plaque in the city square now identifies the location.

Throughout Europe, the voice of dissent and the call of reform could be heard. This is the ecclesiastical picture at the time that Luther arrived on the scene. His dates are 1483-1546.

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<sup>48</sup> Brinton, Christopher, and Wolff, p. 472.

A Brief Biography of Martin Luther

The date of Martin Luther's birth was November 10, 1483. The place was Eisleben in the province of Prussian Saxony and in what is presently included in the Eastern Zone of Germany (D. D. R.). His parents were Hans and Margarethe Luther (Ludher, Lüder, Leuder, Lutter, Lauther, all of which philologists trace back to the old German name Chlotar<sup>49</sup>). The original building is no longer standing. A replica of the home, built upon the original foundation is open for the tourist to observe.<sup>50</sup>

The Luthers lived in Eisleben only six months after Martin was born. They moved to the town of Mansfeld where the father sought his future livelihood in the copper-mining industry. The first years there had been difficult but by the time Martin was ready for school the family's financial circumstances had improved greatly. The father even became one of Mansfeld's leading citizens.

The homelife of the Luther family was one of medieval Catholic piety. He learned the rudiments of the Christian religion from these concerned parents. A high level of discipline was maintained in the parent-child relationship. The rod was not spared in the home as well as the school. Young Martin received his share of these thrashings. This, however, is not considered unusual in that corporal punishment was considered standard training at the time.

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<sup>49</sup>E. G. Schwiebert, "The Formative Years of Doctor Luther," Concordia Theological Monthly, vol. XVII, no. 4 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), p. 244.

<sup>50</sup>F. Berendt, Die Beziehungen Anhalts zu Kur-Sachsen von 1212 bis 1485 (Halle, 1907), pp. 42-43; Boedler, p. 66. (Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 104).

Luther received his elementary education in the village school of Mansfeld, attending until about age fourteen. The subject matter consisted of "the medieval Trivium of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric."<sup>51</sup> By the year 1497 the financial circumstances of Hans Luther had improved to such an extent that he was able to send his son to a boarding school in Magdeburg which was maintained by the Brethren of the Common Life. The three following years were spent at Eisenach (1498-1501) at St. George's School. His proficiency with Latin was acquired here which was one of the main matriculation requirements for the university.

From Eisenach he, at the age of 18 years, went to the University of Erfurt, the most celebrated institution of learning in Germany at that time. The enrollment was a little above 2,000. Luther distinguished himself as a university student. Melanchthon states that "the extraordinary talents of the young man were at that time the admiration of the whole University." His fellow students referred to him as "the learned philosopher" and as "the musician." He took his Bachelor of Arts degree already in 1502 (19 years old) and his Master of Arts degree in 1505 (22 years old).<sup>52</sup>

One must wonder if the previous remarks of Philip Melanchthon do not indicate a degree of subjectivity which was conditioned by so many later years of associated work. In taking his B. A. degree he ranked thirtieth in a class of fifty-seven. This is hardly a distinguished mark at this point. When he received his M. A. degree he ranked second in a class of seventeen.<sup>53</sup> Such a ranking, with attending circumstances could have been the area of reference by his later co-worker.

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<sup>51</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 111.

<sup>52</sup>Qualben, p. 222.

<sup>53</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 128.



Instead of pursuing a career in teaching at this time he yielded to the wishes of his parents and began the study of law at the same university. At this time, however, there had to be a religious problem with which he was internally wrestling. In his later years he revealed what it was. It is sufficient for our purposes here to note that because of this religious problem he decided to seek his own peace of mind in monastic life and on July 17, 1505 he applied for admission to the "Black Cloister" maintained by the Augustinian order in Erfurt.

The next few years saw a rapid succession of events. All in their own way contributed to shape his theological mind. He became a consecrated monk in 1506. In the spring months of 1507 he was ordained a priest. After his ordination he continued his theological studies.

In the regular university there were four steps in the training of a graduate student leading to the Doctor's degree. The Biblical scholar first completed a rather long course of study which gave him the title Biblicus, or lector, for it entitled him to deliver elementary lectures on the Bible. This was followed by a second degree, Formatus, which implied that he had now mastered the critical terminology of the medieval dictionaries. The third degree was Sententiarius, which entitled the graduate to lecture on the first two books of Peter Lombard's Sentences. The final step before the doctorate, Licentiatus, granted the candidate the right to become a regular lecturer in theology. The promotion toward the doctorate involved the successful participation in a public debate conducted by one of the leading professors in that graduate school.<sup>54</sup>

On March 9, 1509 he earned the title Baccalaureus Biblicus. He was called to lecture at the University of Wittenberg while continuing his studies. By that fall he had achieved the third de-

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<sup>54</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 148-49.

gree along this educational route. He returned to the University at Erfurt. From November 1510 to March 1511 he went overland by foot to Rome. He was called once again to the University at Wittenberg in the summer of 1511 upon his return from Rome. At the University of Wittenberg he was promoted for the doctorate by the head of the Augustinian Order, John Staupitz, whose theological chair on the faculty he was to inherit. On October 18, 1512 the degree of Doctor Biblicus was conferred upon him and since it was the Elector who had supplied the educational fees he added also the stipulation that Luther be appointed for life to the chair of lectura in Biblia.

The years that follow his appointment to the lifetime position at the University in Wittenberg will not be outlined in detail at this point since significant excerpts of the rhetoric of the Reformer and its historical setting will be looked at in the chapters that follow. Only a brief outline is offered for the sake of historical continuity. The years from 1512 to 1517 were times in which Luther's theological development became apparent and his popularity and scholarship evident as well. The years that followed 1517 were times of bitter turmoil and conflict with the mother church and its representatives. In 1522 he re-emerged following his banishment at Worms in 1521. His work at Wittenberg, the spread of the Protestant Reformation, the firming-up of the churches, occupied the remainder of his life. Significant samples of his rhetorical contributions from these periods of his professional life will be examined in the material that follows.

Martin Luther died on February 18, 1546 in the city of Eisleben not far from the place of his birth. He had been asked to mediate a bitter family quarrel among the Princes of Mansfeld. This strain, on top of an already strenuous life proved to be too much and death was attributed to a severe heart attack that took place within hours after a peaceful settlement of the dispute. He lies buried at the foot of the pulpit within the Castle Church at Wittenberg.



The Reverend Mr. Hilgendorf standing by the tomb of Luther which is at the base of the pulpit in the Castle Church.

## CHAPTER III

### IN THE CLASSROOM--A SCHOLARLY PROFESSOR

#### Preliminary Considerations

The following analysis of Luther's teaching will be focused with four questions: (1) What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? (2) What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort? (3) What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's teaching? (4) What was the response of the audience to the rhetorical effort?

#### The Historical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

The teaching career of Dr. Martin Luther at the University of Wittenberg began in 1512. As nearly as can be determined his first formal lecture was on October 25, a Monday, at seven o'clock in the morning.<sup>55</sup> Since it was a stipulation of the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, that Luther be appointed to his professorship for life, the latter continued, except for periodic interruptions, to lecture on Bible interpretation until the time of his death on February 18, 1546. He was a member of the theological faculty. A part of the oath that he made at the time that he received his doctor's degree in theology was that he would not

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<sup>55</sup>Paul E. Kretzman, "Luther's Academic Relations to Erfurt and Wittenberg," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. I, No. 4 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1930), pp. 278-79.

teach any false doctrine.

During the almost thirty-four years that Luther held his professorship he lectured on but thirteen of the Bible's sixty-six books. His lectures on Genesis, Psalms and Galatians were repeated at later dates so that he produced sixteen lecture series in all during his professional career at Wittenberg. In researching this material this writer was able to construct the chart on the following page which shows the dates of the Reformer's lectures.

A few of the dates on the chart on the next page are not known precisely. Luther's lecturing duties were frequently interrupted by such things as sickness, travels, pressing duties of a different nature and by the plague which caused a closure of the university for a while.

Prior to that eventful day of October 31, 1517 when Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church, he had lectured on five different books of the Bible. He was delivering his fifth lecture series at the time of the posting. It was by the fall of 1517 that the ethos of Luther as a scholarly teacher was becoming established and the course of the later Reformation predestined.

A person cannot select just one of these series of Luther's lectures and say that this is "typical" of the man, nor can one say at precisely a given point in these lectures that his credentials as a scholar are recognized. One can, however, take note of the change of events, the change of the person, the change of the circumstances which contribute to the establishing of that ethos.

LUTHER'S LECTURES

<u>Series Number and Topic</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Data</u>
1. Genesis	1512 (Oct. 25)--1513-(?)	Information scarce; Repeated and enlarged 1535-1545
2. Psalms	1513 (Aug. 16)--1515 (Oct. 21)	Repeated 1518-1521
3. Romans	1515 (Nov. 3)--1516 (Sept. 7)	
4. Galatians	1516 (Oct. 27)--1517 (March 10)	Repeated 1531 and 1535
5. Hebrews	1517 (March 27)--1518 (April)	
6. Psalms	1518 (?)--1521 (?)	Precise dates not known Second series on Psalms
7. Deuteronomy	1525 (?)	
8. Ecclesiastes	1526 (July 30)--(Nov. 7)	
9. Isaiah	1527 (Summer)--1530 (Feb. 22)	
10. I John	1527 (Aug.)--(Nov. 7)	
11. Titus	1527 (Nov. 11)--(Dec. 13)	
12. Philemon	1527 (Dec. 13-18)	
13. I Timothy	1528 (Jan. 13)--(March 31)	
14. Song of Solomon	1530 (March 7)--1531 (June 22)	
15. Galatians	1531 (July 3)--1535	Second series on Galatians
16. Genesis	1535 (June 1)--1545 (Nov. 17)	Second series on Genesis; his largest and longest work

The years of 1512 to 1517 were years of rapid recognition of Luther as an appealing scholar and lecturer. The years that follow and until his death were years of functioning within his established ethos. For our purposes here we shall be looking primarily at those formative years prior to October 1517, and especially at the years of 1515 and 1516 with his lectures on Romans when his ethos as a recognized scholar begins to emerge and he becomes recognized as the Voice of Wittenberg.

### The Physical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

#### Wittenberg and the University

The city of Wittenberg was located along the Elbe River in Electoral Saxony. This was the place where the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, had decided that a university should be founded. The year of its beginning is given as 1502. He immediately "launched an extensive remodeling and building program."<sup>56</sup> He "sought in this newly founded academy to rival the prestige of the century-old University of Leipzig."<sup>57</sup> The dreams and aspirations of the Elector had not been realized, however, for "the new foundation had not flourished according to hope, and the elector endeavored to secure better teachers by inviting the Augustinians and Franciscans to supply three new professors."<sup>58</sup> It was with these preliminaries that the choice of Martin Luther was made. His work and activity

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<sup>56</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 201.

<sup>57</sup>Roland Bainton, Here I Stand, (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 53.

<sup>58</sup>Bainton, p. 53.

within the Augustinian Order and his previous teaching experience at the university had caught the attention of his superior, Dr. John Staupitz. His potential as an independent scholar was recognized. Immediately after receiving his doctorate in October of 1512 he assumed his duties as a professor and lecturer on the Bible.

#### Lutherhaus (Lutherhalle)

When one tours Lutherstadt, as Wittenberg is called today, the visitor gets the impression that it is a place that has passed its niche in history. The university is no longer functioning at Wittenberg. It was combined with the University at Halle in 1817. A large number of Wittenberg University buildings, however, are still to be seen. Many of them have been restored and retained for historical purposes since this was the seat of the Protestant Reformation. Among the buildings that one can tour is the Lutherhaus which is now a national Luther museum. This building had been called the Black Cloister. It had been the place where Luther lived when arriving at Wittenberg in 1512 and a portion of it on the second floor was made ready for the Luthers when the Reformer married in 1525. On the second story of this Black Cloister there was also another room. Its dimensions today are twenty-five feet by seventy feet. It was used for lecturing purposes. It is here where Luther is said to have delivered his earlier lectures on the Psalms and Romans. Student space in the classroom had to be a premium for a few years later, 1520, "George Spalatin heard Luther lecture to 400 students,"<sup>59</sup> although one must wonder if it was in

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<sup>59</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 230.





The statue of Luther in the Wittenberg town square with the Reverend Mr. Hilgendorf standing to the right of center.



The main windows of the Lutherhaus in Wittenberg.



Rev. and Mrs. Hilgendorf seated in the narrow twin seats before the bull's-eye window panes of the main window niche of the Lutherhaus.



The heavy oak table in the living room of Lutherhaus.





The Luther study in the Lutherhaus.



The large lecture stand in the room where Luther first taught on the second floor of Lutherhaus.

this room because of the size. If a class was too large for this room, Luther lectured in a larger room of the Collegium Friederici some 500 yards away."<sup>60</sup>

### The Rhetorical Characteristics of Luther's Teaching

#### First Years of Lecturing

When we take a close look at Luther at this time we get a picture of a man who was feeling his way along in the first lectures that he gave upon assuming his position in 1512.<sup>61</sup> Luther knew little Hebrew and Greek (the languages of the Bible) at this time.

As Meissinger, the student of Luther's early lectures on the Psälms and Romans, has shown, Luther was not even an accomplished exegete when he began to lecture in 1512 and 1513. He followed the old medieval method of breaking down the text, giving first a crude word-for-word explanation of the Latin text called Glossae, and then a more detailed interpretation called Scholia.<sup>62</sup>

Luther's first lectures of note were on the Book of the Psalms. These were started on August 16, 1513 and continued until October 21, 1515. This selection was probably made by him because of his own personal interest in the Psalter. One of the directives to a monk of the Augustinian order was that daily use be made of the Psalms.<sup>63</sup>

His procedure in teaching the Psalms was to provide the students with copies of the Latin Vulgate text. There was consid-

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<sup>60</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 230.

<sup>61</sup>Ewald M. Plass, This Is Luther, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p. 301.

<sup>62</sup>Schwiebert, p. 281.

<sup>63</sup>Hilton C. Oswald, "Lectures on Romans" Luther's Works (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), XXV, p. ix.

erable space left between the lines for classroom notations.

In these spaces Luther carefully entered the clean copy of his interlinear and marginal glosses in Latin, copied carefully from previously assembled slips of paper. According to the custom of that day, these notes were intended to be dictated almost verbatim in the classroom and entered by the student in his own copy of the Latin text of the Scripture. . . . In addition to these glosses, Luther also prepared an extended commentary on various selected passages, written out in detail as a separate preparation for the lectures. This type of added commentary was known as scholia, a plural for which one rarely sees the singular scholion or scholium.<sup>64</sup>

When this series of lectures on the Psalms was given Luther certainly had not been teaching long enough to establish himself as a teacher of prominence. We can observe, however, the methodology he employed. We also have a significant comment from him which indicates that he must always have sought a close identity with his Saxon constituency which is always a vital consideration in the establishing of ethos. His effect seemed always to reach beyond the classroom and into the larger community of people. He characterized his work on the Psalms as . . .

. . . not for Nurembergers, that is, cultured and smart people, but for coarse Saxons, for whom Christian instruction cannot be chewed and prechewed enough even by my wordiness.<sup>65</sup>

#### A Changing Lecturer

It is with the next series of lectures which was on the Epistle to the Romans that we see especially the emergence of the ethos of the Reformer as a scholarly professor. It is this section therefore which is selected here for closer scrutiny.

Luther began his lectures on Romans on November 3, 1515.

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<sup>64</sup>Oswald, pp. ix-x.

<sup>65</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, "Selected Psalms III" Luther's Works, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), XIV, p. ix.

He started with somewhat the same classroom methodology as was used in the lectures of the previous session on the Psalms.

Equipped with this preparation--28 sheets of glosses and 123 sheets of scholia--Luther entered the lecture hall each Monday and Friday morning at six o'clock for three semesters, from the spring of 1515 until fall 1516, to dictate and lecture on Paul's Epistle to the Romans in the manner of his time.<sup>66</sup>

What must it have been like to be in a classroom with Luther teaching especially as he delivered his lectures on Romans? Information concerning his appearance, his methodology and his mannerisms is fairly accurate at just this time.

Let us get a mental picture of his appearance. This is somewhat vital when considering ethical matters. Appearances do change with the passing of time. One description of Luther at this time comes from the year 1519. It is recognized that this is several years after the time that the lectures on Romans were made yet the assumption is made here that his general appearance did not change that much in the few intervening years. This description is attributed to Peter Schad (Mosellanus).

Martin is of middle height with slender body, worn out both by study and care, so that you can almost count his bones. He is in the vigor of manhood; his voice is sharp and clear. . . . He has no lack of matter in speaking, for an immense stock of ideas and words are at his command. Perhaps you miss in him judgment and method in using his stores. In daily life and manners he is cultivated and affable, having nothing of the stoic and nothing supercilious about him; rather he plays the man of all seasons. He is a joker in society, vivacious and sure. . . . But what most men blame in him is that in answering he is more imprudent and cutting than is safe for a reformer of the church, or than is decorous for a theologian.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Oswald, p. x. It is to be noted here that the date for the beginning of the Romans lectures differs with the preceding paragraph. The first date seems to fit best in the lecture chronology.

<sup>67</sup>Plass, p. 32.

In later life, especially after controversy had followed him, Luther was at times very rough in his language on his opponents. We gain a different picture of him as he stands before a class of students and also as he meets them in their university life.

Particularly in Germany, the "land of professors," there is frequently a great gulf fixed, both by custom and by choice, between the cathedra and the bench. The relation between professor and student is often coldly impersonal; and the interest of the men of learning in those who sit at their feet is purely professional. It was different in the case of Professor Luther. His warm, sociable nature moved him to take a personal interest in his students. He became their spiritual mentor in and out of the classroom, exercising a fatherly supervision particularly over their moral life and cautioning them against the pleasant but perilous vices of adolescence and early manhood. The students appreciated such interest and would ask the Doctor to act as judge in their differences and difficulties. They had learned in the classroom to have confidence both in his head and his heart.<sup>68</sup>

This love of Luther for the classroom and the company of students can be seen also from one of his remarks.

Some masters rate the proud youngsters to make them feel what they are, but I always praise the arguments of the boys, no matter how crude they are, for Melanchthon's strict manner of overturning the poor fellows so quickly displeases me. Everyone must rise by degrees, for no one can attain to excellence suddenly.<sup>69</sup>

#### The Romans Text

What Luther said in his lectures, especially his lectures on Romans, can be noted with a fair degree of accuracy. Besides extant copies of Luther's own manuscript there exists also copies of student notebooks.

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<sup>68</sup>Plass, p. 303.

<sup>69</sup>Preserved Smith, The Life and Letters of Martin Luther, (Boston: Houghton, ca. 1911), p. 331, (cited in Plass, p. 303).

From the composite of these notebooks we get a very fair picture of what Luther actually said in the lectures, and it is interesting to compare the students' record with what the lecturer's own manuscript tells us he had planned to say. What the students heard occasionally helps to explain what we see in Luther's manuscript. It is obvious that Luther dictated his glosses to his students with scrupulous faithfulness to his manuscript, but in the scholia he apparently abbreviated and omitted with complete freedom and occasionally substituted new materials or exposition previously given in his lectures on the Psalms.<sup>70</sup>

The material on the following page is an actual copy of Luther's notes over the section of Romans 3:1-9. The bold print in the center of the page with the wide line spaces is the Latin Vulgate copy of the New Testament, the most common version of the Scriptures available at just that time. Luther had these sheets printed and furnished especially for his students. In this copy of Luther's the handwritten notes are in Latin. Luther would read the Latin Vulgate text and as he read, he would dictate short explanatory paraphrases of individual words and expressions. These were to be jotted between the lines and they were called inter-linear glosses. As this process continued down the page, Luther would stop and dictate notes that were to be written in the margin. These were called marginal glosses.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the following material the professor had prepared for himself an additional set of notes that were much longer. In these he would discuss at length the meanings of certain phrases and sections of the verse being considered. These longer notes of Luther were called scholia. The contents of the

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<sup>70</sup>Oswald, p. x.

<sup>71</sup>Oswald, pp. x-xi.



*Mibi videtur...*  
 Vid ergo amplius iudaeo ē: aut quare vultis crederi?  
 etiamis? multum per omnē modū. Prīmū quidē quia  
 non per crederit sonitus eloquia dei. Quid enim quidam  
 illorum non crediderūt? Nūquid incredūlitās, illorum fidem  
 dei eucubabit? Absit. Est autē deus verax, oīs autē homo  
 mendax. Sicut scriptū ē: Ut iustificeris in locutōib⁹ tuis  
 & vincas cū iudicans. Si autē iniquitas nra iusticiam dei  
 commendat: quid dicemus? Nūquid iniquus est deus qui  
 iustificat? Iniquū hominē dico: Absit. Alioquin quō iu-  
 dicabit deus hūc mūdū? Si enim gentes dei in meo men-  
 dacio abutūt in gloriā ipsius, quid adhuc & ego tanq̄  
 peccator iudicor? & nō sicut blasphemamur: & sicut aiūt  
 quidā nos dicere? Faciam⁹ mala ut veniāt bona. Quōs  
 dā nō iūsta ē. Quid ergo? Præcellimus eos? nequaē

*Et qd dicitur...*

Page from Luther's Lecture Notes on Romans 3:1-9, with marginal notes in Luther's handwriting. Presented to the author by Johannes Ficker of Halle, Germany

From Luther and His Times by E. G. Schwiebert, copyright 1950 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission.

scholia were authoritative statements from other sections of the Scriptures, from the church fathers, and even from some of the more recent teachers of the church. These were called auctoritates. These scholia allowed the teacher more freedom of response. It is in these notes especially where one gets an insight into the mind that produced them. He would praise or criticize the way a given section was being applied to the real-life situation.<sup>72</sup> It is in this section that we too would look for the Reformer's ethical development.

#### A Developing Humanist

Before we do this we must recall something that was mentioned in the previous chapter. This was the Age of the Renaissance. The study of ancient languages and cultures was strongly encouraged. This was called humanism. Luther had relied heavily upon the Latin Vulgate prior to this. A significant contribution to Bible study, however, had recently been made by Erasmus of Rotterdam. This noted humanist had collected the best of Greek manuscripts available on the New Testament. In February of 1516 Erasmus' New Testament was published by the Froben Press. It is known that in August of 1516 that Luther had a copy and was using it in his lectures on Romans. Not to be overlooked at this time was the contributions that were made also in Hebrew research and the publication of De Rudimentis Hebraicis of John Reuchlin. These were scholarly tools which Luther was starting to incorporate into his Romans' lectures and it was to quickly change the whole character of his classroom delivery.

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<sup>72</sup>Oswald, pp. x-xi.

Luther himself was becoming a Biblical Humanist. These new tools of research became the basis for biblical studies.

Luther's study of Greek and Hebrew after 1514 caused him to mature very rapidly into a great Biblical exegete and by 1516 was beginning to effect Spalatin quite profoundly. As the University of Wittenberg was being transformed into a school in which Biblical Humanism was the key to theology, this change is reflected in the materials added to the Castle Library.<sup>73</sup>

What evidence do we have with the precise text of Romans 3:1-9 that Luther was now starting to use the Greek? This writer searched through the scholia for evidence of this. (Let it be stated here in all candor that we are not interested in discussing the theology of this section but the humanistic methodology of Luther.) In his notes on verse one as he goes for a precise rendering of the words he says: "but as the Greek has it." He appeals to his linguistic knowledge. He does this again in his notes under verse four. "The Greek has: 'God shall be' or 'let God be truthful,' as a statement in which we express not so much the truthfulness of God as a confession of His truthfulness, so that the meaning is: It is right that all should confess and admit that God is truthful."<sup>74</sup>

Working through the scholia of this section one continually finds an ethical appeal in such phrases as "And thus the meaning is . . . ," "This authoritative statement must not be taken here as . . . ," "For originally it was written . . . ," "And this is a true statement . . . ," "But others say . . . ," "But according

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<sup>73</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 252.

<sup>74</sup>Oswald, pp. 194-97.

to my understanding I . . . ," "And thus the meaning is entirely clear . . . ," "Or, as the Greek says . . . ," "The answer is . . . ," "Thus it agrees with the Hebrew . . . ," "Hence, the Hebrew text says . . . ," "Because it speaks causally at least in our translation and in the Septuagint . . ." and "Therefore we have to yield. . . ."75

When one looks at Luther's lectures towards the end of his series on the Romans we see that his scholia are liberally sprinkled with Hebrew, Greek, Latin and German grammatical notations. When he was discussing the ninth chapter of Romans and the seventeenth verse he was trying to ascertain the meaning of the word "power." Within one paragraph he puts much of his linguistics together and shows some disagreement with the Latin text.

. . . for our translator surprisingly exchanges this for what people otherwise call "strength" (fortitudo), "dominion" (imperium), or "power" (virtus, potentia, potestas).

But there is a great difference, for in Greek *δύναμις*, in Hebrew *כֹּחַ*, in Latin vis, vires, robur or most properly, virtus. . . . In German we say . . . *kräftig*, or *mächtig*.76

As Luther gropes for a precise meaning to the words of the text we see him belaboring the subject with Latin, Greek, Hebrew and German for several paragraphs following the previous comment.

But *ἐξουσία* in Greek properly means "power" (potestas), or a free ability and permission to act . . . And there is still another word in Hebrew for our term "strength" (fortitudo).

It is *קָוֵץ*, that is, something hard and robust. . . .

<sup>75</sup>Oswald, pp. 198-220.

<sup>76</sup>Oswald, p. 392.

In German we call this fest ("firm"). . . . For וְשֵׁעַ (virtus) and וְתִיבָה (fortitudo), if they are equally strong, do nothing.<sup>77</sup>

One cannot determine with accuracy the precise time when Luther started his Greek and Hebrew studies. We can come up only with approximate dates

Luther probably did not begin to study Greek seriously until 1514. No doubt he was aided by John Lang's knowledge of Greek and his rich classical library. In 1516, when Luther began to use Erasmus' Greek New Testament, he was still a novice; but as he matured through 1517 and 1518, his mastery of Greek and Hebrew became more apparent and with it, also, his understanding of the Bible. By 1520 Luther was developing into an able linguist, and this maturity is well reflected in the three major tracts written in 1520 and in his second lecture on the Psalms.<sup>78</sup>

#### Turmerlebnis

No consideration of the series of lectures on the Epistle to the Romans would be complete without taking note of a fundamental change that was gradually becoming apparent in the outlook, understanding, and attitude of the Reformer. It is this series of lectures which profoundly affected the spiritual life of the man. He had been trained in scholastic theology with the view that God was the stern Judge of the sinner. The God that he was beginning to understand was one totally different from this. He was a loving and merciful Father who did not require that man prove himself worthy of God's grace to gain acceptance. Already while lecturing on the Psalms he became aware of this change that was growing within him. This is commonly called the Turmerlebnis, or Tower Discovery. It can be called the break with Scholasticism and the beginning of

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<sup>77</sup>Oswald, p. 393.

<sup>78</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 281.

the Biblical Humanist. If the Reformation is to be pointed to a particular date it would have to be this event, or awakening that took place sometime in the fall of 1514.<sup>79</sup> This experience made a different kind of lecturer out of Luther.

A salesman, to be an effective salesman, must believe his product. It is known that some companies require their sales personnel to buy and use the product they must sell. For whatever else the Turnerlebnis may reveal it certainly did this, it convinced the professor of his product. This attitude began to make itself manifest in his lectures on Romans. "Luther worked his way toward a historical-Christological interpretation that was to be the core and center not only of his teaching but also of his preaching and living."<sup>80</sup> The ethos of the Reformer can be observed in that he was a person through whom his convictions show in his lectures. This was evident to his students.

#### The Audience Response to the Rhetorical Effort

Luther's ethos became evident also by the effects of his lectures. As early as 1514 he was an educational unknown, passed over in Trittenheim's Schriftstellerlexikon, a kind of Who's Who of German university professors.<sup>81</sup> Within a few years his name was to be known throughout central Europe.

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<sup>79</sup> Available information would indicate that the exact date of this religious experience is still much in doubt. It is sufficient for our purposes here to note that this is an approximate date.

<sup>80</sup> Oswald, p. xi.

<sup>81</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 293.

The first reactions to Luther's lectures were upon the student body. An enthusiasm was evident. "Already by 1515 Luther's 'New Theology' had made quite an impression on the Wittenberg student body."<sup>82</sup> The same enthusiasm was soon to be evidenced in the Wittenberg faculty. One by one the entire faculty was won for the position of Biblical Humanism.

Biblical Humanism was flourishing in the University of Wittenberg by 1518; and it is also ample testimony to Luther's unusual gifts of leadership for in four years he had risen from a comparatively unknown young professor to the spiritual leader of the whole institution.<sup>83</sup>

Attendance at the university had dipped prior to 1515, but with the spreading word of the different kind of university because of Biblical Humanism the enrollment began to grow. The tourist to Wittenberg today, is told that as the lectures of Luther grew in popularity that even the local merchants would be regular attenders in the classroom. During some of the stormy years the attendance dipped but later reached some significant levels. This is attributed to the effects of Luther at Wittenberg.

Elector Frederick was getting the popular university he desired.

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<sup>82</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 293

<sup>83</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 302.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN DEBATE--A DYNAMIC OPPONENT

#### Preliminary Considerations

The following analysis of Luther's debating will be focused with four questions: (1) What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? (2) What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort? (3) What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's debating? (4) What was the response of the audience to the rhetorical effort?

#### The Historical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

The amount of material available for researching the rhetoric of Martin Luther as it pertains to the Leipzig Debate with John Eck is most abundant. It might appear from this fact that the topic at hand in this chapter would be an easy one to relate and evaluate, but hardly so. This writer found this to be a formidable task.

Why should this be? There are several reasons for it and this writer believes that they should be so stated so that any reader is partially aware of the finer judgments and evaluations which had to be constantly considered. One of the most obvious of reasons would be that the material used for this chapter comes from either Protestant or Roman Catholic pens. Some of these works are scholarly and some are not. These must be carefully worked through. We must



bear in mind also that the debate was on theological topics. Any recorder would view the event through his own theological pre-conceptions. This is understandable, but it also compounds the problem of scholarly evaluations. With the best of intentions by this writer he still found the temptation to be ever present to drift towards a theological evaluation and he had to constantly re-orient himself as to the precise direction he was heading in his judgments. With apologies to none let it be stated that a serious attempt is here made by this writer to keep all judgments purely rhetorical in nature. Does this mean that no theological matters will be discussed? Not so! The entire debate was theological. One cannot ignore such a fact and be scholarly. As such, theological subjects will be treated here with as much of the original pathos recaptured as is possible, but endeavoring to limit any judgments formed to the discipline of rhetoric and leaving the theological judgments to one's self.

To attempt to do this one must try to work through the kaleidoscope of correspondence that circulated among the principal parties and to document well from these sources as well as the actual account of the debate itself.

#### Events up to October 31, 1517

The debate cannot be appreciated to its fullest degree unless first the events leading up to it are carefully traced so that the reader is acquainted with certain facts. As was noted in the previous chapter, a fundamental change was taking place within Martin Luther. His theology was one which reflected a humanistic approach to the Bible

and its interpretation. At this same time there was much concern being registered about the method and the manner of the sale of indulgences. The function of indulgences in the Middle Ages can be seen from the following"

Alexander of Hales contributed a plausible explanation of how indulgences really worked, which was officially sanctioned by Pope Clement VI in 1343. According to Canon Law, Roman penance consisted of three steps: (1) sincere contrition of heart, (2) the oral confession to a priest and his absolution from sins and eternal damnation, and finally, (3) the satisfaction by good works which proved that the confession had been sincere. . . . Alexander of Hales claimed that when a Christian bought indulgences, he satisfied the requirement for good works.<sup>84</sup>

The use of indulgences gradually evolved from relieving a man of temporal punishment from sin and from suffering in purgatory until by the latter half of the fifteenth century they were available for the dead in purgatory. A still later innovation were the Butterbrief which granted certain exemptions such as eating otherwise prohibited foods on fast days.<sup>85</sup> All of this was documented by a beautifully drawn up Indulgence Letter made available to the purchaser.

Martin Luther was not the first Roman Catholic to call this practice into question, but he certainly had to be one of the louder voices. He was shocked to see the effect that the traffic in indulgences was having on his Wittenberg parish. Parishioners had purchased such letters from one John Tetzel who on the authority of Archbishop Albert of Mainz had penetrated deeper into the German lands with their sale.<sup>86</sup> The opinions Luther had about indulgences at this

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<sup>84</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 304.

<sup>85</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 305.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Herndon Fife, The Revolt of Martin Luther, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 248.

time were a long way from what they finally ended up being. Exactly one year before he posted his theses on indulgences he tried to delicately handle the subject in a sermon at the Castle Church in Wittenberg.<sup>87</sup> Four months later, however, on February 24, 1517 he delivered a sermon in which his true feelings about indulgences found a passionate expression. In the final paragraph of that sermon the Reformer says:

Then in addition, the very profusion of indulgences astonishingly fills up the measure of servile righteousness. Through these nothing is accomplished except that the people learn to fear and flee and dread the penalty of sins, but not the sins themselves. Therefore, the results of indulgences are too little seen but we do see a great sense of self-security and licentious sinning; so much so that, if it were not for the fear of the punishment of sins, nobody would want these indulgences, even if they were free; whereas the people ought rather to be exhorted to love the punishment and embrace the cross. . . . Indulgence is equivalent to impunity, permission to sin, and license to nullify the cross of Christ. . . . For, not through indulgences, but through gentleness and lowliness, so says he, is rest for your souls found. . . . They teach us to dread the cross and suffering and the result is that we never become gentle and lowly, and that means that we never receive indulgence nor come to Christ. Oh, the dangers of our time! Oh, you snoring priests! Oh, darkness deeper than Babylon! How secure we are in the midst of the worst of all our evils!<sup>88</sup>

The weeks and months that followed the delivery of this sermon only served to harden his resolution to attack the sale of these indulgences. Luther had been trained in his earlier years to make full use of Aristotle's theories of rhetoric.<sup>89</sup> While at the University in Erfurt he participated in weekly disputations or debates which were

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<sup>87</sup>Fife, p. 248.

<sup>88</sup>John W. Doberstein, "Sermons I" Luther's Works, LI, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), pp. 131.

<sup>89</sup>Fife, pp. 41-44.

sylogistic in form and took place between one person who proposed a set of propositions and another who responded to it. When he went to the University at Wittenberg he introduced these academic disputations and used them for student encounters.<sup>90</sup> Many of these he drew up and supervised in their academic use. The sentiments of Martin Luther concerning the use of indulgences were so strong that debating this issue was not going to be entrusted to someone else but was one in which he was going to issue the challenge himself. The academic disputation with which he was so familiar was going to be his formula for discovering the truth about indulgences. He formulated ninety-five theses which were given the title "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences." He chose the eve of All Saints' Day, October 31, when the Castle Church was bustling with pilgrims who came to view the many relics kept there. At noon of that day he posted these theses on the door of the Castle Church because it served as the university bulletin board for faculty and students alike.

That he intended these theses to serve as a basis for a scholarly discussion with his colleagues at the University of Wittenberg and other learned men can be gathered not only from his own words and those of his colleagues, but also from the fact that they were written in Latin. His act may have been prompted by the circumstance that people were gathering in Wittenberg to adore the remarkable collection of religious relics of Frederick the Wise on All Saints' Day and to receive indulgences for their act of piety.<sup>91</sup>

On the same day he sent a copy to the person most immediately concerned, Archbishop Albert, with a covering letter. Another copy went to Hieronymus Scultetus, who as bishop of Brandenburg

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<sup>90</sup> Harold J. Grimm, "Career of the Reformer I" Luther's Works XXXI, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 31.

<sup>91</sup> Grimm, p. 190.

was the immediate ecclesiastical superior of the Wittenberg cloister and university. Copies were probably sent to churchmen of importance in Wittenberg and its vicinity.<sup>92</sup>

This particular event of the posting of the Ninety-five Theses has been over dramatized in both picture and in print. One can readily find articles and drawings which depict this action on the part of Luther as boldly challenging the institutionalized church and its leadership. This proved to be a result of the posting but it was not the motive. This exaggeration of the posting event is due in part to the desire of many to fix a precise, visible and dramatic moment for the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. That Luther was moved by deep pastoral concern and from honest motives we note from a concluding paragraph of the letter that accompanied the copy of the Ninety-five Theses sent to the Archbishop of Mainz on October 31, 1517.

What can I do, excellent Bishop and Most Illustrious Sovereign? I can only beg you, Most Reverend Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to deign to give this matter your fatherly attention and totally withdraw that little book and command the preachers of indulgences to preach in another way. If this is not done, someone may rise and, by means of publications, silence those preachers and refute the little book. This would be the greatest disgrace for Your Most Illustrious Highness. I certainly shudder at this possibility, yet I am afraid it will happen if things are not quickly remedied.<sup>93</sup>

In its proper focus it was a rhetorical move by the professor at Wittenberg in which he issued a challenge to anyone to step into the arena of the academic disputation and to join in theological debate on the power and efficacy of indulgences. All of the drama was now to follow.

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<sup>92</sup>Fife, p. 252.

<sup>93</sup>Gottfried G. Krodel, "Letters I" Luther's Works XLVIII, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 48.



The tower of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.



The Reverend Mr. Hilgendorf standing before the doors of the Castle Church.

## The Repercussions of the Posting

A detailed listing of the Ninety-five Theses will not be incorporated into this work for several reasons. These theses are readily available to anyone who is at all interested in reading them. Furthermore, they would take a considerable amount of space to print. Thirdly, interest in them at this point would be purely theological and our concerns here are rhetorical. The theses merely set the stage for the unfolding of events which led to the debate in Leipzig. The Ninety-five Theses themselves were actually never debated, but triggered other theses which were used.<sup>94</sup>

Luther posted his theses on indulgences on October 31, 1517. It was not until July 4, 1519, well over a year and a half later, that the debate which they spawned took place. The time immediately after the posting was one of succeeding shock waves. The time immediately before the debate was one of climactic and strategic maneuvering by the various parties employing a wide range of rhetorical efforts. This year and a half of waiting we must attempt to recapture to appreciate the debate.

There was not an immediate challenger to the theses. Instead, the posting action had a kind of electrifying shock in many areas and a polarization of opinion was rapidly forming. The theses were quickly reprinted, not only in Latin but also in German. They were read in both academic and lay circles throughout Europe. There was little doubt but that Luther had touched and challenged some sensitive theological issues of his day. Rumors about the purpose of the theses

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<sup>94</sup>Grimm, p. 37.

and the motive for their publication remind one somewhat of feathers cast before a strong fan.<sup>95</sup> The effects of their posting were soon to be felt in the economic and political life of Germany. What was rapidly becoming apparent was that the real issue was not the indulgences and their sale but instead a challenge of the authority to even issue such writs. More precisely, the posting of the theses was quickly interpreted as a challenge of papal authority. Theological storm clouds were quickly gathering and they were hanging very heavily. There was even grave concern for the physical safety of Martin Luther.<sup>96</sup>

Exactly how a copy of Luther's Ninety-five Theses came into the hands of John Eck, we do not know. Certainly if Eck was keeping himself informed on the theological issues of his day it would not have been difficult for him to get a copy. One of the ironic twists of fate in the entire Eck--Luther encounter that was starting to unfold was that the two men had become somewhat acquainted with each other by means of correspondence through an intermediary and were enjoying a measure of reasonable friendship. Dr. Christophorus Scheurl who was the City Counselor of Nuernberg had endeavored to bring the two men together. Scheurl had formerly served at the University of Wittenberg where he knew quite well Luther and others who were serving on the faculty. Early in 1517 John Eck was a guest in the home of Scheurl in Nuernberg and "when the guest had heard Scheurl extol the noble qualities of Luther, he had manifested a great desire

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<sup>95</sup>Fife, pp. 254-56.

<sup>96</sup>Fife, p. 264.



to become personally acquainted with him and . . . had at once dispatched a letter to Luther."<sup>97</sup>

Scheurl had promised Eck that he too would write and introduce them. Scheurl remarked to Luther in a letter that was dated April 1: "I have no doubt that you will answer him (Eck) . . . because I deem him worthy of your friendship."<sup>98</sup> Luther replied to Scheurl under date of May 6: "As regards your admonition to write our Eck in a friendly manner, I have done this with the greatest care possible. Whether the letter has reached its destination I do not know."<sup>99</sup>

In another letter to Scheurl from Luther dated September 11 Luther requested that a copy of his theses against Scholastic Theology be forwarded to Eck. "These theses you may submit to our friend Eck, the very learned and accomplished man, in order that I may hear and see what he has to say about them."<sup>100</sup> These theses had been favorably received in some circles but they must have caused some suspicion on the part of Eck because he remained very silent about them.<sup>101</sup>

Scholastic theology can be described as the kind of theology that had dominated the church's teaching since early in the twelfth

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<sup>97</sup>W. H. T. Dau, The Leipzig Debate in 1519 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), p. 1.

<sup>98</sup>Dau, p. 15.

<sup>99</sup>Dau, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup>Dau, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup>Dau, p. 16.

century. It was the logic and philosophy of Aristotle as super-imposed on theology. It was this theology that was in conflict with the theology of biblical humanism that Luther had introduced and that was flourishing on the Wittenberg campus (see last chapter). It was shortly after this, perhaps within two months, that Eck had another set of theses to peruse, namely the Ninety-five Theses. The friendship that was starting to blossom over the past nine months was to be abruptly terminated.

#### A Look at John Eck

John Eck was born on November 13, 1486, a full three years younger than Luther (November 10, 1483). His proper name was Johann Maier. His place of birth was Eck, Swabia. He was an individual of remarkable abilities. He matriculated at the University of Heidelberg at the age of twelve. It was there that he Latinized his name after the place of his birth and was to be known as John Eck. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1499 from the University of Tuebingen and in 1501 his Master of Arts degree at the age of fourteen. He received his Bachelor of Theology degree in 1505; Sententiarius degree in 1506; Licentiate of Theology degree in 1509; Doctor of Theology degree in 1510 at the age of twenty-four. He had been ordained a priest on December 13, 1508 with a special dispensation from the Pope because he was below the canonical age.<sup>102</sup> In November of 1510, he became a theological professor at the University of Ingolstadt. Here he rapidly rose to the position of rector in 1511 and to that of pro-chancellor in 1512. He remained at Ingolstadt

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<sup>102</sup>Dau, p. 5.

the rest of his life and was perhaps the deciding influence why that institution was not swept into the Reformation camp. It is interesting too, that the biographies of Luther and Eck find so many parallels.

What kind of person was Eck? That all depends upon whom one consults. Protestant historians have been extremely unkind to him. A selected list of insulting epithets include a few of the following: "Assophist," "Ass's head," "dunce head," "fool," "quarrelsome bully," "greedy hypocrite," "liar," "blasphemer," "heretic,"--these are the printable ones.<sup>103</sup> Luther has to share full responsibility for his use of such language in describing Eck, even employing sexual obscenities to describe the man.<sup>104</sup>

It is impossible to believe that these words could possibly describe John Eck. Rather, such language is best understood against the background of extremely bitter theological debate. There is solid evidence that Eck and his colleagues used language just as bitter and as rank against the new "heretics" of their day.<sup>105</sup> The violations of the ethics of decent language appears to be close to a draw.

Eck's mind would have to be described as well-educated, brilliant and keen. He was a recognized author and a person of seemingly limitless energy, channeling much of this physical stamina into the academic disputation where he was a dreaded opponent. "Eck was well known in academic circles as a facile, versatile public speaker, while in public disputation he was greatly feared both for his erudition

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<sup>103</sup>Fife, p. 331.

<sup>104</sup>Fife, p. 322, footnote.

<sup>105</sup>Fife, p. 322, footnote.

and for the venom of his tongue."<sup>106</sup> He was as dedicated to Scholastic Theology as Luther was to Biblical Humanism.

To his opponents Eck registered as proud, egotistical, vain-glorious and a cheat. There is evidence for some of this as we shall see, but the use of bitter epithets must certainly indicate that his evils were exaggerated in the minds of his opponents. Catholic research would bear out the assertion that Eck had his ethical weaknesses. "Catholic scholars of recent days have shown that in spite of his self-advertising tactics Eck was a man of sound scholarly attainments and great productive energy in the field of scholastic theology."<sup>107</sup>

#### The Obelisks and the Asterisks

The posting and disseminating of the Ninety-five Theses was producing a decided polarization effect in both the academic and the ecclesiastical community. It did not take Eck long to decide at which pole he was going to stand although the correspondence we have indicates that he was anything but diplomatic in assuming his position. Our point here is not that he was a dedicated Scholastic theologian, for this is a theological position of his which certainly he was entitled to and which was subject to the available means of persuasion as much as is any theological position. Our point is that he did violate professional ethics and contributed his share to the rift and polarization which was present even before the debate began.

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<sup>106</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 385.

<sup>107</sup> Fife, p. 332.

Eck had visited Gabriel Von Eyb, the Bishop of Eichstaedt a short time after he had received a copy of the theses and the two of them discussed at length Luther's latest work.<sup>108</sup> On this occasion Eck had drawn little marginal daggers before the various theses to which he had taken exception. These little notations were to become known as Obelisks. The bishop was inclined to agree with Luther's position and asked Eck to put his comments in written form and send him a copy.

It is at this point that copies of his comments began to circulate through the acquiescence of Eck and one of Eck's enemies secured a copy and had it channeled to Luther. Luther received them sometime around the middle of March. Upon receipt of them Luther prepared a response which came to be known as the Asterisks, that is, stars. The Obelisks and the Asterisks which these two exchanges were called, were names applied by Luther. The designation Obelisk, (dagger), was indicative of how Luther reacted to Eck's comments. Eck had not confronted him openly but in a round about fashion. These daggers, as Luther called them, had come from a person he considered to be a dear friend. Luther's Asterisks were not sent at first to Eck but were routed back through the same channel from which the Obelisks had come. In a letter sent to Link which accompanied this response of Luther under date of March 23 Luther penned his frustrations and disappointments about Eck.

If you will communicate them to him, he will readily perceive by their light how rash it is to condemn the work of others, especially when one has not understood it, and how extremely

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<sup>108</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 335.

treacherous and abominable it is to cover with such bitter gall the views, nay the mere inquiries, of a friend without giving him previous warning, and while the friend expects that everything will be taken for the best by his friend.<sup>109</sup>

The next day, March 24, in another letter from Luther's pen, this time to a friend, Egramus of Zwickau, he expresses still further displeasure with Eck's actions.

. . . Recently a man of signal and clever learning and of a trained mind, and, what smarts the more, a man who was bound to me by a great and recently established friendship, has written Obelisks against my Theses. I mean Johann Eck, Doctor of Theology, vice-chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt, Canon of Eichstaedt, and now, at length, preacher at Augsburg, a man already famous and widely known by his books. If I did not know the purposes of Satan, I should be astonished at the fury with which the man breaks our friendship, which was of quite recent origin and very pleasant, without giving me the least warning, without writing me a word or bidding me farewell.

He has written Obelisks, in which he calls me a fanatic Hussite, heretical, seditious, insolent, and rash, not to mention lesser abuses, such as, that I am dreaming, clumsy, unlearned, and lastly, that I am a despiser of the Supreme Pontiff. In short, he has written nothing but the foulest abuse, and he aims at my Theses, so that there is in the Obelisks nothing but the malice and envy of a most infuriated mind.<sup>110</sup>

On May 19 after returning from Heidelberg and a meeting of the Augustinian order which had taken up an entire month (April 11 to May 15) Luther addressed a letter to John Eck together with a copy of his Asterisks. Because of its impact in establishing the entire rhetorical scene for the debate to follow, we quote at length from it.

Some Obelisks have come to me in which you have tried to demolish my Theses on indulgence. This is a proof of the faithful friendship which you have voluntarily offered me, yea, of that evangelical charity according to which we are bidden to admonish a brother before accusing him! How could I, simpleton that I was, believe

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<sup>109</sup>Dau, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup>Dau, pp. 20-21.

or suspect that you would come at me from behind while you were flattering your brother? You, too, have fulfilled the Scriptures which say: "Which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts." (Ps. 28:3) I know that you would not want me to do this to you, but you have done it and have had the courage to do it; see now what your conscience is saying to you. I am quite astonished to see with what effrontery you presume to judge my opinions before you know and understand them. Surely, this rashness is a very faithful witness that you think yourself the only theologian, so much so that you imagine that your opinion must take precedence of every other, yea, that all that you have condemned, even when you have not understood it, must stand condemned because it does not please Mr. Eck. Prithee, suffer God at least to live and reign. However, not to be at great length with you, since you are so utterly infuriated against me. I have sent you Asterisks against your Obelisks, that you may see and recognize your ignorance and rashness. I am indeed sparing your honor by not publishing them, but send them to you privately, so as not to render evil for the evil that you have done me. I have written them only for the person from whom I received your Obelisks and desire that you should receive my Asterisks through him. Otherwise, had I wished to publish them, I should have written against you more carefully and pertinently, yet also with more firmness. Now if your confidence in your worthless stuff is still unshaken, go to work and write; I shall meet you with equal confidence. Perchance it will then happen that I shall not spare you either, although God knows that I would rather that you should come to your senses again, and, if you see anything in me that is displeasing to you, you would first deal with me like a friend, as you know it behooves a theologian to do. For what harlot, when in a passion, could not have vomited forth the same abuses and revilings which you have vomited forth against me? Yet you are so far from feeling sorry for this that you even boast of it, and think you have done right. You have your choice: I shall keep up our friendship if you wish it; or I shall cheerfully meet your attack, for I see that you know nothing in theology except the husks of scholastic opinions. You will find out what you can accomplish against me when you begin to prefer war to peace and fury to love. But may the Lord give to you and to me good sense, and bid us be of good cheer. Behold, though you have hurt me, I lay down my arms, not because I fear you, but God. After this it will not be my fault if I am forced to defend myself publicly. However, let us speak pleasantly.<sup>111</sup>

#### A Friend Complicates the Scene

There is strong evidence to suggest that the Leipzig Debate might never have come about had it not been for a mutual friend of

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<sup>111</sup>Dau, pp. 22-23.

Luther and Eck who placed himself into the picture and proceeded to complicate matters. Both Luther and Eck showed genuine reluctance at persuing their differences too far. "After this savory exchange the opponents were both of a mind to let the matter rest. . . . Eck, especially, regretted his attack, and Scheurl mediated between the two men."<sup>112</sup> The friend who complicated matters was Dr. Andreas Bodenstein, otherwise known as Carlstadt because like Eck, it was the place of his birth.

Carlstadt was the dean of the University of Wittenberg. While certainly a learned man, he did have some personality peculiarities that became especially evident at this time. His "was an impulsive nature: whatever he took hold of he pushed to the extreme."<sup>113</sup> Luther and Eck could well have handled their problem but it was this impulsive dean who felt that Eck had besmirched the good name of a colleague on his faculty and thereby also the university itself and that it behooved him to rise to the occasion and defend the honor of all concerned.

Luther was gone to Heidelberg for a month as was noted before. During this time Carlstadt issued a succession of theses to be debated by students, all pertaining to the Eck--Luther episode. The list grew to the length of 406 theses. These, too, were published and disseminated and Eck was soon to find out that he was ingloriously under attack at Wittenberg. As ironical as it might seem, both Luther and Eck tried to placate this misguided dean of the Wittenberg faculty.

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<sup>112</sup>Fife, p. 336.

<sup>113</sup>Dau, p. 32.



The letters they exchanged make for interesting reading. They have been preserved for church historians to pore over.

Efforts to get the disputations halted were of no avail and the letter exchanges continued throughout the summer of 1518. It was on August 14 that Eck countered with a treatise called "Defense of John Eck against the Bitter Invectives of Dr. Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt." In this document Eck made the interesting remark: The Reverend M. Luther . . . frankly acknowledges . . . that he does not see how I can decently remain silent and not defend my honor. . . ."114

Carlstadt received Eck's defense on August 28 and in a kind of blind fanaticism drafted a counter defense and published it on September 14. It bore the title "Defense of Andreas Carlstadt against the Monomachy of the Excellent Dr. Johann Eck." In his remarks he let it be known that he was ready to follow the suggestion of Eck and let the judges in the dispute be the "Apostolic See, . . . the universities at Rome, . . . at Paris, . . . or at Cologne."115

#### The Front Heats Up

There was activity on other fronts as well, while the above-mentioned incidents were transpiring. The Ninety-five Theses had become a ready topic of conversation among the common people, the German nobility, academicians and ecclesiastical dignitaries. Even the church administration at Rome felt constrained to enter the picture and to take steps to end the dispute which from the beginning had been somewhat dismissed as a petty monks' quarrel that would pass with

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<sup>114</sup>Dau, p. 36.

<sup>115</sup>Dau, p. 38.

time, but which now was being considered as a heresy to be dealt with severely. There was a heated exchange between Silvester Prierias, a Dominican theological expert and the official adviser to the Pope, and Luther in the summer of 1518. A look at the exchange leads one to the conclusion that the Saxon professor was not so easily to be silenced and that the theological problem could not be handled from Rome.<sup>116</sup> A false copy of Luther's Ninety-five Theses and a "forged diatribe against the Roman Curia,"<sup>117</sup> had been forwarded to Rome and served to widen the Luther--Rome breach. On August 7 a papal summons was received by Luther to appear before authorities in Rome to be tried for the allegations that were piling up against him. Luther appealed to his prince and chief benefactor that he be examined before a neutral German tribunal. The papal legate, Cardinal Cajetan, who was in Augsburg attending the Diet mediated a compromise and asked for Rome's permission that Luther be heard before him. On August 23, 1518, Pope Leo X dispatched an official communication which empowered Cajetan to deal with the German heretic in summary fashion.<sup>118</sup> To further pursue the details of the intent of this proposal does not lie within the scope of this research, but simply to point out that the theological scene was badly polarized at this point. A major part of the problem was theological, but contributing to this confusion were also political and economical factors plus the rivalry of different monastic orders.

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<sup>116</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 339.

<sup>117</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 342.

<sup>118</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 343.

Luther kept that date to appear before Cardinal Cajetan in the city of Augsburg. His hearing of October 12--14 settled nothing. The dates, however, are significant to our study in that Eck, too, was at the Diet and this afforded the first opportunity for Luther and Eck to meet face to face. Eck was certainly aware of the mounting charges against the Wittenberg professor. Eck called on Luther at the Carmelite Convent for the purpose of discussing the impending debate that Eck was to have with Carlstadt.<sup>119</sup> It appeared that Luther had succeeded in working out an amicable way for Eck and Carlstadt to settle their differences in a fair disputation. Luther returned to Wittenberg from Augsburg on October 31, the first anniversary of the posting of his Ninety-five Theses. On November 15 he penned the following letter to Eck:

Magister Andreas accepts our agreement made at Augsburg that you meet either at Leipzig or Erfurt in a fair disputation for the discovery of the truth, in order that there may be an end of quarreling and writing books. He asks you, accordingly, to fix the day for the meeting and select one of the two places named. He would have made the selection, but he thought that he ought to give you the choice, because the fatigue of the journey will be greater for you, and you may be rushed with work more than he. See to it, then, that I have not urged him to this resolution in vain, and that the hope of our adversaries, that the theologians will quarrel forever and never agree, may be proved futile.<sup>120</sup>

The place and the setting of a debate is often a crucial factor. So it was here. Carlstadt could have made the choice but waived the privilege. Eck chose the Leipzig setting. He was to be in a friendly environment, to wit, a friendly city, a friendly university faculty and student body, and a friendly Duke George.

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<sup>119</sup>Dau, p. 43.

<sup>120</sup>Dau, p. 45.

Once again we must trace developments around the person of Luther. His return to Wittenberg was not a return to tranquil life. The passions of many had been fanned to fever pitch. To follow all the intricate details of charge and counter-charge, of conversation and communication, of fact and rumor, of maneuver and counter-maneuver during this post Augsburg time is a whole story in itself.<sup>121</sup> Just a few observations are in order for our purposes. Luther's refusal to recant following his appearance before the papal legate was only to further polarize the disputants. There were two different theologies in conflict. Only in the aftermath of Augsburg did Luther realize how he had challenged papal authority and aroused papal ire. All efforts at reconciliation were futile and there were many. Luther loyalists solidified their concerns; others concentrated their attacks. The physical safety of Luther was not just a concern it was a real problem. Luther was both an honest hero and a heretical heel. There appears to be few who had no opinion.

Despite all of the turmoil that surrounded their religious controversy, preparations did move forward for the Carlstadt--Eck debate. Yet because of the nature of the dispute and the individuals involved there was certainly much more at stake than just two men who would be confronting each other. It was a debate that would fight for the control of men's minds. It was recognized that the debate was technically between Carlstadt and Eck. In reality, however, the debate was between Luther and Eck. It was only through much maneuvering over technical issues that the primary verbal exchanges

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<sup>121</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 353-57.

were to be between Luther and Eck.

Besides the theological issue there were other factors of an ethical nature that were at stake. There was pride of all kinds. There was academic pride of one university and its alumnae and staff trying to outdo or embarrass the other. There was monastic pride with the Augustinians and the Dominicans each trying to embarrass the other. There was national, sectional and civic pride with the various electors and magistrates each defending their university faculties and the honor and prestige that each coveted so keenly. There was a strong element of personal pride among the chief personalities. There were the twin problems of economics and politics. There is strong evidence that the Fuggers of Augsburg were financially committed to the outcome because the sale of indulgences was declining and commercial interests were being effected.<sup>122</sup> Emperor Maximilian had died suddenly on January 12, 1519. There was as much at stake for the church as for the government in the selection of a successor.

Eck had quickly agreed on the site of Leipzig for the debate but the final word was not to be his. The University of Leipzig was under the direct control of Duke George in whose territory of Albertine Saxony the institution was located. Eck besought his permission.

Duke George was extremely flattered and immediately notified his university and also expressed his gratitude to Eck. He encountered much more opposition, however, than he had expected. The Leipzig faculty, fearing to become involved in the Luther heresy, stated that they believed such a debate would only make the situation worse, and since it was really no concern of theirs, they proposed that Duke George summon a synod, composed of bishops and university representatives from surrounding schools, to sit in judgment on the problem.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 385.

<sup>123</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 385-86.

The fears of the theological faculty are registered in the following excerpts from their letter to Duke George of December 16.

We send your Grace certain letters of Dr. Eck. . . . Whereas both sides have brought much scandal among the people, and we fear that more will arise, and as each side is convinced that it is in the right, in our opinion would not make them lay aside theirs, but would only impel them to assail each other with injury and scandal. . . . For we feared that others, even laymen, might be drawn into the quarrel, and that the Elector Frederick might lay it up against this university, and that thereby there might arise a quarrel between him and your Grace.<sup>124</sup>

Duke George had more power and desire than a mere letter from the theological faculty could stop. He wanted the debate to take place and so stated in a letter to his faculty under date of January 4. Following a number of letter exchanges between the Duke, the theologians, the university, the presiding bishop, Eck and Luther, some of them very brutal in content, the following words reached Duke George under the date of February 15 and from the university administration. "At Your Grace's written command we have granted permission to the honorable and learned doctors, John Eck and Andrew Carlstadt, to debate."<sup>125</sup>

Eck must have been sure of this outcome because a month and a half earlier, December 29, 1518, he published his Twelve Theses which were to be the real items at issue in the forthcoming debate. As one studies these statements one truly gets an insight into the mind of Eck. He would have to be considered as brilliant, clever, cunning, subtle, one who knew how to gain the upper hand. One also begins to see why he was considered to be one of the most feared

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<sup>124</sup>Dau, p. 47.

<sup>125</sup>Dau, p. 75.

debaters of his day. The theses were for Carlstadt but cleverly aimed at Luther and the "new theology" coming out of Wittenberg. The subjects that Eck strikes at are penance, indulgences, good works, purgatory, and papal power, not items of his dispute with Carlstadt. In his final thesis Eck stated:

We deny that the Roman Church, prior to the times of Silvester, was not superior to other churches, but we have always acknowledged the person who occupies the chair and has the faith of St. Peter to be the successor of Peter and the Vicegerent of Christ.<sup>126</sup>

Earlier, when defending and discussing his theses Luther had made some vulnerable statements and Eck had done his homework. Luther had stated that "the Roman Church in the days of Gregory the Great had not ruled over the Greek world" and "the Christians during the first eight centuries after Christ were not under the Pope, yet they had been members of the Christian Church."<sup>127</sup> The real issue that was coming to the fore was that of Papal Authority.

Whatever love or respect the two men tried to openly show to each other prior to this was now to end. The opinion which Luther gained of Eck was captured for us in Luther's preserved writings. Since in this paper we are concerned with ethical matters of the Reformer, we would quote at length the correspondence of Luther to Carlstadt. Its importance in ethos and polarization matters is seen in that this was published as an open letter for all to read. We believe that it figures heavily in the unfolding scene of the Leipzig Debate.

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<sup>126</sup>Dau, p. 60.

<sup>127</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 389.

Our Eck has issued a schedule in which he noisily proclaims with grand and proud words, as is his way, that he will meet you in debate at Leipzig. I had conferred with him in your name at Augsburg to see whether your controversy possibly could be composed by a friendly and confidential meeting, and, as became your dignity, you did not decline this. See now how beautifully this man is mindful of his claim that he never changes, how, after shamefully abusing you, he promises you a duel, but now turns his frogs or gnats--I know not which--against me.

I had hoped that such highly important subjects would be discussed as the grace of God, human misery, and the matter which is the principal point in your controversy with him. Meanwhile Eck is shouting against poor me. In keeping with the times he is playing a carnival prank: he digs up the foolish questions regarding indulgence. Your subjects he treats as side-issues, and does not touch them with the tip of his finger, as we say. Perhaps the Holy Ghost foresaw this prank and trick, and inspired the heart of the excellent doctors of the University of Leipzig to refuse you permission to settle this matter at their school.

But, my dear Andrew, neither will I have you go into this mean sham debate, not only because this pretty red-cheeked and white-armed mask is attacking me and my propositions, but also because your gifts and your disputation are of too high an order to be degraded by a discussion of the foolish claims of this sophist and of my assertions regarding indulgences, which should rather be called negligibles. All teachers, even the scholastics, those miserable authorities of Eck, admit, first, that indulgences are not necessary for a Christian; next, that it would be better there were none, and that this subject is as suitable for being treated in writing or in a debate as a donkey for playing the harp. Nor had I ever considered it worthy of debate, if it had not been necessary for the sake of Christ's people on account of deceivers, vain talkers, selfish and greedy people, who must be reprov'd. (Titus 1:10,7) Nevertheless, these great and noble theologians are worried so fearfully with these trifling and useless things and strive to magnify their importance with such a display of anxiety that one can see they believe the honor of their name and office to be at stake. In the meantime they entirely neglect and put aside the true object of theology and of the essential things--not, of course, because they seek after lucre and glory, oh, no!--except in an incidental way, and provided these advantages are not put too far from them.

However, God wills that I shall not be engaged in a worthier occupation than to spend my life wrangling with tricky and senseless sophists, with the noxious fawners of the Pope, and with Romanizing tyrants. I shall therefore put my serious occupation back gladly and cheerfully, and attend to the pleasantries of these people.



Accordingly, my dear Eck, I do not charge you with a vanity that is very plain, because you published your schedule for the debate before you were assured of the consent of Leipzig, yea, after you had learned from me that they absolutely refused their consent. For you have indeed hoped to gather fame from the air, that is, from a debate which is never to take place. I do not charge you with treachery, lack of kindness, and conduct unbecoming a theologian because you present theses to Carlstadt which are foreign to the matter between you. Since you could hope that he would not acknowledge them as relating to him, you would again score an empty triumph over such a great man.

I do not charge you with having changed to most contemptible fawning to the Pope, with having again produced a fiction about me, and foisted new errors upon me which you have imagined, while you pretend to do nothing of the kind. I submit to such treatment from a theologian. I only want to show that we see through your miserable artifices and the fancies which you have woven out of nothing, and we wish to remind you kindly to employ a little subtler cunning in your insidious machinations. Your boorish and sleepy smartness you may employ against your fellow-sophists.

Meanwhile be a brave man and "gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty" (Ps. 45:3) For since you have not accepted me for your peace as arbitrator, you may perhaps welcome me as a combatant. Not that I have decided to gain a victory over you; I only want to give you an opportunity--after your victories in Austria, Lombardy, and Bavaria (at a disputation held at Landshut)--to achieve the reputation of having triumphed also in Saxony and Meissen, and to be hailed forevermore as the great paladin of the empire. Then, after gaining such great and eternal glory, you will be able to rest, according to the saying of your master: Motion ceases when the highest perfection in anything has been attained. I should prefer, however, if you would at last give birth to the wonderful beast which you are carrying about with you such a long time, and spit out the nauseous things that afflict your stomach, and thus make an end of your imposing and grandiloquent threats.

But, my dear Andrew, I come back to you and beg that you will join me in writing to the gracious prince, Duke George, and the wise counselor at Leipzig, whether they would let us have some public hall in which we might hold the debate. For I do not wish at all to see the excellent doctors of the university burdened with the dangerous office of judges of this debate, which they have very prudently declined.

Yes, this is what we shall do: we shall call in two notaries to whom both Eck and Luther, and others if they wish, may dictate their arguments. I make this suggestion lest we, too, should be

charged with that contemptible vainglory and useless labor which can be observed in Eck's disputation at Vienna; also, that the shouting and violent gesticulation with which disputants in our day are in the habit of raving and slaying the truth may be subdued, and, on the other hand, that every point may be set down in writing with the greatest modesty, and then be submitted to the Apostolic See, the bishops, and the entire Christian world for their judgment.<sup>128</sup>

The war of words had begun! February 7 Luther published twelve counter theses. Point by point he challenged Eck. When it came to thesis twelve he asserted:

That the Roman Church is superior to all others is established from the altogether lifeless decretals of the Roman Popes that have appeared during the last four hundred years; but the history of eleven hundred years, the text of the divine Scriptures, and the decree of the Council of Nice which is the holiest of all, contradict this claim.<sup>129</sup>

In a letter the same day to Spalatin Luther referred to Eck as "the little vainglorious animal."<sup>130</sup> On February 18 Luther wrote to Eck and said that he is "hypocritical," having an "obtuse head and such a beclouded brain," driven by "hatred" or "greed of glory" to such "blindness." "All the rest we shall settle at the time of the debate."<sup>131</sup> Just how dynamic he could be in debate was to be seen in a few months.

#### Duke George's Ambivalence

The date of June 27 had already been agreed upon and since it was clear that Eck had Luther in mind when he did his publicizing Luther let it be known that he wanted now to be named as Eck's oppo-

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<sup>128</sup>Dau, pp. 61-63.

<sup>129</sup>Dau, p. 65.

<sup>130</sup>Dau, p. 65.

<sup>131</sup>Dau, p. 66.

ment in fact. The mere wish and desire of this, however, was not enough. Those who were to come to this event as participants would require the approval of Duke George by way of issuance of a safe conduct. Luther made request for this and the Duke was to use this opportunity to humiliate Luther for whom he had but little love. The correspondence of Luther, Duke George, Eck, and the university reveals what behind-the-scenes struggles were shaping up on this question. The faculty opposed Luther's coming and so stated in a letter to the Duke. Eck favored Luther's participation and in a letter of February 19 he addressed the university and so stated. "I am writing to Luther to be present, for there is just as much reason for his presence as for that of Carlstadt; for, in my opinion, both of them are equally in error."<sup>132</sup>

It was the Duke, however, who had to consent. From February through to May Luther made repeated requests of Duke George but always there was a stalling or a hedging on granting the safe-conduct. Luther's correspondence during these months reveals the frustration and exasperation at the thought of being debated and of being unable to be present and to speak for himself.

The tenseness eased on June 10 when the safe-conduct writ arrived for Carlstadt so that he could officially go to Leipzig. It read as follows:

At the desire of Dr. Carlstadt, we, George, Duke of Saxony, grant to him and to those he may bring with him, for the debate to take place at Leipzig with Dr. Eck, as long as he may be with us and until he returns to his own home, free and safe conduct.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Dau, p. 77.

<sup>133</sup>Dau, p. 81.

This was all that Luther had to read. He literally invited himself along as a part of "those he may bring with him."

#### One Final Round with the Pen

Following the publication of Luther's open letter, Eck felt free to speak out more openly and to publicly admit that in reality he had Luther in mind. Eck set to work re-drafting his Twelve Theses, adding, however, another between the sixth and the seventh treating of free will. The crucial twelfth thesis then became number thirteen. The title that he gave to this new draft this time makes specific mention of Luther. These appeared on March 14, 1519.<sup>134</sup> In a letter written to accompany the theses Eck considers Luther's heretical errors the cause of all the polarization.<sup>135</sup>

Dr. Carlstadt issued a set of theses too, and these came out on the date of April 26, 1519. These were to be Carlstadt's platform at Leipzig. They bore the title "The Conclusions of Carlstadt Against Dr. John Eck to be Presented at Leipzig on June 27."<sup>136</sup>

The third part in this Leipzig triumvirate was to publish too. Luther considered it necessary to make a reply to the new set of thirteen theses that Eck published on March 14. Luther's version was made public on May 16, 1519. It is evident that Luther considered the fault to be all Eck's for the polarization that had taken place. In a letter that accompanied his thirteen theses the Wittenberger stated: "God will have to bring something good out of this

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<sup>134</sup>Fife, p. 345.

<sup>135</sup>Dau, p. 90.

<sup>136</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 388.

debate which Eck has soiled with so much evil, malice, and abuse."<sup>137</sup> Shortly after this Luther issued still another writing which bore the title Resolutio Lutheriana super propositione sua decima tertia de potestate papae. It was an explanation of Luther's thirteenth thesis on the authority of the Pope. This was to be the critical issue should he get to debate Eck at Leipzig and it was this thirteenth thesis that caused such wide-spread interest because of the theological implications.

The stage was now set with but one exception as was noted before, Luther still did not have the Duke's permission to go and debate. Permission to go, Luther assumed under Carlstadt's safe conduct. Permission to debate would come after one week of the contest had passed.<sup>138</sup>

### The Physical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

#### The Arrival and Preparations

The existing accounts of the arrival of the disputants presents about as much contrast and color as did the persons themselves. The distance from Wittenberg to Leipzig is in the neighborhood of forty miles. A leisurely drive by bus today over improved roadways requires a little more than an hour. It was much different then. The journey down from Wittenberg was made in a kind of entourage. Two open wagons led the procession. Since Carlstadt was the debater he rode alone in the lead wagon with his books piled around him. The second wagon had Luther, Philip Me-

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<sup>137</sup>Dau, p. 94.

<sup>138</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 389.

lanchthon and others associated closely with the event. In addition to this about two hundred students from Wittenberg marched with weapons such as spears, swords and clubs forming somewhat of an armed guard. They arrived in the city of Leipzig on June 24 with a hostile crowd gathering along the streets. When they reached the churchyard of St. Paul's and were passing the cemetery a wheel of Carlstadt's wagon broke and came off, toppling the would-be debater, together with his books into the mud. Hecklers in the crowd seized upon the sight and called it an omen of things to come, needless to say, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the Wittenbergers. Luther and Melanchthon found lodging with Melchoir Lotter, a Leipzig printer.

Eck was already in Leipzig, having arrived two days ahead of his challengers, on June 22. Eck used this time wisely to the disgust of the Wittenberg group. "He came with a special letter of recommendation from the mighty Fuggers of Augsburg, and at once the financiers of Leipzig were duly impressed with the importance of a gentleman who enjoyed the friendship of the greatest bankers of Germany."<sup>139</sup> In considering the ethos of Luther one has to consider somewhat the ethical qualities of Eck as well. We are fortunate in that some of this was captured by pen for us by a member of the Leipzig faculty (Mosellanus) whom we cited in the previous chapter also. He described Eck's six days prior to the debate.

Eck met the rich burghers at their homes and was feasted and flowered, dined and wined; and wherever he went, he charmed his hosts and hostesses by his wit, his fluent conversation, his cosmopolitan manners, and his easy morals wherever he discovered

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<sup>139</sup>Dau, p. 114.

a leaning in that direction, while he could also be very devout and full of reverence and pious reflections with others. On the day after his arrival he joined the clergy and the professors in the customary procession of Corpus Christi Day, and impressed the throngs of spectators along the route with the fervor of his devotion and his great humility. The theologians were enraptured with him; henceforth they clung to him wherever he went; they went out riding with him, they arranged collations for him, they presented him with new garments, and in every possible way lionized him.<sup>140</sup>

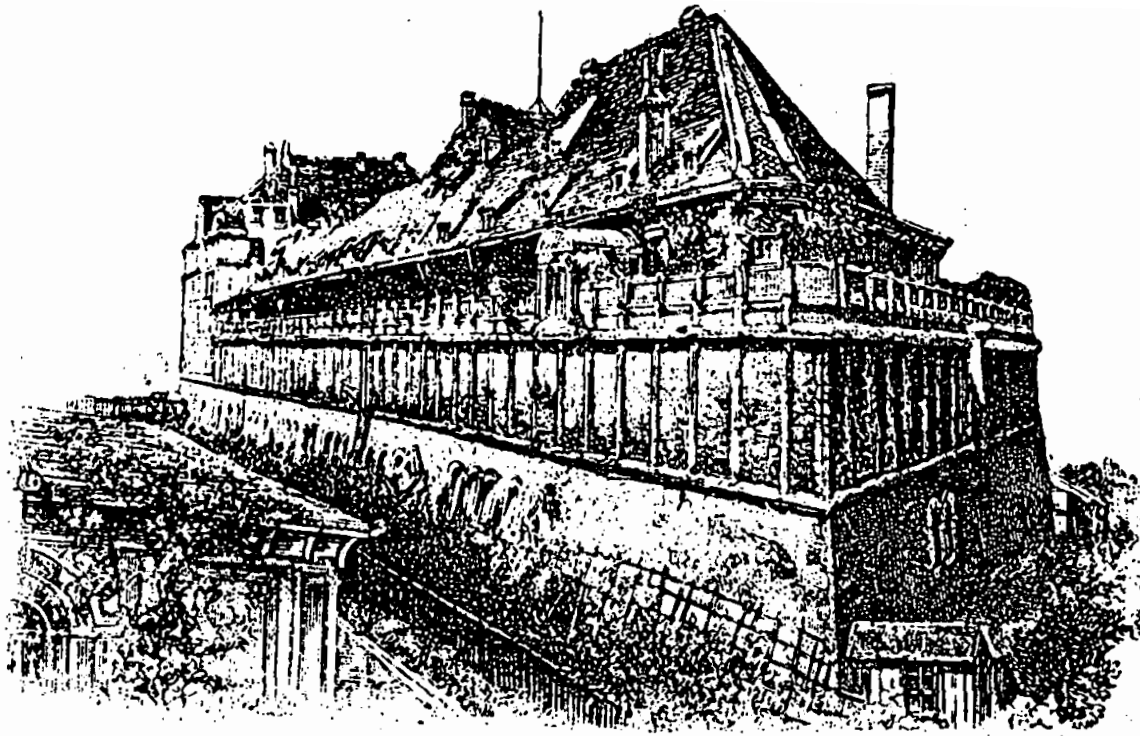
Duke George had assumed personal supervision of this event. When it became evident that the Leipzig University chapel would not accommodate the over-flow attendance he ordered that the great hall in his ancient Pleissenburg Castle be made ready. Information is difficult to obtain as to the sizes of these places mentioned. This writer was able to find stated only in comparative terms. We know that the chapel was "too small." We know that the great Hall of Princes, as it was called, in the Pleissenburg was "much larger" and therefore, more suitable. This writer found one picture which was a later drawing of the debate scene but even this was inconclusive as to size.

There are a few brief descriptions about the hall. One says that the hall was "decked with fine tapestries at the expense of the duke."<sup>141</sup> The center of attention were two elevated desks for the disputants. This enabled the debaters to look down on the assembly. They were placed facing each other. "Over the one from which Luther would speak a picture had been mounted on the wall representing St. Martin, while Eck's desk was surmounted by a representation of St.

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<sup>140</sup> Dau, p. 115.

<sup>141</sup> Fife, p. 352.



*The Pleissenburg in Leipzig, where the famous debate was held*

(From LUTHER AND HIS TIMES by E. G. Schwiebert, copyright 1950 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission.)



George the Dragon-killer."<sup>142</sup> There was an obvious insinuation in these trimmings.

Since at this precise moment the debate was still technically between Eck and Carlstadt the rules had to be between the two of them. These were agreed upon on Sunday, June 26, after a few rounds of negotiations with each party giving in and gaining a bit. Since the same rules were to apply when Luther met Eck, we would briefly state them. There would be notaries even though Eck had at first opposed the idea of recorders. A "detached" panel of judges who were theologians was to be named later on. Luther was most adamant against this arrangement as he felt too many theologians had prejudged the situation. In fact at this point in time Luther was so bitter and disgusted that he planned to go back to Wittenberg at once. Since the time of his arrival and even prior to coming to Leipzig there had been unending efforts to irritate Luther and now this. Eck paid a visit to Luther. In the conversation Luther remarked that he had no safe conduct and hence would go home. Eck secured the promise of debate from Luther if the latter got the safe conduct. Within minutes after Eck took leave of Luther Duke George furnished the writ.

On Monday morning at seven o'clock amid much pomp the opening exercise commenced. Dr. Simon Pistoris, law professor of Leipzig, delivered the opening and welcoming address in the university's hall of princes.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>Dau, p. 113.

<sup>143</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 393.

Then a procession was formed: two by two the assembly marched to St. Thomas Church, a delegate from Wittenberg always walked with a Leipziger. The citizens' guards with their arms marched alongside. The solemn high mass was celebrated at the church, and then the procession reformed, and with banners waving and drums beating marched to the splendidly decorated hall at the Pleissenburg. After everybody had occupied the place assigned him, Duke George sitting surrounded by his notables, and the elite of Leipzig having grouped itself around Eck, oration was delivered by Peter Schade from the Moselle valley, hence called Mosellanus.<sup>144</sup>

These morning festivities closed with the St. Thomas Choir singing Veni, sancte Spiritus.

The previous quotation also gives us the first glimpse of the audience that was to observe this debate. Here, once again, information is sparse and we would like to have more. Besides the principal parties in the debate there were gathered behind the desk of Eck the members of the Leipzig faculty.<sup>145</sup> To the side of Eck were the "leading abbots and preachers of the region."<sup>146</sup> The audience was also "composed of many distinguished personages."<sup>147</sup> Included in this would have to be those with a political background such as Duke George who was surrounded by his notables and the elite of Leipzig.<sup>148</sup> Conspicuous by their absence were the Dominicans.<sup>149</sup> In the Wittenberg camp were

Duke Barnim, Rector of the University of Wittenberg, . . .  
Melanchthon, Amsdorf, Eisermann, . . . Fach, . . . Lang, Adam

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<sup>144</sup>Dau, p. 120.

<sup>145</sup>Dau, p. 114.

<sup>146</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 398.

<sup>147</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 396.

<sup>148</sup>Dau, p. 120.

<sup>149</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 398.

Krafft, Prior Hitaschold von Posa, Doctor Auerbach, the Electoral court lawyer John Ruehel, and the court official Hans von der Planitz.<sup>150</sup>

Four appointed recorders were present. The students from the two respective schools occupied rear seats. How large such an audience would be we cannot determine.

At two o'clock that afternoon the Leipzig debate was formally begun between John Eck and Andreas Carlstadt. It was to continue, off and on, for a week, ending on July 3. It is not our intention to go into this phase of the debate save to make some passing observations about it. Eck was decidedly the master. He was able to speak very fluently and without notes from the wealth of accumulated wisdom and experience. Carlstadt presented the image of a befuddled brain constantly trying to extricate himself from the maze of books and other material about him. The debate assumed the dimensions of being extremely boring because Carlstadt was no match for the sharp tongue and keen intellect of Eck. This phase of the debate dragged to its weary close on July 3.

#### The Rhetorical Characteristics of Luther's Debating

##### Luther and Eck Face Each Other on July 4

At seven o'clock the Monday morning of July 4 the great hall of the Pleissenberg was filled as Luther rose to speak.<sup>151</sup> For our purposes we shall consider this debate session by session since this provides one with a suitable arrangement with which to analyze the confrontation.

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<sup>150</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 398-99.

<sup>151</sup> A complete wording of the morning session of the debate of July 4 is found in Dau, pp. 131-45.

With a largely hostile audience before him Luther's first words would have to be well chosen in the hope of at least striking a beginning at establishing a rapport with his listeners. As we look back at his opening remarks we can see that he made heavy use of ethical proof. His first words were an invocation. "In the name of the Lord. Amen." The use of a prayer by a clergyman at this juncture should not be considered unusual. Furthermore, a prayer should always be understood as a private matter between an individual and his God and we should not assign to it ulterior motives, but in that it was spoken in the presence of a listening audience it must also have served the purpose of focusing the attention of those present on the probity of his character, helping to create the impression, already from his opening remarks that he was sincere in his undertaking.

He proceeded with candor and straightforwardness to state both his acceptance of the rules of the debate and his reservations at having to discuss the issue of Papal Supremacy in public. "I only add that from reverence for the Supreme Pontiff and the Roman Church I should gladly have avoided this subject, because it is unnecessary and creates an astonishing amount of odium against one; but I was drawn into it by the thesis of the excellent Dr. Eck." It is true that Luther issued the first debate challenge with the posting of his Ninety-five Theses but his subject was really Indulgences. Many were calling him a disloyal son of the church. With these words he lets it be known that he does not wish to be considered disloyal and disrespectful. Once again a strong ethical appeal can be noted in that he endeavors to minimize unfavorable impressions

that have been created concerning him.

Luther continued with his opening statement: "I am also pained to observe that those are not present who ought to be here before others; I mean those who have privately and publicly so often sullied my name with the vile charge of heresy. Now that my cause is about to receive a hearing, they have withdrawn themselves--these inquisitors of the depravity of heresy who have neglected fraternal admonition and instruction and used incriminations instead." We would see further both ethos and pathos used here in that he attempts to focus the opponents' cause with that which is not virtuous. He had in mind some of his more vocal opponents since the time of his posting of the Ninety-five Theses. Most notable of these would have to be John Tetzel and other Dominicans who had not come to the debate. He revealed his own emotions as well as the emotions of his opponents and makes a bit of a martyr of himself in the whole arena of the dispute. We believe that these words were wisely chosen to at least make a beginning in the right direction for himself.

What is said of Luther's opening remarks can almost be repeated for Eck's opening remarks. Eck too, opened with an invocation which was undoubtedly offered with just as much sincerity. "In Thy name, sweet Jesus." The audience was largely pro-Eck and as he continued they are reassured that he is with them. "All I shall say or have said shall be submitted, first of all, to the judgment of the First Seat (the Pope) and the Lord sitting in the same; next to the judgment of any others whose business it may be to correct the erring." We can rightly envision nods of approval as the Ingolstadt professor

aligns himself so well with his audience. About Luther's remarks of being drawn into the debate by Eck he said: "But the reverend father will remember that if he had not first declared, in a set of resolutions, that before the times of Silvester the Roman Pontiff was not above the rest. . . . In vain, therefore, the reverend father puts the blame on me." Assuming the air of being above such trivialities he said; "But I shall waive these digressions, and God directing me, address myself to our principal object."

Eck proceeded then to give us the first insight into the logic that he is going to use. He is going to speak directly to the thirteenth thesis of Luther and stated: "Against your position I assert: There is a monarchy and a single principality in the Church by divine right, and instituted by Christ. Therefore, Holy Scripture and approved history do not contradict this." Eck is going to cite seven proofs to support his statement. He paused briefly between his fourth and fifth proof for Luther to respond. We would outline Eck's logic.

1. Without giving the Bible reference he merely referred to St. Paul and that Apostle's reference to "one church." He said that this is the Church militant and is fashioned like the Church triumphant with "one monarchy" and "one Head."

2. His second proof he said is from John 5. "That the Son does nothing but what He sees the Father do." Eck's explanation of this Bible verse is vague. "He is not from heaven who refuses to be under the Head, just as he is not from heaven, but from Lucifer, who will not submit to God."

3. Eck offered as a third proof the words of Dionysius Areopagita. "Our hierarchy is religiously arranged in orders which God ordained, and is conformed to the heavenly hierarchies of the saints."

4. Without amplification of the previous quote, Eck offered a fourth, that of Gregory Nazianzen who said: "sacred mysteries are being celebrated after a heavenly pattern, and thus we are, while still on earth, formed into one society with heavenly orders." It is a part of Eck's style to then inject little absurdities such as this one: "What a monster would the Church be without a head!"

Luther's response to Eck's opening remarks was very short. "When the Doctor argues that there is one universal Head of the Church, he says very well. . . . This argument does not concern me." Luther here is not referring to the Roman Pontiff but to Christ as is evident from the remarks that follow. This remark of Luther must mean that either he did not understand the strategy of Eck or that he was wanting him to present still additional material and to sharpen his focus.

Eck continued with three additional quotations all of which he now claimed meant that this universal head of this earthly church is the Pope and that unity flows from him.

5. "I praise him (Luther) for this statement, for he agrees with John (Book of Revelation): 'I saw a new holy city descending.'" Once again Eck is vague with this reference and its meaning. We fail to see a legitimate conclusion from it.

6. Quickly he passed to his sixth proof and quoted Cyprian: ". . . to the Chair of Peter and the principal Church, where sacerdotal unity takes its origin. . . ."

7. A citation from Jerome rounds out Eck's proofs. "The welfare of the Church depends on the dignity of the Supreme Priest. . . ." Eck drew his conclusion from this reference: "That this Supreme Priest is the Roman Pontiff appears from the two epistles of the same Jerome to the Pope Damasus." He issued his challenge and then sat down. "Now let the reverend father indicate another monarchy in the Church in former times."

Before we pass to Luther let us look at the logic of Eck. It should be noted that in Eck's original thesis which he stated as he began that no mention was made of the Pope as being the universal head of the church. Only the words "monarchy and single principality" are used. That the Pope is meant by him in these four references is only by an inference on Eck's part. In his first four proofs he defended the idea that there is one Universal Head to which Luther responded that he would not disagree with that. It is in Eck's last three citations that he closes this gap and identifies this "monarchy and single principality" as being the Pope. Eck had used three incomplete Bible references (more allusions than quotations) and four patristic references. This is stated so that we might more clearly see the logic of Luther as he responded.

Luther's reply: "That there is a monarchy in the Church militant, and that its head is not a man, but Christ Himself, I fully profess, and that on divine authority." Luther's ethical proof here



is very strong. It is an authoritarian proof, that of "divine authority," the obvious inference being that such an authority is the supreme court of theological decisions and that Eck is not using such proof. He will attempt to disclaim Eck's patristic authorities with that of "divine authority."

1. Luther began: "In I Cor. 15 we read: 'He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet.'" In the same general reference he gives an additional quotation: ". . . when He shall deliver the kingdom to God and the Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." Luther quoted Augustine who said "that Christ transfers to us, who are His kingdom, His likeness by faith."

2. The second proof Luther offered was Matt. 28. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Luther felt the meaning to be so obvious that he did not pause to explain it.

3. Acts 9 reads: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Luther said of Augustine's understanding of this reference: "We must not listen at all to persons who push Christ out of the Church militant into the Church triumphant. . . . We do not see our Head, and yet we have Him. . . ."

4. Luther quoted from Psalm 122: "There are set thrones of judgment over the house of David." This reference to be considered along with the reference from Acts 9. "We see the seats, but not Him who sits on them, the King."

With equal force Luther then turned to the seven authorities that Eck had used and point by point he made his refutation and in

the same order.

1. We recall that Eck had only referred to "Paul." Luther furnished the reference and said: "For his first authority, Paul, especially in Eph. 4; where he says that Christ is the Head of the Church, proves for me and not for him. . . ." Luther offered a second quotation from Paul, I Cor. 3, and said: "Here any other Head than Christ is plainly ruled out."

2. Luther looked at Eck's second authority and in an effort to discredit this respected and feared Ingolstadt debater said: "This refers neither to the Church militant nor to the Church triumphant, but, as all the doctors hold, to the equality of the Son with the Father." Concerning Eck's remark about "refusing to be under the Head," Luther said he would pass over that "for just as his authorities were badly cited, so this remark was badly inserted by him."

3. The citation from Dionysius, Luther said: "proves nothing against me; for I do not deny the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but the point I am debating refers to the head. . . ."

4. The quotation from Gregory Nazianzen was answered by Luther next. It "is understood by everyone who knows grammar to say nothing either of a monarchy or of a head." We observed Eck's style when he injected a little absurdity at this point. Luther replied with a hypothetical illustration which was in reality also an argument into absurdity. "If his head, which he calls the Roman Pontiff, dies, being human, then the Church is without a head. If in the meantime Christ is the Head of the Church until another Pope

is elected, is it less monstrous to hold that Christ yields His place to a living Pope, and only takes the place of a dead one?"

5. The reference to Cyprian used by Eck received the comment from Luther that it is "not to the point at all. For Cyprian is not speaking of the Roman bishop." We have then another indication of Luther's incisive style. "If our excellent Doctor will stand by his authority, Cyprian, we shall close the debate this minute." To fortify this remark the Wittenberger used still other quotations from Cyprian. Luther was willing to grant that sacerdotal unity did come from the Seat of Peter but only for the Western Church. Furthermore, the Roman Church sprang from the Jerusalem Church. Luther reversed Eck's logic and said: "with his logic he might establish beyond question that Jerusalem is the head and lord over all churches."

6. What must have been his strongest words so far were made in connection with the reference of Eck to Jerome. He said Jerome "has not been correctly quoted by our excellent Doctor." There have been Churches who have not accepted the Pope as head and are not heretical. Luther's example was the Greek Church. Eck's strongest argument from Jerome, Luther labeled as "irrelevant." Eck had quoted Jerome: "I am speaking with the successor of the fisherman and disciple of Christ, and I am an associate of his happiness, that is, of the Seat of Peter; I know that the Church is built on that Rock." Luther pointed out a fallacy in Eck's logic. "It does not follow that because I associate with this particular church, therefore it is the first." Luther then quoted from the African council in the ninety-ninth distinction, chapter one: "The bishop of the first seat

shall not be called the prince of priests nor the supreme priest. . . . Nor shall the Bishop of Rome be called the universal pontiff." If the monarchy of the Roman Pontiff exists by divine right, all these statements would be heresy, and he concludes, "which would be rash to assert."

7. To conclude his remarks for this round Luther offered a new proof of his own and quoted Luke 22. It was the caution of Jesus about strife and greatness among the disciples. Luther had replied to all of Eck's points except the one from Revelation. Whether this was an oversight or intentional we do not know. Its omission by Luther did not effect his argument.

Certainly the Ingolstadt Doctor knew from this moment on, if there were doubts before, that here was a real battle. As he rose to speak he had to take note of Luther's impressive list of quotations and rebuttals. Luther had come across strongly in his ethical appeal. "The reverend father has entered the lists quite well informed; he has his materials arranged in good order. . . . Your most illustrious lordships, excellencies, and principalities will pardon Eck, who has for a long time been engrossed with other business, if he is not able on the spot to keep up such a well-rounded and accurately worded pile of arguments as the reverend father has done. For I came here to debate, not to publish a book." Eck made a strong appeal to the sympathies of the audience. Scholars have disagreed if this emotional proof offered was genuine or hypocritical. But real or not, Eck had felt the sting of real competition and he assumed a bit of a martyr's role as he referred to his own work schedule, thereby playing on the

sympathies of the audience. To be noted also is a bit of sarcasm in his reference to writing a book, because Luther had recently published one and many of his citations were freshly on his mind. The reply which Eck now made did not answer all the points which Luther had made.

1. Eck did not take up the first four Bible references which Luther had quoted. He answered them in a general way by saying, "No one presumes to deny" that Christ is the Head of the Church. Eck, however, had done this very thing when he said that Christ was only in charge of the Church triumphant.

2. Eck returned briefly to the I Cor, 3 passage. Instead of quoting from the reference he gave Jerome's interpretation of the reference and said: "He refers to Peter, and clearly states that Peter has been appointed head of the Church." I Cor. 3 does not say this.

3. John 5 had to be understood according to Bernard who said that the order in heaven was like that of the Roman hierarchy. "That this ecclesiastical hierarchy. . . has been instituted by Christ, and that, as God is the Head in heaven, so the Supreme Pontiff is the head in the Church militant." Eck did not respond to Luther's hypothetical illustration about the headless church and called it "facetious reasoning." Upon the death of the Pope the college of cardinals "holds those rights, until a new pontiff is elected." Eck's reply was not furnished with any supporting evidence.

4. Regarding the Cyprian references, he claimed that Luther did not understand and that the meaning of statements must "be learned

from the reasons for making them." He referred to the remark about unity having its origin in the Roman Church. He talked at length with ideas that were not clear and appeared to argue in circles and that Cyprian was to be understood only in a certain way. He cleverly diverted attention at the right moment by saying, "Let the reverend father, I pray, quit mentioning and insulting us with Greeks and Orientals, who have become exiles from the Christian Church when they fell away from the Roman Church."

Eck spoke for the remainder of that morning. Certainly the main lines of argument and proofs had been established in this first session. Eck's claim was basically this, that the papacy had been in existence from the beginning as the head of the Christian Church; that this was so by Divine order, and that the testimony of the fathers supported this. Luther's argument followed these lines: Christ is the Head of the Church on earth; the Bible clearly speaks of this; and the testimony of the Church fathers reveals that it was regarded so from the beginning.

Luther had conducted himself well. He had been calm and dispassionate. His logical proofs had been easy to follow even if most of the audience did not agree with him. He came across to the audience as one well-informed, as one who had a command of the language, of the fathers and of the Bible. In those areas needed to establish his ethos Luther was making a strong showing.

Eck showed speaking skill. He was, however, noticeably weak in Bible proofs. Luther could seemingly quote the church fathers with more accuracy than Eck. For these reasons Eck's logic was less

than satisfying for this writer. It appeared that he may have been over-confident from his previous accomplishments and was relying on his reputation and oratory to carry him through.

While the audience did not agree with Luther, still we would conclude that by means of his logical proofs he was relating well to them. In this first session it would appear that Luther had made a good beginning.

It was Luther's turn to speak first when the afternoon session was opened at two o'clock.<sup>152</sup> It is his intention to raise ten points to which Eck must respond in this same session. Each man spoke but once except for several interjections by Luther. These ten points had surfaced in the morning session.

1. Luther returned to the reference of I Cor. 3:4. We see Luther attacking strongly Eck's sources. Eck had quoted Jerome to Luther. The Wittenberger said here: "I shall not let myself be forced by a minor testimony that has been introduced to give up a greater; not even Jerome is so great that on his account I should drop Paul. . . . Paul teaches and forbids anybody to say that he is of Peter." . . . . "My reply is not defeated yet, and if it is not met with stronger arguments, I shall confront all the past and future arguments of the Doctor with it." Luther's logic is simple here. The Bible must be considered as a primary source and a higher authority than men. "For the Word of God is above all the words of men."

2. Luther returned to the Bible reference of John 5:19. Eck

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<sup>152</sup>A complete wording of the afternoon session of the debate of July 4 is found in Dau, pp. 145-57.

had asked Luther to read what Bernard said of this reference. Luther said: "I hold St. Bernard in honor and do not despise his opinion, but in a controversy we must go back to the true and proper meaning of Scripture, which can stand the test in debate. Here Luther lets the authority of Christ stand against that of Bernard. "It is manifest, then, that Bernard understands this word of Christ in another sense."

3. Luther returned to his hypothetical illustration about the headless church which Eck had tagged as "vulgar, ridiculous and miserable argument." Luther replied: "Let it be vulgar and ridiculous, if it only cannot be defeated; for I do not see yet that it had been refuted." Concerning Eck's remark that the cardinals have the right to elect a new Pope, Luther reasoned that this only strengthened his point because "that at a time like that of Jerome, when there were no cardinals, there cannot have been a Pope."

4. The quotations about Cyprian were taken up next, especially the reference where Cyprian referred to Pope Cornelius as his brother, never as his lord. "If our excellent Doctor can prove that Peter appointed a single one of the apostles, or a single one of the seventy disciples, or that he sent one of them on any mission, I grant all he claims and declare myself defeated." On the other hand, Luther reasoned, if he proves that Peter exercised no lordship over the other apostles, then he would hope that Eck would do likewise.

5. A fifth point by Luther on the action of the Council of Nicea about the election of a bishop must still stand or else it is a "miserable devil's conclave." That council had stated that no



bishop who is already installed in office is to usurp authority over the other bishops." Luther concluded this point by saying, "Therefore my argument still stands."

6. Eck had ridiculed Luther's grammatical knowledge about Cyprian's reference to sacerdotal unity. Luther responded, "this new logician or philosopher explains this 'origin' to mean the transfer of the office. As for Eck's charge that the Eastern Church was heretical, Luther wanted to know what to do with the many fine saints that came from that Church.

7. Luther returned to the quotation of Jerome in which this church father had used the expression "the highest priest." Luther said of this, "Jerome calls every bishop the highest priest because he has been elevated from among other priests. Hence the passage does not properly refer to the Roman Pope."

8. Luther claimed that Eck failed to refute a point he made from Jerome that that church father had determined that inferiority and superiority of bishops was not from divine right but from custom.

9. Luther's ninth point was that Eck had made an inconsistent use of a reference from Dionysius. Admittedly, this was but a minor point in passing.

10. To Luther the tenth point he raised caught Eck in another weak and otherwise inconsistent remark. Luther had referred to the ninety-ninth distinction in which it was forbidden to call the Roman Pope the universal bishop. In his answer to Eck's explanation Luther tried to make him look ridiculous in his reasoning. Ecks's reasoning was "that the Roman Pope is not the universal bishop, but the bishop

of the Church universal." Luther's reply was, "If I did not wish to spare him, I should overthrow also this answer of his. But I shall leave the decision to the judges and the auditors."

The reply of Eck to these ten points was shorter than was Luther's statement. His rebuttals found no strong appeal.

1. To Luther's claim of referring Paul to Jerome he said, "if we wish to be God-fearing men, that Jerome has correctly understood the meaning of Paul."

2. Eck's response to John 5:19 found him reluctantly conceding a point. "None but Arians have denied that Christ . . . claims co-equality with the Father, nor does Bernard cite the passage in any other sense."

3. The third point in rebuttal was that he never denied that Christ was the Head of the Church. This is ambiguous at best for Eck. When he began the debate his point was that Christ was the head only of the Church triumphant and that the Pope was the head of the Church militant. Eck did not fully answer this point. As he closed he said: "I believe that there were cardinals at the time of Jerome, or Jerome could not have been a cardinal priest." Upon hearing that remark Luther spoke out: "Jerome never was a cardinal." Eck said nothing to this.

4. As Eck began his fourth point he seems to have momentarily lost his geographical bearings and made the remark; ". . . because the Novatian bishops came to Rome from Numidia, a country of which Ptolemy and Strabo tell us that it lies on the other side of the Atlas Mountains." Luther again interrupted, "On this side." To

refute the "brother" quotation attributed to Cyprian Eck said: "I hold that that was the opinion of the party who collected Cyprian's writings, not Cyprian himself." Once again this appeared as a weak point to the argument that was advanced. Concerning whether or not Peter appointed a single apostle he replied: "that is beside our object." We have a good example of the reasoning of Luther and Eck side by side in Eck's next remark. "What he said next I decline to admit, because he draws this conclusion: Peter could not appoint an apostle, therefore the successor of Peter cannot appoint a successor to an apostle, or exercise authority over him. His premise is true, but his conclusion is false, because the Pope now has that power and does ordain bishops. "This clearly has to be a fallacy in Eck's logic. He is saying that because a rite is exercised now proves that it was there before.

5. The fifth point received only slight attention in passing with no significant point made.

6. Eck did not speak directly to Luther's sixth point and claimed that Luther attacks his logic.

7. Eck held to his charge that the Eastern Church was schismatic and heretical.

8. Eck did not speak to the "inferiority and superiority of bishops" point that Luther stressed but reiterated that Jerome recognized Damasus as Pope.

9. There seemed to be a slight meeting of minds on point nine. "The reverend father may not have understood. It never entered my mind to say that the papacy is an order above that of the episcopate."

10. Eck attempted a "guilt by association" approach to the point Luther had made. He did not answer the point but simply pointed out that Luther's views coincide with "an infinite multitude of such fools and of people who are striving after something peculiar."

After these remarks Eck sat down and the afternoon session adjourned. The pattern of proof that was established in the morning session had continued in this afternoon session. Luther had used Bible references as his main proof and claimed that the history of the church supported this. Eck had appealed again and again to the authorities of church tradition and history.

#### Luther and Eck Face Each Other on July 5, 6, 7, and 8

The July 5 sessions proved to be heated.<sup>153</sup> The lines of argument did not change. Much of what was said was a repeat of the day before. The one new element that received more attention was the meaning of Matt. 16:18. It was Eck's claim here that the "Rock" was Peter. It was Luther's contention that the grammar would bring out that the "Rock" was "the faith which Peter professed, and which is common to the entire Church."

It may very well be that Eck having had a night to sleep on the approach of Luther, decided to use some rhetorical efforts whose ethics are open to question. Eck used a subtle ad hominem attack. The audience of that day was definitely anti-Hus, a Bohemian reformer of a previous generation. In cunning fashion Eck insinuated that Luther was of the same mold as the Bohemians (in its context it meant

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<sup>153</sup> An abbreviated wording of the remainder of the debate is found in Dau, pp. 164-87.

arch-heretics). Luther was quick to sense this and defended himself against this attack. Luther was being driven onto dangerous ground and so during the lunch break he went to the university library and read of the acts of the Council of Constance in which Hus was condemned.<sup>154</sup>

In the afternoon session Luther carefully noted the good features of Hus's writings but drew a line between himself and others the likes of Hus and Wyclif. He clearly did not want to get mouse-trapped in the context of guilt by association. This was Eck's chance, however. He tagged Luther as a defender of heretics. Luther interrupted: "I protest publicly before you all that the excellent Doctor, in what he says, is shamefully lying about me." Eck countered: "The Bohemians would proclaim Luther their champion." "This is a most shameful lie," shouted Luther. In Eck's closing remarks of the day he appealed to the jurists not to admit the position of Luther that the Bible alone should decide this issue of authority.

On Wednesday, July 6, the debate resumed still belaboring the issue of papal supremacy. Citing Scriptural references and the example of the Eastern Church Luther refused to be classified with heretics as Eck had done the day before. He denounced Eck's charge that he was a friend of the Bohemians. Eck then turned on the Eastern Church whom he called the Greeks and categorized them as heretical and Luther along with them. Luther closed out the day by reminding Eck that after three days of debate Eck had still failed to establish from the Bible the divine right of the papacy.

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<sup>154</sup>Bainton, p. 115.

Thursday, July 7 saw Eck as the first to speak. He complained that Luther had "bellowed his arguments at the learned gentlemen present like an ox." After due response Luther stated: "This is all I have to say in rebuttal of Eck's arguments and now I shall proceed to attack him with direct counter-arguments." There was once again a healthy give and take in which Luther appealed to Bible authority and Eck cited his patristic evidence. It appeared once again that Luther had the upper hand and Eck remarked he would have to regard Luther as a heathen if he did not believe the infallibility of councils.

Luther was the first to speak on Friday morning, July 8. The exchanges in the morning session added nothing significant to the over-all enlightenment of the thesis under debate. Each stuck by his position and the authorities each cited. Eck's point was that Peter's primacy was assured from the testimony of the church fathers. Luther's point was that there was no divine authority for this assertion.

The afternoon session was to be the last on this topic. By agreement between the two parties the papal supremacy debate was to end with this session. Each restated their respective positions by way of summary.

The dramatic part of the Leipzig Debate was over with the conclusion of the debate on papal supremacy. There were other topics to be debated and these topics were to occupy the two men from July 8 in the afternoon and until July 13. Such topics were: Purgatory, Indulgences, Repentance, Priestly Absolution, and Satis-

factions for Sin. The lines of argument in these topics were the same as for the first topic of papal supremacy. As a criterion for truth Luther quoted Scripture; Eck mainly used the Church fathers. It is not our intention here to examine these topics other than to make the general observation that Luther and Eck sometimes found themselves in agreement.

The Luther--Eck confrontation formally ended at about eight o'clock in the morning of July 14. In his concluding remarks Luther charged Eck with trying to change the point of the controversy and by failing to answer Luther's Scriptural proofs. In a kind of final outburst he said that Eck was somewhat of a ridiculous lute player, coming back to the same old tune.<sup>155</sup> With this he sat down. Eck was the last to speak and charged that Luther was giving the Bible the preference over the writings of the church fathers, and that Luther had violated the laws of decency.<sup>156</sup> The remainder of that day and for the 15th and 16th also Eck re-engaged Carlstadt for the conclusion of the entire debate. To formally close the debate Johann Langius Lambergius, a former rector of the university made a long address to a nearly empty house followed by the "Te deum Laudamus," by the Thomas School Choir and the city musicians.

A Summary of the Rhetorical Characteristics  
of Luther's Debating

A study of this debate reveals a number of Luther's rhetorical characteristics. One that stands out above others in the judgment

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<sup>155</sup>Fife, p. 364.

<sup>156</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 412.

of this writer is that of authoritativeness. Truth as he saw it was contained in the simple quotations of the Bible. He had studied the Bible in its original languages. To him it was the voice of God. He entered all his theological tasks in this debate with that conviction. More than a few times he reminded his opponent, Dr. Eck, that the Bible was the sole criterion as to what was right or wrong. His stance with regard to the Bible was expressed most succinctly on the afternoon of July 4. "For the Word of God is above all the words of men."<sup>157</sup>

Because it was his conviction that the Bible was truth he quoted it to prove his points. As he spoke then, it was a strong authoritarian note that he struck. It was precisely this ethical proof that proved to be a difficult problem from which Eck tried to extricate himself. It was at the close of the second day's debate that he had turned to the jurists and appealed to them "not to admit the sole authority of the Scriptures, for then their Jus Canonicum, their civil code, would be put out of commission."<sup>158</sup> Even later in the debate we are told: "Once more Eck seized the floor and remarked that the impatient monk was speaking scurrilous things, and was making a show of giving the Scriptures the preference over the fathers, just as if he were an oracle."<sup>159</sup>

Next to Luther's authoritativeness with the Scriptures was his authoritativeness with the fathers. Quoting the church fathers

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<sup>157</sup> Dau, p. 146.

<sup>158</sup> Dau, p. 166.

<sup>159</sup> Dau, p. 186.



was supposed to be Eck's forte, and it was. Eck had not expected someone else to be so well versed. It had to be a source of irritation for Eck that he was challenged for accuracy in his own domain. It must be stated that although Luther quoted the church fathers he did not consider them as a proof for the points that he argued. If the patristic citations agreed with Scripture it was supportive evidence. If they did not agree Luther would not accept them. Once more the Bible he claimed as the sole authority.

Coupled with the previous feature was his ability to then present his convictions in what was a clear and logical order. This was due in part to his linguistic ability so that as he used a given biblical reference the listener could see the point or points that he was adducing. Many, if not most, of his hearers had not had this form of biblical studies, his clarity and logic served his authoritarian role. This enabled him to cut to the heart of an argument and to be understood with his highest proof of Scripture.

Another rhetorical characteristic of Luther was his own research of the subject that was the main thesis in the debate. Luther came to the debate well-prepared. Eck had remarked in the beginning: "He has his materials arranged in good order in the book which he has written and published."<sup>160</sup> Luther had researched his subject and was ready for the debate.

Luther was blessed with a keen memory as was evidenced by his many quotations from the Scriptures and even by affording

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<sup>160</sup>Dau, p. 138.

the particular reference to some of the biblical quotations that Eck had made. His memory was in evidence also as he made use of the writings of the church fathers.

Luther gave the impression of being a fast thinker. On several occasions he interrupted Eck with several important corrections on statistical data.

Luther's view of the Scriptures, his knowledge of them and of the church fathers, his ability to arrange these matters in a logical fashion, his keen memory and his fast thinking, enabled him to see through the arguments that were presented by Eck. He could see Eck's fallacies. One of these was in the opening remarks of the debate. Luther did not deny a universal head of the church but when Eck continued and then identified the human head as a divine head then the logical Scripture proofs of Luther began to come. Even in Eck's use of Scripture Luther made corrections.

Eck had used several subtle ad hominem attacks. Luther did not adopt this tactic. When it was used on Luther we see his emotions strongly expressed. Eck had no more than begun this form of attack and Luther sensed the full implications of it and voiced his strong protests.

As viewed by this writer Luther made extensive use of a wide range of ethical and logical proofs. It would appear that one was about as strong as the other. His emotional proof, while evident, is not as weighty as the former.

The Audience Response to the Rhetorical Effort

For the most part those who were on Eck's side to begin with remained so and likewise with Luther's following. This was to be expected. "But there were also a number of learned and discriminating scholars among the opposition who were much impressed by Luther's new theological approach and his ability."<sup>161</sup> One of the secretaries of the debate, John Graumann, Rector of the St. Thomas School in Leipzig was one of these. He later matriculated at the Wittenberg University and still later used his secretarial skills in recording many of Luther's sermons.

Another such individual of the audience was Heinrich Stromer, the court physician of Duke George. His expressions are taken from a letter.

It is indeed remarkable how modest the holy theological learning of Martin has remained. The man, believe me, is worthy of being immortalized. He stressed nothing except wholesome truths, omitting all the extraneous materials and being satisfied with the majestic Gospel and the writings of the Fathers.<sup>162</sup>

Another such audience response can be noted from Peter Schad who was a professor at Leipzig.

He is so wonderfully learned in the Bible that he has almost all the texts in memory. He has learned enough Greek and Hebrew to form a judgment of the translations. He has no lack of matter in speaking, for an immense stock of ideas and words are at his command.<sup>163</sup>

It is not difficult to find a number of similar excerpts from letters, especially from Luther's friends. We do not quote them here

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<sup>161</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 415.

<sup>162</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 415-16.

<sup>163</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 416.

because there must be some obvious bias.

In considering audience reaction the long range effects to the Wittenberg University are to be noted. As a result of this encounter the enrollment increased dramatically in the years that immediately followed. If it had been Eck's intent to silence Luther he failed because as history shows the debate served as a catalyst in long range audience reaction.

In considering audience reaction one must consider the remote audience of the judges as well. The judges for this debate had not been selected in advance. So when the debate ended Chancellor Caesar Pflug summoned the contestants so this matter could be attended to. Luther and Eck agreed to let the Universities of Paris and Erfurt judge. There was a disagreement as to who on these respective faculties would judge. Luther preferred to have the entire faculty; Eck wanted only the theological faculty and Canonists. Duke George was to decide and Luther lost.

The University in Erfurt refused to judge the debate. It was simply their decision to remain silent. No verdict ever came from them. As for the Sorbonne, it too chose the route of silence at first. There is documentary evidence that Eck used the interim to try to influence Paris.<sup>164</sup> The silence of Paris was no doubt due to the hot theological issue that was involved. It was not until April 15, 1521, almost two years later that their verdict was announced against Luther. It is clear that their decision was not made

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<sup>164</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 424-25.

on the debate as such but on a series of events that transpired after the debate. "The feelings of John Eck and his friends and supporters were considerably mixed when they learned the nature of the official verdict of Paris."<sup>165</sup> If we interpret their reactions correctly it is this that theologically they had to come out against the Lutheran theology and rhetorically they could not exalt Eck.

The response of Luther and Eck are in order too. Eck's letters clearly show that he considered himself the victor.<sup>166</sup> Luther's reaction to the debate has been preserved in letter form also. Luther was keenly disappointed and in his letter of July 20, 1519 to Spalatin the debate is referred to as a "tragedy" and a "fiasco."<sup>167</sup> Luther had hoped for harmony but discord had prevailed.

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<sup>165</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 434.

<sup>166</sup>Dau, pp. 194-95; 198-202.

<sup>167</sup>Grimm, pp. 319-25.

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE PULPIT--A POPULAR PREACHER

#### Preliminary Considerations

The following analysis on Luther's preaching will be focused with four questions: (1) What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? (2) What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort? (3) What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's preaching? (4) What was the response of the audience to the rhetorical effort?

#### The Historical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

Whatever low opinion there was of Luther in other areas of Europe following the Leipzig Debate, in Saxony he was highly respected and loved (noted in chapters three and four). The Leipzig Debate closed on July 16, 1519. Luther then found himself attacked from many directions. The church administration in Rome was now to assume an active role in attempting to end the troubles. It was John Eck once again who was the opponent behind the scenes. Eck had gone to Rome with a detailed report of the happenings in Germany. This resulted in the issuance of the papal bull Exsurge Domine on June 15, 1520 in which Luther was formally charged with heresy. He was given sixty days in which he was to repent.

This attempt to silence Luther proved to be futile. His response in part can be noted from the following:

The indulgences are not a pious fraud, but an infernal, diabolical, antichristian fraud, larceny and robbery, whereby the Roman Nimrod and teacher of sin peddles sin and hell to the whole world and sucks and entices away everybody's money as the price of this unspeakable harm. . . . If this recantation is not enough, I will improve on it some other time.<sup>168</sup>

On January 3, 1521 Luther was formally excommunicated from the church. Almost one month before that date Luther had severed his ties with the church by defiantly burning the first papal document. Emperor Charles I who had recently assumed his office called an Imperial Diet to settle things in Germany. This assembly was held during the middle of April. It was demanded of Luther that he recant. The day of April 18, 1521 has often been referred to as the most important in Luther's career. He made his defiant stand at Worms using the same arguments he had used on John Eck almost two years earlier.

Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures or evident reason (for I believe neither in the Pope nor Councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen.<sup>169</sup>

The meeting was thrown into utter chaos. Several efforts to resolve the crises in the next few days proved futile. Luther was granted safe-conduct to return to Wittenberg. On April 26 Luther left Worms. It was the intention of Emperor Charles to place Luther under the ban<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> George W. Forell, "Career of the Reformer II" Luther's Works, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958) XXXII, p. xi.

<sup>169</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, pp. 504-05.

<sup>170</sup> Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 509.

which for all practical purposes meant that he was declared a public enemy and there would be no longer any protection for his person. Anyone who openly sympathized or abetted him in any fashion could also come under the ban.

Elector Frederick of Saxony was keenly aware of all the implications of the ban and proceeded to put into effect a plan to insure the physical safety of his professor. It would take several days for Luther and company to make their journey by carriage to Wittenberg. The Elector arranged that Luther should be "kidnapped" as they traveled during the dark evening hours of May 3. Luther was disguised as a knight, placed on a horse and removed to the Wartburg Castle near Eisenach where he was to begin a forced exile until broken by his return to Wittenberg ten months later. Only a few of his select friends knew his whereabouts. Fearing that he could still be recognized on sight he assumed the appearance and identity of a knight and became known as Junker Joerg.

The time that Luther was in hiding in the Wartburg furnishes us especially with the backdrop for the eight Wittenberg sermons in early March of 1522. It is Luther's correspondence during this time which is one of our main sources of information. The ten months that he was to spend in the Wartburg Castle give us an indication of his tremendous working capacity. He literally kept the printing presses active. In a letter to Nicholas Gerbel under the date of November 1, 1521 we note the following:

It is not safe for me to send my little books to you, but I have written on this matter to Spalatin asking him to take care of it. In the meantime a little book on the Antichrist, Against Catharinus, has come off the press, one Against Latomus



at Louvain, one in German On Confession, also the 67th Psalm explained in German, the (Magnificat) of Mary explained in German, and the 36th Psalm explained as comfort for the congregation in Wittenberg. . . . My German exposition of the Epistles and the Gospels for each Sunday of the Church year is being printed. I have also completed a public rebuke of the Cardinal of Mainz, because he has again erected the idol of indulgences. . . . The explanation of the Gospel concerning the ten lepers is also ready. All this is in German. I am born for my Germans, whom I want to serve.<sup>171</sup>

The previous quotation indicates the pastoral concern Luther had for the congregation he had to leave behind in Wittenberg. As we search his correspondence of this time we note that he made frequent inquiry about the welfare of this flock. One must consider these letters as a prelude to the sermons to more effectively see the ethical and emotional proof which he employed at the time when he then delivered the sermons. In a letter to Melanchthon of May 12, 1521 he said: "Be sure to write everything that happens at your place and how everything is."<sup>172</sup> This letter had been prefaced: "To Philip Melanchthon, evangelist of the congregation at Wittenberg." A letter of the same date but to John Agricola makes an inquiry. "Write what the situation is with the preaching and who was entrusted with it so I may strengthen either my hope or my fear for the Word."<sup>173</sup> We note some agitation on Luther's part when he wrote to Melanchthon on May 26.

I would like to know who fills my pulpit. Is Amsdorf still snoring and lazy? Also, what is Doctor Karlstadt doing? May the Lord guard and strengthen you in what you write concerning the prosperity of the University. Amen.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Krodel, pp. 319-20.

<sup>172</sup>Krodel, p. 217.

<sup>173</sup>Krodel, p. 221.

<sup>174</sup>Krodel, p. 232.

In June he wrote an entire letter to the Wittenberg people. The letter was really a preface in one of his writings. The entire letter is one continuous encouragement not to become discouraged at his absence. This letter furnishes us with some interesting insights as to the pastoral love that existed between this man and his flock.

In a letter to Melanchthon on July 13 he sounded relieved. "Since things are going so well at Wittenberg, you certainly don't need me."<sup>175</sup> Two days later he expressed joy at the news from Wittenberg in a letter to Spalatin. "All your news about Wittenberg is pleasant. Thanks be to Christ, who has sent others to replace me." Commenting on a different matter several lines later he said: "In what 'great fear' the Wittenberg people were because of my absence."<sup>176</sup> A letter to Amsdörf on September 9 indicates that he has no hope of returning to his people in Wittenberg. He sounds frustrated and pleaded that Melanchthon be given the task of preaching. The letter registered some concern about Karlstadt and his activities.<sup>177</sup> Even from the Wartburg Luther had suspicions about the man.

Luther had reasons for being wary of Carlstadt. The same kind of impulsive actions that we noted before the Leipzig Debate were becoming evident once again in Carlstadt's behavior. Karlstadt was insisting on introducing certain reforms in the worship life of the Wittenberg people. Together with Gabriel Zwilling and some Augustinian friars he refused to celebrate the mass in the tradi-

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<sup>175</sup> Krodel, p. 258.

<sup>176</sup> Krodel, p. 269.

<sup>177</sup> Krodel, pp. 310-12.

tional way. Carlstadt became an agitator in the midst of a tense community. By means of his sermons, lectures and other academic activities he was fanning the flame of unrest. Of the reform of the mass Carlstadt said: "Who partakes only of the bread, sins." Again, "Organs belong only to theatrical exhibitions and princes' palaces"; "Images in churches are wrong"; "Painted idols standing on altars are even more harmful and devilish."<sup>178</sup> Zwilling, meanwhile, went even further in a blind fanatical zeal. He proclaimed that no one should henceforth go to mass. In November these two men started urging monks to leave the monastery. Later they joined in destroying other items that were used in the worship of the people. Wittenberg was being turned into a place for radical mob rule which was the result of impulsive actions not based on clear thinking.

In a letter of December 18 to John Lang, Luther deplored the manner in which the monks left. "I do not approve of that tumultuous exodus, for the monks could have parted from each other in a peaceful and friendly way."<sup>179</sup> A letter of the same date to Wenceslas Link reveals that Luther had secretly returned to Wittenberg early in December but dared not enter the monastery lest his whereabouts become known.<sup>180</sup>

Luther's correspondence would indicate that the tenseness that was present might have passed in time without too many additional problems. Towards the end of December, however, a group of

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<sup>178</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 536.

<sup>179</sup>Krodel, p. 356.

<sup>180</sup>Krodel, p. 359.

men, called the Zwickau prophets, three in number, came to Wittenberg. They claimed to be prophets who had received revelations from God directly. Their fanatical presence in an already tense environment touched off the Wittenberg disturbances. Luther tried to handle the matter by correspondence with Melanchthon,<sup>181</sup> but it was to no avail.

On February 22, 1522 Luther wrote to Elector Frederick, under whose care he had been, and informed him that he planned to return soon to Wittenberg. The Elector replied immediately and asked Luther to stay in hiding. In the same communication Luther was informed about the sad state of affairs in Wittenberg. This, evidently, was the deciding factor in causing Luther to return.

Elector Frederick was still confessing the faith of the mother church. He was concerned that he too, would be placed under the ban for permitting a heretic to live in the territory. The other part of his dilemma was that he felt Luther had been treated unfairly and as such he owed the professor his protection. He asked that Luther draft a statement in which Luther set forth his reasons for returning and that it was without the Elector's permission. Luther complied. This letter was written either on March 7 or 8 at the time Luther got back to Wittenberg. We would take from this letter only the three reasons Luther cited for his return.

. . . The first reason: I am called by the whole congregation at Wittenberg in a letter filled with urgent begging and pleading. Since no one can deny that the commotion has its origin in me. . . . I had no way of refusing without rejecting Christian love, trust, and confidence. . . . The second reason:

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<sup>181</sup>Krodel, pp. 364-72.

on account of my absence Satan has intruded into my fold at Wittenberg. . . . The third reason: I am rather afraid that there will be a real rebellion in the German territories, by which God will punish the German nation.<sup>182</sup>

At the same time Luther conferred with his closest friends of the University and it was agreed that on Sunday, March 9 he would preach the sermon and for each of the following seven days.

### The Physical Setting of the Rhetorical Effort

The church in which Luther delivered the eight sermons was one of the two main churches in Wittenberg. As was noted in the previous chapter the Castle Church was used for university functions. The Town Church (Stadtkirche), however, as its name implies, was for the citizens of the town. The twin spires of this church dominate the skyline of the eastern edge of town. The exact date that the church construction started, this writer was not able to find. In literature he picked up at the time he visited this Reformation landmark he found that its beginning is vaguely dated as prior to 1300 and from the time that Wittenberg was founded. The same literature also indicates that the church was enlarged and remodeled from time to time. This would corroborate what Schwiebert states.

The main nave was added in 1360, while the two Gothic towers were erected in 1412. The beautiful painting of the Virgin was made in 1483. The outside of the church was adorned with many sculptured figures and inscriptions.<sup>183</sup>

When this writer visited the Stadtkirche in 1972 he was told that many of the inner appointments of the church have been

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<sup>182</sup>Krodel, pp. 393-99.

<sup>183</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 214.

altered since the time of Luther and yet not to such an extent that one cannot visualize what it must have been like in 1522 when Luther delivered his eight sermons. (The church is used yet today.)

The ceiling of the church is a confluence of Gothic arches with the base of the arches blending into equally spaced pillars along either side of the nave. The altar is recessed in a Gothic arched chancel to the east end of the church. The pulpit in Luther's day, so our guide indicated, was by the base of the main pillars along the south side of the nave. This would locate the pulpit about in the middle of the church, but to one side. This was done largely for acoustical effect so that a preacher would be mostly in the center of his audience but slightly to one side. This writer believes that with this arrangement the entire audience could have easily heard the speaker.

The original pulpit of Luther's day has since been removed and placed into the Lutherhalle in Wittenberg. A new pulpit now graces the interior of the church. The original pulpit would have allowed for the preacher to have his head about twelve feet above floor level which would have given the speaker the illusion of towering over his hearers whether they were seated or standing. Taking into consideration the height and the location of the pulpit this writer draws the conclusion also that Luther was easily seen by most everyone in the church on that occasion unless they were behind one of the pillars of the far side.

This writer was not able to find a precise number of listeners. There were a few references to the fact that the church was



A view of the twin spires of the Stadtkirche, looking eastward from the spire of the Castle Church.



The Reverend Mr. Hilgendorf standing in the present pulpit of the Stadtkirche.

full. But how many would the church hold? This too, could only be an estimate. If one allows for standing room only, which is plausible because of unfixed furniture, the church could easily have held upwards of one thousand people. Considering the tenseness of the hour and the strong desire to have Luther return to the Wittenberg community it is certainly conceivable that he had that many listeners on this occasion.

His audience consisted largely of unidentified townspeople. We know that his close associates of the Wittenberg community were present such as Mēlancthon, Justus Jones, Nicholas Amsdorf, and Hieronymus Schurf, but even the recorder of these sermons was an unknown amanuensis.<sup>184</sup> The conclusion is certainly warranted that the audience was exclusively Wittenbergers, both townspeople and university faculty and students who were eager to have Luther return and minister to them. It is probable also that any person of importance in Wittenberg was there since the problem that Luther addressed was one that effected both the academic and the civic community, for in many respects the university and town life had been blended into one.

#### The Rhetorical Characteristics of Luther's Preaching

As was noted before, the people of Wittenberg were rioting because of the inflamed rhetoric of several of its religious leaders during Luther's absence. One can scarcely imagine what took place in the minds of these people who had been raised in a rich Roman

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<sup>184</sup>Doberstein, pp. 69-70.



Catholic tradition, now suddenly being told to discard many of their religious uses. Hence when Luther decided to preach to them he directed his remarks to these uses. The following<sup>185</sup> is a brief resume of the sermon topics:

First sermon--March 9, 1522, Sunday, about the abolition of the mass.

Second sermon--March 10, 1522, continued to speak of the abolition of the mass.

Third sermon--March 11, 1522, about marriage of priests and leaving the cloisters, and about images.

Fourth sermon--March 12, 1522, continued to speak about images.

Fifth sermon--March 13, 1522, about miscellaneous items and the sacrament.

Sixth sermon--March 14, 1522, about conduct and worthiness in receiving the sacrament.

Seventh sermon--March 15, 1522, a firmness about the absence of love in Wittenberg.

Eighth sermon--March 16, 1522, Sunday, about confession in its various uses.

This writer finds the topics of these sermons to be of importance because they give further insight into the Wittenberg disturbances. Most noteworthy in them we observe a preacher reaching directly the emotional needs of his audience. It is to be noted also that the sermon series commenced on a Sunday and ended on a Sunday.

The entire series of these sermons is printed on thirty pages of the American Edition of Luther's Works. Even by present day standards with which this writer is acquainted these would have

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<sup>185</sup> Doberstein, pp. 70-100. The full text of these sermons can be found within these thirty pages.

to be considered as short sermons. The sermons are about equal in length. This writer timed his own reading of these sermons at about the tempo that he uses in preaching and found that they fit easily within a fifteen minute span at what he considers a moderate pace. It is admitted that this is highly subjective and inconclusive as to the length of time Luther required, but allowing even for a change of tempo the time span does not vary that much but what the conclusion is still drawn that these were short sermons. This factor together with the topic selections is further indication of pathetic proof in an audience setting that was tense emotionally.

#### The First Sermon

For none of the sermons does Luther employ a biblical text, but his sermons are full of biblical quotations. Only in the first sermon,<sup>186</sup> the fourth sermon, and in the last sermon is there a semblance of an outline. This outline structure at the very beginning is both pathos and logos. "In the first place, we must know that we are children of wrath, and all our works, intentions, and thoughts are nothing at all." Luther fortifies this with a reference from Eph. 2:3. "Secondly, that God has sent us his only-begotten Son that we may believe in him and whoever trusts in him shall be free from sin and a child of God." Luther fortifies this point with a reference from John 1:2. Thirdly, we must also have love and through love we must do to one another as God has done to us through faith." I Cor. 13:1 is then quoted. This third point is amplified a bit when he asks: "And here,

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<sup>186</sup>Doberstein, pp. 70-75.

dear friends, have you not grievously failed? I see no signs of love among you." Over and over again, in various ways throughout the course of these sermons Luther returns to these thoughts which are basically these: You deserve nothing. God has richly blessed you. You do not show yourself grateful. His words are heavily loaded with emotional proof as he continues under this third point. "Here let us beware lest Wittenberg become Capernaum. . . . Dear friends, the kingdom of God; --and we are that kingdom--does not consist in talk or words, but in activity, in deeds, in works and exercises." This writer understands what Luther meant by the reference to Capernaum. Just a week and a half before visiting Wittenberg in the summer of 1972 this writer also walked through the deserted ruins of the biblical city of Capernaum on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. It was a city that Jesus had used as headquarters for a time. Jesus said it was a city richly favored but lost that favor because its people did not appreciate their blessing. Luther's inference is that it could be so with Wittenberg. Instead of counting their blessings of a restored Word of God they are showing themselves unappreciative. A fourth point is then added to complete his introduction. "Fourthly, we also need patience." Rom. 5:4 is offered as a proof text.

Luther's logic in speaking to these people was that they should not suddenly discard all of their heritage in reckless abandon and so to cause the weaker people in their midst to stumble. "One must not insist upon his rights, but must see what may be

useful and helpful to his brother. . . . Dear brother, if you have suckled long enough, do not at once cut off the breast, but let your brother be suckled as you were suckled. I would not have gone so far as you have done, if I had been here. . . . There has been too much haste."

Next Luther adds an illustration to fortify the logic he has just used. "The sun has two properties, light and heat. No king has power enough to bend or guide the light of the sun; it remains fixed in its place. But the heat may be turned and guided." From this illustration he draws a lesson and returns the hearer to the thoughts expressed in the introduction. "Thus faith must always remain pure and immovable in our hearts, never wavering; but love bends and turns so that our neighbor may grasp and follow it. "Luther wants them to feel a keen sense of responsibility towards preserving their fellowman's faith and not destroying it. He says: "Therefore, dear brethren, follow me; I have never been a destroyer."

At this point Luther was halfway through this first sermon. Everything he has said up to this point in time was for the purpose of having them see their accountability to each other. Having established that fact he drives to their consciousness the element of guilt. "Therefore all those have erred who have helped and consented to abolish the mass; not that it was not a good thing, but that it was not done in an orderly way. . . . For it was done in wantonness, with no regard for proper order with offense to your neighbor." As he continues he strongly scolds them. "For I cannot defend your action; as I have just said . . . you could have consulted me about

this matter."

As he concludes this first sermon he makes an appeal to them to rise above their destructive actions. "Let us, therefore, feed others also with the milk which we received, until they, too, become strong in faith. Very abruptly Luther ends this sermon with a kind of announcement. "This is enough about the mass; tomorrow we shall speak about images."

Several observations are in order before looking at the next sermon. Luther did not have to establish his ethos with this audience. This was a captive audience in that sense. His authority was accepted by them. These people wanted him in their midst once again to guide them. He could use strong and scolding language and they would accept it. In this sense this entire series from beginning to ending is one of ethical proof.

With the exception of the four logical points in his lengthy introduction he gives the appearance to this writer of simply speaking out of the fullness of his emotions as the occasion demands. He knew the particular point he wanted to establish about the mass and he gathered his thoughts around it.

There is a heavy use of pronouns. In this entire sermon there were only six sentences that did not have one of the following words: I, me, my, you, we, our, your, they, his, him and us. One gains from this a very close speaker-audience interaction which is the result of an ethos that was established.

## The Second Sermon

When Luther had ended his sermon the day before he said that he would speak about images next. But this he does not do. He returns to the subject of the mass with but four sentences of introduction.<sup>187</sup> We observe no discernible outline. He merely continues where he had left off in his remarks of the day before but now he goes a bit further and wants to show what the results will be of abolishing it by force. The following quotation would indicate Luther's logic that forced agreement was not always the answer. "Now if I should rush in and abolish it by force, there are many who would be compelled to consent to it and yet not know where they stand, whether it is right or wrong, and they would say: I do not know if it is right or wrong, I do not know where I stand, I was compelled by force to submit to the majority. And this forcing and commanding results in a mere mockery, an external show, a fool's play, man-made ordinances, sham-saints, and hypocrites."

Luther's whole concern in this sermon consists in warnings of what will happen when a majority of ill-advised fanatics run rough shod over the weak minority. He bids them to hold to the Word they have and let it work on men's hearts. It should be the power that changes people. Luther used himself as a homely illustration of this point. "I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf . . . The Word did

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<sup>187</sup> Doberstein, pp. 75-78.

everything."

This sermon was more peaceful in tone. The general observations about the previous sermon apply here as well. With this sermon too, Luther is constantly fortifying his remarks with the use of Bible references. The conclusion is abrupt as though snipped with a scissors. "Let this be enough at this time concerning the things that are necessary."

#### The Third Sermon

The third sermon<sup>188</sup> is likewise without text. The style reminds one of a lecture that comes in serial form. Here Luther takes up the subject of marriage and of monks and nuns leaving the cloisters. Luther logic on the subject is simple; it focuses on what the Scripture allows. "In the things that are free, such as being married or remaining single, you should take this attitude: if you can keep to it without burdensomeness, then keep it; but it must not be made a general law; everyone must rather be free. So if there is a priest, monk, or nun, who cannot abstain, let him take a wife and be a husband, in order that your conscience may be relieved." To fortify this remark Luther quotes 1 Tim. 4:1-3. Luther's logic is further revealed when he wishes that all cloisters would cease to exist but he does not want them emptied with confusion and chaos as these agitators have done, and here he identifies the agitators by name. Should the monks and nuns go back. His answer is: "This is bad, and yet it is better that the evil should be outside than inside."

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<sup>188</sup> Doberstein, pp. 79-83.

Luther's style here is to repeat the lessons he has just stated and to make a strong emotional appeal by way of application. "Thus, dear friends, I have said it clearly enough, and I believe you ought to understand it and not make liberty a law, saying: This priest has taken a wife, therefore all priests must take wives. Not at all. Or this monk or that nun has left the cloister, therefore they must all come out. Not at all. Or this man has broken the images and burnt them, therefore all images must be burned--not at all, dear brother!"

In the last half of this third sermon Luther abruptly shifts from the previous topic to that of images which he had promised two days earlier. "But now we must come to the images." His understanding to them is that "we are free to have them or not. . . . I am not partial to them." Luther offered a factual illustration of the point he wants to make. "A great controversy arose on the subject of images between the Roman emperor and the pope; the emperor held that he had the authority to banish the images, but the pope insisted that they should remain, and both were wrong. Much blood was shed, but the pope emerged as victor and the emperor lost. What was it all about? They wished to make a 'must' out of that which is free. This God cannot tolerate." To support his claim that images can be used he cited the biblical examples of Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses. "In the face of such uncertainty who would be so bold as to destroy the images? Not I." If people worship the image that to Luther came into violation of another Scripture, II Kings 18:4. "Here we must admit that we may have images and make images, but we



must not worship them, and if they are worshiped, they should be put away and destroyed." Luther cited several Bible references to support the logic of this argument and then as though the clock had run out on him he said: "Let this be enough for today."

#### The Fourth Sermon

Dr. Luther makes a brief review as he begins the fourth sermon.<sup>189</sup> He briefly mentioned the four subjects he had treated so far and then returns to amplify on the subject of images and their use. Because some people had abused images by worshiping them does not mean they were to be destroyed. He used a kind of four-pronged enthymeme obviously for greater audience participation in his sermon. Luther also used descriptive language and analogy when he said: "There are many people who worship the sun and the stars. Therefore we propose to rush in and pull the sun and stars from the skies. No, we had better let it be. Again, wine and women bring many a man to misery and make a fool of him; so we kill all the women and pour out all the wine. Again, gold and silver cause much evil; so we condemn them. Indeed, if we want to drive away our worst enemy, the one who does us the most harm, we shall have to kill ourselves." The obvious answer to these little syllogisms is "no." The obvious answer to the use of images then is not to destroy them but rather to use them properly. "Therefore I must admit that images are neither here nor there, neither evil nor good, we may have them or not, as we please. This trouble has been caused by you."

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<sup>189</sup> Doberstein, pp. 84-88.

Having admonished the Wittenberg congregation on this subject sufficiently, he quickly drops it and announces another. "Let us proceed and speak of the eating of meats and what our attitude should be in this matter." He knew that consciences were not bound in such matters but for people whose religious practices were in transformation, his concern was, "Observe, then, how you ought to use this liberty." He listed three ways to handle the matter.

1. "First, if you cannot abstain from meat without harm to yourself, or if you are sick, you may eat whatever you like, and if anyone takes offense, let him be offended."

2. "Secondly, if you should be pressed to eat fish instead of meat on Friday, and to eat fish and abstain from eggs and butter during Lent, etc., as the pope has done with his fool's laws, then you must in no wise allow yourself to be drawn away from the liberty in which God has placed you, but do just the contrary to spite him."

3. "Thirdly, there are some who are still weak in faith, who ought to be instructed, and who would gladly believe as we do. . . . We must bear patiently with these people and not use our liberty" but bear with them gladly.

This course of action outlined by Luther is substantiated by the use of several references from the Bible. The first is Acts 16:3 and the other is Gal. 2.

#### The Fifth Sermon

In this sermon<sup>190</sup> Luther treats of a number of miscellaneous items that had confused the thinking of his audience. Luther uses

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<sup>190</sup>Doberstein, pp. 88-91.

reductio ad absurdum through analogy. He referred to them as "foolish laws." You have heard how I preached against the foolish law of the pope and opposed his precept, that no woman shall wash the altar linen on which the body of Christ has lain, even if it be a pure nun, except it first be washed by a pure priest. Likewise, when anyone has touched the body of Christ, the priests come running and scrape his fingers, and much more of the same sort. But when a maid has slept with a naked priest, the pope winks at it and lets it go. If she becomes pregnant and bears a child, he lets that pass, too. But to touch the altar linen and the sacrament, this he will not allow. But when a priest grabs it, both top and bottom, this is all right." This is by far the roughest language used thus far in these sermons. As this writer read this series he got the impression that by this Thursday Luther must have sensed to an even greater degree that his audience was accepting his every word. This previous remark is a kind of syllogistic argument into absurdity and with strong language which was constructed so as to create a feeling of ridiculousness.

Besides letting the communicant touch the host the radical reformers during Luther's absence had introduced the wine also to the communicant. This was called "both kinds in the Sacrament." This caused Luther some deep concerns as well. He did not disagree because it was distributed in "both kinds," but with the way it was introduced, not allowing for the weak. "But now you go at it pell mell, and headlong force everyone to it. . . ." He vents some of his harshest criticism upon them. "You are bad Christians as far as I am concerned. In this way even a sow could be a Christian, for she has a big enough snout to receive the sacrament

outwardly. . . . Dear friends, this dare be no mockery, and if you are going to follow me, stop it! . . . This cannot be overlooked; for you have gone so far that people are saying: At Wittenberg there are very good Christians, for they take the sacrament in their hands and grasp the cup, and they go to their brandy and swill themselves full." These last words were most sarcastic, heaping shame upon his audience. This is his strongest use of emotional proof so far.

He closed with a similar remark. "I may say that of all my enemies who have opposed me up to this time none have brought me so much grief as you. This is enough for today; tomorrow we shall say more."

#### The Sixth Sermon

In his Friday sermon<sup>191</sup> Luther continues with the subject of the sacraments. This sermon is very conciliatory in tone. He extends pastoral advice on how people are to conduct themselves and who is worthy to receive the sacrament. This sermon has somewhat the appearance of a catechetical lesson. We observe very few of the previously mentioned rhetorical devices. The most noteworthy device is this soothing pastoral tone. This writer would see in this his audience adaptability. As this series of sermons is coming to an end and in view of what he said the day before he closes with the words, "For this bread is a comfort for the sorrowing, a healing for the sick, a life for the dying, a food for all the hungry, and a rich treasure for all the poor and needy. Let this be enough for this time concerning the use of this sacrament. I commend you to God."

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<sup>191</sup>Doberstein, pp. 92-95.

## The Seventh Sermon

This seventh sermon<sup>192</sup> is the shortest of all. It is barely a page and a half in length. The impression this writer received was that of evangelical firmness or pathos. His subject is the sacrament once again and this time "the fruit of this sacrament, which is love." He reminded them that "this I do not yet perceive among you here in Wittenberg, even though you have had much preaching and, after all, you ought to have carried this out in practice." The main part of this sermon consists of a homily on I Cor. 13, often called the "love" chapter. A pastoral note closes out this short sermon. "I commend you to God." This writer believes that this sermon could have been preached in about seven to ten minutes.

## The Eighth Sermon

Luther's last sermon<sup>193</sup> of this series has a climactic note. He begins by saying, "Now we have heard all the things which ought to be considered here, except confession. Of this we shall speak now."

This sermon offers an outline. He speaks of the three kinds of confession and relates what each is.

1. The first is that of public confession, that which is done in the presence of the congregation. Luther uses Matt. 18 to explain this.

2. The second kind of confession needed is that of speaking privately to God by the individual. Here Luther used Ps. 106

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<sup>192</sup>Doberstein, pp. 95-96.

<sup>193</sup>Doberstein, pp. 97-100.

and Ps. 32.

3. The third kind of confession is that of speaking one to another. Here he returns to Matt. 18 for supporting evidence.

Luther amplified the gospel of forgiveness in closing this sermon. This has to be emotional proof once again. This writer envisions Luther as one who sensed that he had accomplished his rhetorical goal with his hearers. All week long he had chided and scolded them because of their sinful shortcomings. Now he is telling them what to do about it. Confess these faults and "be assured of thy grace and mercy."

#### A Summary of the Rhetorical Characteristics of Luther's Preaching

In these sermons Luther used a wide range of rhetorical features. We would here define them still further.

As was mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, these sermons are one continuous study of ethical proof. The question was not on whether or not to accept his remarks but rather, let Luther straighten out their misguided thinking.

In this respect also, the entire series is a study of emotional proof. The emotions of audience and speaker were both evident by the temper and tone of the occasion. At periodic places throughout these sermons Luther called forth additional elements of emotion. He could and did strongly scold their misguided actions and called on them to turn in a different direction.

Luther's logical proof is evident also. As was pointed out earlier, the first, fourth and eighth sermons have outlined points

which are easily identifiable. We see logic also in the overall organization of the eight sermons. He begins with a reminder of their high calling. He next categorizes their errors and from the first through the seventh sermon treats these in various ways. In his last sermon he asks them to recognize their mistakes and to confess their wrongs. There is a logical progression from beginning to ending. Luther had selected topics that related to the needs of his audience. Furthermore, all of his major points he establishes with a Bible reference.

The style of Luther's preaching is evident here too. He uses a simplicity in his sentence structure along with appropriate selection of words. His logical and emotional proofs are evident. He appears to be a kind of "clock" preacher. He allows himself so much time in the pulpit. Once he has used up so much time he ends his sermon even though he has not exhausted his topic. No hidden meaning is inferred by this. It would appear simply that Luther considered this entire series as a unit and felt that he could break his sermons at various places. The reason for the abrupt endings to these sermons could also be the result of the disciplined limits of classroom lecturing. The brevity of all eight of the sermons is interesting also.

The zeal with which Luther approached his homiletical task is important. Eight sermons in eight days in a highly charged atmosphere is an accomplishment. This writer has upon two occasions preached four sermons in one day, but all the same. This is physically exhausting. He has upon several occasions preached three

different sermons on one day. This too is exhausting. He has furthermore, preached five different sermons on five consecutive days on several occasions. This too, he found to be a drain on his physical stamina. Eight sermons in eight days would be considered an arduous task by anyone. To Luther, preaching was a demanding task. The rugged pace he set for himself here he maintained in varying degree throughout his professional life.

The Weimar edition contains more than two thousand sermons, transcripts of stenographic notes made by listeners, printings of individual sermons, various postils, and running expositions of books or parts of books of the Bible. This is estimated to be about two-thirds of the sermons actually preached between 1510 and 1546.<sup>194</sup>

Many of Luther's thoughts about preaching were made in the years that followed these eight sermons but we see that they held true for these sermons as well. The main source of such information are his "Table Talk," a collection of Luther's sayings written down by close friends. Under the date of November 4, 1538 he said:

In men speech is a great and divine gift. It's with words and not with might that wisdom rules men, instructs, edifies, consoles, and soothes in all circumstances of life, especially in affairs of conscience. Therefore God provided his church with audible preaching and visible sacraments. . . . The power of the oral Word is truly remarkable."<sup>195</sup>

This zeal for preaching which we see in these eight sermons is reflected also in the manner that he went to work and tried to elevate the level of preaching in the years ahead. At the time that the Protestant Reformation was taking shape there was a genuine

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<sup>194</sup> Doberstein, p. xii.

<sup>195</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, "Table Talk" Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1967), LVI, pp. 317-18.



derth of good Gospel preachers in the churches. Poorly trained preachers who had neither the skills of public address, nor theological depth were pressed into service. One odd individual carried a can of beer into the pulpit and refreshed himself occasionally during his preaching."<sup>196</sup> Preaching in the churches had not been emphasized during the Middle Ages. With the birth of biblical humanism it received a new importance. In his Advent postils Luther said this of Christ's commission: "Go therefore, i.e., just go on preaching; don't worry about who will listen; let me (Christ) worry about that. . . . You preach, and let me (Christ) manage."<sup>197</sup>

To help elevate the level of preaching among those many churches that were following the Reformation Luther published his Church Postils and House Postils. These were a kind of sermon study for the pericopes of the Church Year. For the poorly trained clergy, who were not able to prepare their own sermons, these writings were intended to be read just as they were. These sermonic works began to appear in 1521 while Luther was in isolation at the Wartburg Castle. His House Postils appeared between 1531 and 1535 when he preached in his home, being unable to appear in public because of his poor health.<sup>198</sup>

Luther always linked the office of the ministry with that of the public proclamation of the Word of God. "A minister is one who is placed in the church for the preaching of the Word and the

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<sup>196</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 630.

<sup>197</sup>Doberstein, p. xx.

<sup>198</sup>Doberstein, p. xv.

administration of the sacraments."<sup>199</sup> The work of the preacher he describes as follows:

A preacher is like a carpenter. His tool is the Word of God. Because the materials on which he works vary, he ought not always pursue the same course when he preaches. For the sake of variety of its auditors he should sometimes console, sometimes frighten, sometimes scold, sometimes soothe, etc.<sup>200</sup>

It is noteworthy the various kinds of advice which Luther offered from time to time in his "Table Talk."

When you preach, don't look at Philip (Dr. Melancthon) or Pomeranus (Dr. John Bugenhagen) or me or any other learned man, but think of yourself as the most learned man when you are speaking from the pulpit.<sup>201</sup>

In my preaching I take pains to treat a verse (of the Scriptures), to stick to it, and so to instruct the people that they can say, "That's what the sermon was about."<sup>202</sup>

Luther always wanted the preacher to understand that he was but the mouthpiece of God. He offers the caution that notes can sometimes get in the way of God.

Our Lord God wishes himself to be the preacher, for preachers often go astray in their notes so that they can't go on with what they have begun. It has often happened to me that my best outline came undone. On the other hand, when I was least prepared my words flowed during the sermon. Amsdorf also confessed that this had happened to him. . . . But many are casual and careless and pay no heed to what and how they preach.<sup>203</sup>

Some of Luther's zeal about preaching is humorous in nature but what he said here holds true for the eight sermons.

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<sup>199</sup>Tappert, p. 100.

<sup>200</sup>Tappert, p. 31.

<sup>201</sup>Tappert, p. 158.

<sup>202</sup>Tappert, p. 160.

<sup>203</sup>Tappert, p. 213-14.

When Kathy (Luther's wife) said that she could understand the preaching of her husband's assistant Pölnner better than that of Pomeranus because the latter wandered too far from his subject, the doctor (Luther) responded. "Pomeranus preaches the way you women usually talk. He says whatever comes to mind. . . . Pomeranus often takes everybody he meets along with him. Only a fool thinks he should say everything that occurs to him. A preacher should see to it that he sticks to the subject and performs his task in such a way that people understand what he says. Preachers who try to say everything that occurs to them remind me of the maidservant who is on her way to market. When she meets another maid she stops to chat with her for a while. Then she meets another maid and talks with her. She does the same with a third and a fourth and so gets to the market very slowly. This is what preachers do who wonder too far from their subject. They try to say everything all at once, but it won't do."<sup>204</sup>

No less humorous is his subtle remark about how to preach in three brief steps.

Conrad Cardatus said to Dr. Martin Luther, "Reverend Father, teach me in a brief way how to preach." Luther responded briefly, "First you must learn to go up to the pulpit. Second, you must know that you should stay there for a time. Third, you must learn to get down again." He added nothing in addition to these words, and as a result Cardatus was quite angry. Yet at length it occurred to him that the doctor had hit the mark very well. Anybody who keeps this order will be a good preacher. First, he must learn to go up to the pulpit, that is, he should have a regular and divine call. Second, he must learn to stay there for a time, that is, he should have the pure and genuine doctrine. Third, he must also learn to get down again, that is, he should preach not more than an hour (which didn't please Pomeranus).<sup>205</sup>

Luther reserved some of his harshest criticism for those preachers who used the good office for their own self-aggrandizement, for showing off their rhetorical skills and not preaching in simplicity for the average layman. His remarks here could well be super-imposed on the eight sermons.

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<sup>204</sup>Tappert, p. 428.

<sup>205</sup>Tappert, p. 393.

We preach publicly for the sake of plain people. Christ could have taught in a profound way but he wished to deliver his message with the utmost simplicity in order that the common people might understand. Good God, there are sixteen-year-old girls, women, old men, and farmers in church, and they don't understand lofty matters! . . . Accordingly he's the best preacher who can teach in a plain, childlike, popular, and simple way. I prefer to preach in an easy and comprehensible fashion, but when it comes to academic disputations watch me in the university; there I'll make it sharp enough for anybody and will reply, no matter how complicated he wants to be.<sup>206</sup>

Cursed be every preacher who aims at lofty topics in the church, looking for his own glory and selfishly desiring to please one individual or another. When I preach I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present, but at the hundred or the thousand young people and children. It's to them that I preach, to them that I devote myself, for they, too, need to understand. If the others don't want to listen they can leave.<sup>207</sup>

The Luther style is also to be noted from his preparation. Generally speaking the sermons of Luther from 1520 through 1527 were prepared in written form.<sup>208</sup> His sermonic preparation of his later ministry was by means of a careful and detailed outline.<sup>209</sup> Some of Luther's sermon outlines are still in existence and these provide one with further insights as to his preparation. These outlines . . . . . contain no elaboration of the text, only a brief outline with a few cues or catchwords. Frequently he had no time to jot down such notes, but even when he did, he often changed the prepared outline in the pulpit, adding new ideas, leaving out sections and transposing others.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup>Tappert, pp. 383-84.

<sup>207</sup>Tappert, pp. 235-36.

<sup>208</sup>Thomas Coates, "Christ in Luther's Church Postils," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. XX, No. 4 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 242.

<sup>209</sup>Coates, p. 243.

<sup>210</sup>Doberstein, p. xvi.

These Wittenberg sermons would have to fit into this latter category. From their internal structure, as we noted before, he appears to have had an outline and an objective but not a manuscript.

As Luther developed theologically, so did his preaching.<sup>211</sup> Up to the year 1521 Luther "strove to give them (his sermons) the scholastic structure typical of the thematic sermon."<sup>212</sup> After 1521 he developed an expository manner. Some might refer to his sermons more as homilies. "He begins at once with the main point and when his text or his time are used up he simply stops."<sup>213</sup> His sermons would sometimes be introduced with a brief reference to the previous sermon. We see that this style holds true for the eight sermons.

Several other noteworthy items about his style should be mentioned. His preaching was with simplicity of expression. "He never uses a four-or-five syllable word when a one-or-two syllable word will convey the proper meaning."<sup>214</sup>

#### The Audience Response to the Rhetorical Effort

There is not a great amount of documentation extent on the effects of these eight sermons. This can be explained in part by the fact that his audience was primarily the simple town folk of Wittenberg and little written documentation was left. Doberstein, in his introduction to the eight sermons says: "This remarkable series of

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<sup>211</sup>Doberstein, p. xvi.

<sup>212</sup>Doberstein, p. xvii.

<sup>213</sup>Doberstein, p. xvii.

<sup>214</sup>Coates, p. 244.

sermons, which are powerful, inspired preaching of the gospel, had the effect of restoring tranquility and order almost at once."<sup>215</sup>

There is a letter in existence of Albert Burer who was a student at Wittenberg at this time and who had listened to these sermons. He stated:

On March 6 Martin Luther returned to Wittenberg in equestrian habit, accompanied by several horsemen. He came to settle the trouble stirred up by the extremely violent sermons of Karlstadt and Zwilling. For they had no regard for weak consciences, whom Luther, no less than Paul, would feed on milk until they grew strong. He preaches daily on the Ten Commandments. As far as one can tell from his face the man is kind, gentle, and cheerful. His voice is sweet and sonorous, so that I wonder at the sweet speaking of the man. Whatever he does, teaches, and says is most pious, even though his impious enemies say the opposite. Everyone, even though not Saxon, who hears him once, desires to hear him again and again, such tenacious hooks does he fix in the minds of his auditors. In short there is nothing lacking in that man which makes for the most perfect Christian piety, even though all mortals and the gates of hell may say the contrary.<sup>216</sup>

Elector John Frederick was informed of what changes took place in Wittenberg following Luther's return. He received a letter from Professor Jerome Schurff.

I humbly wish your Grace to know that there is great gladness and rejoicing here, both among the learned and the unlearned, over Doctor Martin's return and over the sermons with which, by God's help, he is daily pointing us poor deluded men back again to the way of truth, showing us incontrovertibly the pitiful errors into which we have been led by the preachers who forced their way among us. It is plain as day that the Spirit of God is in him and works through him, and I have no doubt that it is by the special providence of the Almighty that he had come to Wittenberg just at this time. Even Gabriel (Zwilling) has confessed that he has erred and gone too far.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup>Doberstein, pp. 69-70.

<sup>216</sup>Krodel, p. 400.

<sup>217</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 542.

For at least several in the audience there was a strong negative reaction. Carlstadt and Luther broke friendship at this time. Carlstadt and the Zwickau prophets left the city for good.<sup>218</sup>

The most important reaction would have to be that Luther was once again in complete control of the Wittenberg scene never to lose it again during his lifetime.

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<sup>218</sup>Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, p. 542.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The rhetorical selections of Dr. Martin Luther analyzed in this thesis consisted of three. These were Luther's rhetoric in three different settings, namely, in teaching, in debating, and in preaching. These were analyzed from a historical-rhetorical perspective. Four questions were answered in both essay and categorical form. These questions were:

1. What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort?
2. What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort?
3. What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's rhetoric?
4. What was the response of the audience to the rhetorical effort?

The following summary and conclusions are noted.

#### The Era of the Reformation

Before analyzing selections of Martin Luther's rhetoric this writer took a broader look at the historical setting of the Sixteenth Century Reformation of which Luther was an important part. This time in world history is known as the Age of the Renaissance. It was an era of transition, awakening and achievement in



the fine arts, in science, in communication, in politics, in economics, in religion and social life.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany on November 10, 1483 of strict Catholic parentage. He had intended to pursue a profession of jurisprudence but in 1505 he suddenly switched professions and began studies for the priesthood. His scholastic qualifications were such that he was promoted for advanced degrees in his field, receiving his Doctor Biblicus degree in 1512 and immediately assuming the chair of lectura in Biblia at the newly founded University of Wittenberg in Wittenberg, Germany. His rhetorical activity emanated largely from this Saxon setting.

This writer draws the conclusion that unless one understands in part this historical backdrop of the larger European setting one cannot analyze and understand Luther's rhetorical contributions. They are so much a part of the age in which he lived. The printing press gave wide circulation to the writings and speeches of the times. The unstable political situation was one of the reasons the Reformer was not silenced by force. The previous calls for church reform, the abuses of ecclesiastical authority, and the inner restlessness of the social and religious life of the people all contributed a share towards providing the climate in which much of the rhetoric of the Reformation was welcomed.

#### In the Classroom--A Scholarly Professor

1. What was the (immediate) historical setting of the rhetorical effort? At the time that Dr. Luther assumed his position on the university faculty new tools for Bible research were coming into

existence. This enabled the professor to make use of the Bible's original languages of Greek and Hebrew. At the same time, these new tools of study contributed to a measure of academic independence for the teacher. He was gradually weaned from his past ties with scholasticism and developed into a leading biblical humanist.

2. What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort?

The city of Wittenberg was located in Electoral Saxony along the Elbe River. Elector Frederick had founded a new university here and was desirous of retaining gifted men for the faculty so as to attract new students. Luther was a part of that choice and began his Bible lectures in 1512. His first lectures were held in an upper room of the "Black Cloister" located at what was then the east edge of town in a part of the greater university complex. When this upper room became too small for lecturing purposes a larger room in the Collegium Friederici some five hundred yards away was used.

3. What were some of the rhetorical features of Luther's rehtoric?

Ethos--When Luther accepted the position of professor at the University of Wittenberg he was a comparatively unknown individual. In the time span of about five years he became a recognized scholar of the Bible whose influence in the Wittenberg scene was recognized. By making use of the latest tools for scholarly research, namely, the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and texts he gravitated from a scholastic interpretation and teaching of the Bible to a historical-grammatical approach. It was his conviction that the Bible was God's Word and this approach opened to him and his students an ex-

citing and vital form of biblical studies. His credibility with his students and his peers was readily recognized.

Pathos--Luther had an agreeable personality for good student relations. He had an interest in them as persons, not just as students, and this interest was noted outside the classroom as well. This was a bit unusual for the times in that there was often a social gulf between the teacher and the student. Luther criticized some of the student abuse of his peers.

Logos--The task of the professor of biblical studies was to teach the meaning of Scripture. Luther would start at the beginning of a biblical book and proceed in an orderly verse by verse fashion. At first Luther relied upon the interpretations of others and used the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible. At this time the Greek New Testament by Erasmus and De Rudimentis Hebraicis of John Reuchlin appeared. Luther began to use these new tools at once so that his lectures were on the basis of Greek and Hebrew grammar. When offering an interpretation for a given section he would logically arrange his deductions based upon the grammar of a section. This grammatical scholarship offers him his logical proof.

Style--From the first Luther's efforts were primarily lectures with the students taking notes upon sheets of paper on which the Latin Vulgate text was provided in wide line format. In these open spaces between the lines the students entered notes called interlinear glosses. Notes to the side were called marginal glosses. Besides this, Luther prepared extended remarks on selected passages and had them written out on separate sheets. These were called

scholia. These notes indicate a preciseness in grammatical interpretation by Luther. This preciseness and clearness is one of the marks of his style. A plainness of expression is noted too, as he called it: "Not for Nurembergers . . . but for coarse Saxons."

4. What was the audience response to the rhetorical effort? Luther grew rapidly in the esteem of the student body. His classes became so popular that the registration for them grew dramatically. Even the townsfolk signed on for his Bible courses. Larger classroom quarters were sought. The matriculation for the university went steadily upward. The most significant reaction was the rapid winning of the entire faculty to the position of Biblical Humanism.

#### In Debate--A Dynamic Opponent

1. What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? Because of Luther's biblical studies he soon found himself disagreeing with a religious practice of the time, namely, the sale of indulgences. Thinking at the time that he was doing his church a favor he posted Ninety-five Theses in which he was determined to seek the truth of the matter in academic disputation. The theses were seized upon by a wider audience of people and were regarded as an attack on papal authority. This combination of circumstances with the ensuing events led to the Leipzig Debate with Dr. John Eck in July of 1519. A new set of theses were to be debated instead of the Ninety-five. Papal supremacy became the main issue. But this time Luther's theological studies had led him to the conclusion that there was no Bible basis for the claim of papal supremacy. Other issues in

the debate fell into comparative insignificance as opposed to this one item.

2. What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort?

The debate was held in the city of Leipzig, Germany. It was held in the ancient Pleissenberg Castle and in what was called the "Hall of Princes" to accommodate an overflow audience. In a setting that was decorated for the occasion Luther and Eck debated before an audience of university personnel, both faculty and student body, before theologians and politicians.

3. What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of

Luther's rhetoric?

Ethos--The credibility of Luther was established as far as the Wittenberg constituency was concerned. The extreme opposite was true as far as the following of John Eck was concerned. The crowd could be called openly hostile towards Luther primarily because of the super-sensitive religious issues that were to be debated. Largely by means of his logical proofs, the result of his linguistic scholarship, he did create the impression with some in the audience who were open to persuasion that he and his message were reliable. The audience remained decidedly polarized to the very end of the debate.

Pathos--Luther was the underdog as this debate opened. The atmosphere was heavily charged with emotion by most all who were present. Much of Luther's pathos was evident in the immediate preceding historical context. He opened with an invocation which was the first step in the direction of putting the audience in a suit-

able frame of mind. Before he ended his opening remarks he did play a bit on their sympathy by deploring that some were not present for the debate who should be because they had been abusing him and his name. The audience was heavily prejudiced because of the sensitive religious nature of the debate. We see that he met this by not antagonizing this situation with further remarks directed to the audience but by remaining calm and assured throughout the encounter. We observe him becoming excited and even angry, however, when Eck used an ad hominem attack.

Logos--The most outstanding characteristic of Luther's rhetoric in this debate is his use of logical proof. Luther astounded his hearers with his command of Scripture texts. At no time did he allow himself to be pushed from the platform of biblical proof. Furthermore, he was able to make frequent quotations from the Scriptures with a logic that could be easily understood and followed. In addition to this Luther was well informed with patristic citations so that he could take full advantage of the best proofs of his opponent. He made frequent corrections of Eck's best patristic evidence. This authoritativeness was a blending of both logical and ethical proof.

Style--During this debate Luther never gave the impression of being at a loss for words. One of the observers described him as one having an immense stock of ideas and words at his instant command. His selection of words always made his message one which was understood, even though not always welcomed. His voice was sharp and clear. These qualities blended to become an effective

instrument of his logic.

4. What was the audience response to the rhetorical effort? Because of the nature of the debate, namely, on the most sensitive of theological issues of the time, with passions running extremely high, many of the audience had their minds made up in advance and were not about to be persuaded. Their attendance was seemingly for the purpose of seeing this renegade professor silenced. This is an understandable reaction. Luther's following remained Luther's following. Eck's following remained largely Eck's following. The only shift in audience reaction and alignment to be noted was the slight shift from Eck to Luther. There were those in the audience who were deeply impressed with the skills of Luther and were persuaded by his arguments. The official judges in the debate were for the most part neutralized because of the sensitive theological issue. This would have to be interpreted as being in Luther's favor. The biggest reaction of all would have to be the failure of Eck to silence Luther. This would have to be done for Eck to claim a victory. This debate proved to be but the catalyst for long range audience reaction in Luther's favor.

#### In the Pulpit--A Popular Preacher

1. What was the historical setting of the rhetorical effort? The sermons analyzed followed the Leipzig Debate by about three years. These had been years of turmoil in which Rome moved decisively to silence the Wittenberg professor. The Diet at Worms, the exile in the Wartburg Castle were followed by radical reformers who upset the

Wittenberg community. To settle these disturbances Luther returned to Wittenberg and preached eight sermons on eight consecutive days from March 9 to March 16, 1522.

2. What was the physical setting of the rhetorical effort? These sermons were preached in the Stadtkirche of Wittenberg. His audience was exclusively people of the Wittenberg community, both from the university and the town. This had been Luther's parish in addition to his teaching duties at the university.

3. What were some of the rhetorical characteristics of Luther's rhetoric?

Ethos--This entire series of sermons is a study of ethical proof. Luther had returned to Wittenberg at their request and by his desire, for the purpose of calming a troubled community. He did not have to establish his ethos with them. That was already done. Luther could scarcely have said the things that he did had not the audience accepted in advance the integrity of his character. These sermons are the result of his ethos, not the cause of it.

Pathos--Luther made heavy use of emotional proof as well. These people were his parishioners. He was their pastor. A mutual love was evident. In these sermons Luther quotes the Bible to them again and again to show them the error of their ways and at the same time to severely scold and denounce them for their failings. There is the strong appeal to change directions in their church lives. He astutely knew the emotional level and tolerance of his audience.

Logos--Luther's use of logical proof is not strongly evident as one looks at these sermons individually with the exception of his



use of Scripture proof as is seen in all his rhetoric. At three different places in the series he does outline his thoughts in logical fashion. His logic is best seen as one looks at these sermons as a unit. From the first sermon to the last there is a logical progression in his rhetorical goal. He begins by reminding them of their high calling, how they have been blessed, and what they are by the grace of God. He proceeds then to enumerate their failings and to point out that this is the result of immaturity, ignorance and misguided zeal and logic. He closes this series by pointing out that this can be corrected and gives them the directive for so doing. There is a clear and logical deductive progression. He leads them from an awareness of who they are, to what they have done, to what they should do.

Style--Luther's style of preaching is an important factor here. He made a radical departure from what had been his former preaching style. These were unwritten sermons, recorded by a listener. An outline is evident in certain sections, but his overall objective is the important factor. Luther appears to be a "clock" preacher. He allows himself so much time in the pulpit. He ends his sermons as quickly as possible once a certain amount of time has elapsed even if he has not exhausted his topic at hand. The next day he picks up his thoughts at the point where he dropped them the day before and proceeds. The brevity of these sermons is noteworthy in an age where the long sermon was common. The zeal with which he attacks his rhetorical task is amazing.

## 4. What was the audience reaction to the rhetorical effort?

The basic reaction was that this calmed the Wittenberg disturbances at once. The community acted once more as though it had a head. More than ever Luther was placed in control of the Wittenberg scene itself.

This writer concludes from the material presented in this thesis that Dr. Martin Luther was a gifted rhetorician. He possessed a number of rare gifts, all the more remarkable to be found in one individual. In the rhetorical settings analyzed here he gives evidence of being a scholarly person. His research into his biblical and ecclesiastical subjects was thorough. He made an effective use of original sources and in turn was able to communicate the result of his research to his hearers.

He possessed remarkable gifts as a debater as well. His scholarship, together with his memory and perceptive mind enabled him to quickly understand his opponent and to meet him head on. Whether in the classroom, on the dais, or in the pulpit he had a command of the language which enabled him to relate well to his followers and to his opponents alike. These combined gifts, which to some extent are a product of his time, had to be one of the prime reasons why that once the seeds of reform had been sown, they also sprouted and spread.

## APPENDIX

**EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920**

**Sept. 14, 1973**

*Department of Speech - Communication*

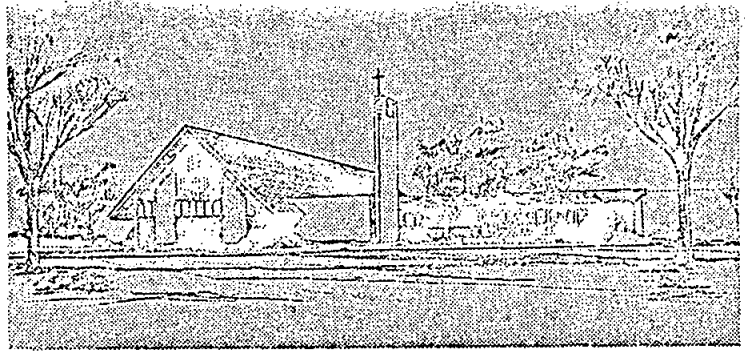
Rev. M.D. Hilgendorf  
706 E. Northline Rd.  
Tuscola, Il. 61953

Dear Rev. Hilgendorf:

The committee will be able to meet with you next Tuesday afternoon. Since we have a faculty meeting scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on that day it may be 3:00 or shortly thereafter before we can meet.

I appreciate your conscientiousness and competency, and I believe the committee will feel very positive about your proposed study.

LUTHERAN CHURCH  
NORTH LINE ROAD AND OHIO STREET  
TUSCOLA, ILLINOIS 61953



WILGENDORF, PASTOR  
RESIDENCE:  
North Line Road

PHONES:  
Off. 217-253-4341  
Res. 217-253-4539

Jan. 18, 1974

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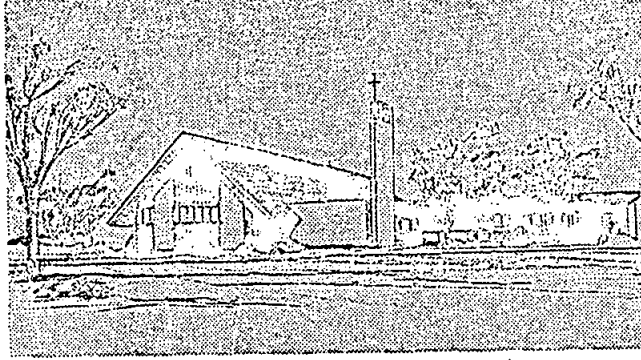
Dear Librarian,

A few months ago I visited the library and was informed that as a pastor of the Central Illinois District I could check out books by mail. I am working on a thesis and would like to check out five books at this time. They are listed here as I took the information from the card file at the library.

- 1) BR 326 .L85 Luther Speaks - Four Essays
- 2) BR 327 .M87 Luther (Morris) Quaint Sayings and Doings
- 3) BR 325 .O5 Facts about Luther (O'Hare)
- 4) BR 325 .W41 Life Studies by Wegener
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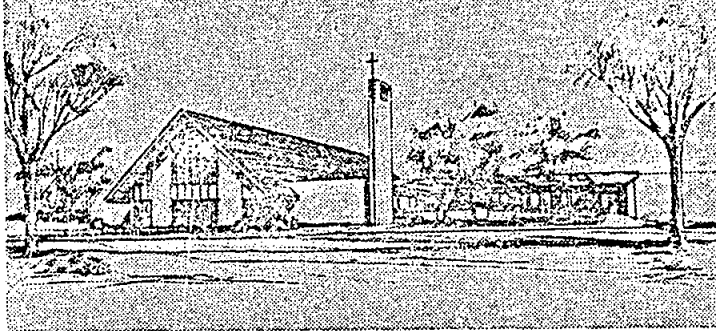
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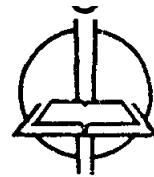
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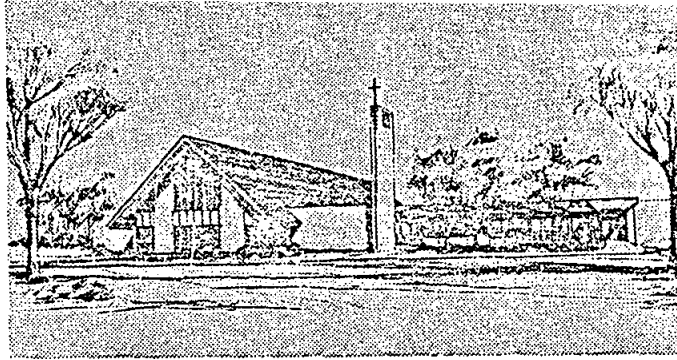
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