

Wittenberg Pastoral Formation as the Reform of Theology

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Introduction

The question of theology belongs to Christianity's perennial task, for the Spirit of Christ that animates it—*windhover* that he is—flies free and fast over the chaos of the world and will not be confined in any ecclesial ark, no matter how gilded the cage provided. Each generation needs take it up anew, whether awake to this fact or no. In the course of church history there are sleeper moments when theology seems tractable and predictable, but then there are those events, electric and propitious, when theology perceives the hour and turns toward it. The Reformation is undoubtedly the latter, regardless of how one squares with its conclusions or effects. Martin Luther, in particular, steps out as a man compelled by his conscience and his calling to turn his mind and energies toward a theology for his day. But what is this theology?

Of theology Luther wrote an enormous amount: "every book is a great action, and every great action a book!" Yet Luther is difficult to pin down exactly: "*sola experientia*—only experience makes a theologian!"¹ Indeed. But Luther also says that only the one who learns to distinguish the gospel from the law can be called a theologian.² And not this only, but for Luther, a true theologian is one who is a "theologian of the cross" rather than a "theologian of glory."³ The "cross alone is our theology" he wrote,⁴ but he also wrote that "our theology" is the distinction of "two kinds of righteousness."⁵ Or is the proper subject of theology rather *cognitio dei et hominis*, the knowledge of God and humanity?⁶ And what of Luther's rule for theology, *oratio, meditatio, tentatio* where spiritual affliction (*Anfechtung*) is the

1. WATR, 1: 16, 13, no. 46. Cf. WA 5: 163, 28-29: "It is by living, nay by dying and being damned that one becomes a theologian, not by understanding, reading, and speculation."

2. WA 40/I: 207, 17-18, Commentary on Galatians, 1535, chapter 2.

3. WA 1: 354, 17f., Heidelberg Disputation, 1518.

4. WA 5: 176, 32.

5. WA 40/I: 45, 24f., Luther's Preface to the Commentary on Galatians, 1535.

6. WA 40/II: 328, 30f. Preface to Commentary on Psalm 51, 1532.

touchstone by which one comes to understand, know and experience the Word of God?⁷ Luther likes his superlatives and exclusive particles—he seems to attribute many things to theology’s center and regard many different themes as constitutive for its truth and efficacy.

It has become fairly common to remark that Luther was not a “systematic” theologian. This does not mean that his thought lacks coherence or he is inconsistent. Rather, Luther does not conceive of theology as a system, a framework for organizing theological concepts and bringing them into logical, internal relation to one another. Luther is certainly trained in such a methodology and can engage the medieval and contemporary systems of scholastic theology. But his antipathy toward this method was not driven by the desire to replace one theological system with another. As the variety of definitions of theology above shows, for Luther, (and perhaps unfortunately for the subsequent generations of Lutheran “systematic” theologians), there is no single “Lutheran theology.” Instead, what Luther intends is a new posture, a new *Standort* for theology that is deeply existential in its orientation and pastoral in its intention.⁸ This found expression especially in the focus of the reforms at Wittenberg that Luther prompted, both in the changes to the curriculum and the theological resources produced.

What follows is a look at the initial history of those reforms, keeping in mind that it was precisely in this concrete and historically particular manner that Luther’s theology was realized. How this informs the efforts of this generation is thus not as obvious or simple as Wittenberg’s theology stated and repristinated. Reflecting on the educational impact of Wittenberg, Robert Rosin writes,

The twenty-first century is not the sixteenth, and more than a few things are different. There is no chance of mimicking Luther even if we wanted to. If anything, we ought to be concerned about those who do not want to go any farther than the sixteenth century . . . Peter, James, and John were admonished not to build booths on the mountaintop as if they could freeze time. Christ had work to do—and so did they. . . . Yet booth building is a perennial temptation and almost a cottage industry in some circles. Grand as that mountaintop vision was, or as exciting as the much paler sixteenth-century image appeared atop [Wittenberg] “White Mountain” by the Elbe, life moves on.⁹

7. WA 50: 660, 1-4. Luther’s Preface to his German Writings, 1539.

8. This new “theologischen Standort” is in Leif Grane’s opinion the most important “discovery” of Luther; see “Luther und das Luthertum” in *Reformationsstudien: Beiträge zu Luther und zu Dänischen Reformation*, ed. Rolf Decot, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Abteilung Religionsgeschichte 49 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 117-26. See also Otto Herman Pesch, “Existential and Sapiential Theology – the Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas,” in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*. Edited by Jared Wicks, S.J. (Chicago: 1970): 61-81.

9. Robert Rosin, “Luther, Learning, and the Reformation A Look at Then with Some Thoughts for Now,” in *Concordia Journal* 43, 1-2 (Winter/Spring 2017), 98.

Wittenberg as a Reformation of Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation in the Wittenberg Reformation is shaped by a particular understanding and emphasis on pastoral care, centered on the preaching and teaching of God's Word. In some ways, this stands in continuity with late medieval definitions of pastoral care and efforts to better prepare and resource clergy. On the other hand, Luther's understanding of the gospel with his theology of the Word providing the *Standort* influenced the direction and means of pastoral formation in the Reformation, with the University of Wittenberg playing a central role.

Pastoral care in the Middle Ages was a broader category than simply the work of the clergy, and encompassed efforts among religious orders as well as lay movements, official priestly acts such as penance or the mass, but also devotional literature and practices—"Geistlichkeiten."¹⁰ Preaching, for example, as a non-sacramental act, was not strictly limited to priests, but was also assumed by monastic and mendicant preachers and even within lay religious communities. Yet already in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was a concerted effort to better equip the clergy for teaching and preaching.

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215), building on the earlier reform efforts of the Paris masters,¹¹ marks a significant undertaking of the church to reform pastoral care and formation. Canons 10 and 21 are the most cited, with 21 famously focusing on lay piety and annual sacramental participation in penance and the eucharist. Canon 10, however, focuses on the episcopal and priestly obligation of *preaching*, calling for the appointment of competent and capable preachers. Canon 10 says in part:

Among other things that pertain to the salvation of the Christian people, the food of the word of God is above all necessary, because as the body is nourished by material food, so is the soul nourished by spiritual food.... It often happens that bishops, on account of their manifold duties or bodily infirmities, or because of hostile invasions or other reasons, to say nothing of lack of learning, which must be absolutely condemned in them and is not to be tolerated in the future, are themselves unable to minister the word of God to the people, especially in large and widespread dioceses. Wherefore we decree that bishops provide suitable men, powerful in work and word, to exercise with fruitful result the office of preaching; who in place of the bishops, since these cannot do it, diligently visiting the people committed to them, may instruct them by word and example. And when they are in need, let them be supplied with the necessities, lest for want of these they may be compelled to abandon their work at the very beginning.

10. See Scott Hendrix, "Martin Luther's Reformation of Spirituality," in *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999): 249-270.

11. Ronald J. Stansbury, "Preaching and Pastoral Care in the Middle Ages," in *A Companion to Pastoral Care in the Late Middle Ages (1200-1500)* (Leiden: Brill 2010), 23-40.

The result was a whole host of pastoral literature aimed at the instruction of priests, providing both form and content for the priestly duty to preach, admonish, and instruct the people.¹² Scholarship has seemed to give more attention to the proliferation of penitential manuals and sacramental literature that followed Lateran IV, perhaps because of the central critique of penance in the early Reformation. However, the role of preaching was still the primary vehicle through which the Christian faith was inculcated among the laity and thus became a primary focus of clergy formation and education.

Few parish priests had a university education, so episcopal legislation became one of the primary means of educating clergy.¹³ Bishops and local councils would establish requirements and syllabi for how priests should carry out their responsibilities. For example, John Pecham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a syllabus in the Lambeth Council of 1281 that required priests to teach their people, in the vernacular, the core teachings of Christian doctrine at least four times a year. These included the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the two evangelical precepts, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues, and the Seven Sacraments. University masters, especially those of mendicant orders, would craft biblical commentaries to support preaching, write treatises on the *ars praedicandi*, and produce sermon collections, all as vehicles of clergy formation.¹⁴ Sermons taught the clergy who then, in turn, taught the laity through such sermons. The importance of preaching for clergy formation, therefore, was not an invention of the Reformation. Instead, the Reformation redoubled its importance.

On the eve of the Reformation, in spite of the various educational efforts, the problem of “*ignorantia sacerdotum*” continued on in some measure. Educational reforms had made its earlier advances in France and England, but after the Western Schism (1378-1417), it began to find greater purchase in the lands east of the Rhine. The urgent call for better and wider spread clerical education in the German lands in the 15th and 16th centuries was thus a kind of “revolution of rising expectations,” as more people experienced and expected better preachers.

Luther’s own education and formation was mediated primarily by the Augustinian Order of which he was a member. Since the 13th century, it was the mendicant orders that dominated the universities and the educated clergy with the observant Augustinians having a particular emphasis in pastoral care in order to bring central monastic ideals to the laity. The spiritual and academic formation program of the Augustinians had been very rigorous in the years before the Western Schism—

12. See Leonard E. Boyle’s pioneering work on medieval *pastoralia* reprinted in *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200-1400* (London, 1981).

13. See Andrew Reeves, “Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England: 1215-1281,” in *A Companion to Pastoral Care in the Late Middle Ages*, 41-72.

14. See Randall B. Smith, “Initiating Young Friars into a Culture of Preaching: The Connections between Thirteenth Century Preaching and Biblical Commentary” in *Initiation and Mystagogy in Thomas Aquinas*, ed. H. Schoot et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 323-349.

16 years of theological study. But in Luther's day it was far less extensive and Luther studied hardly more than 3 years before getting his doctorate.¹⁵ Thus, his most important theological formation occurred afterward with his own study of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings in preparation for his lectures on Romans.¹⁶ It was also there that he began to see the fundamental problems in the theological method and formation that dominated the universities. And so, he advanced a critique to his faculty colleagues—first in the disputation of Bartholomäus Bernhardt on grace and free will, (*Quaestio subscripta de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia*, 1516), and in his Ninety-seven Theses Against Scholastic Theology (*Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, 1517)—and then to his fellow Augustinians in his Heidelberg Disputation (*Disputatio Heidelbergae habita*, 1518).

In these critiques, Luther indicated how certain commonly held assumptions, coupled with scholastic sources and methods, distorted the gospel, bound consciences, and adversely impacted both piety and pastoral care. The response was to change the theology curriculum at the university. For Luther, changing the curriculum was the first step in reforming the church. In fact, only in the context of university curriculum changes did Luther use the word “reformation”:

The universities, too, need a good, thorough reformation.... Actually a great deal depends on it, for it is here in the universities that the Christian youth and our nobility, with whom the future of Christendom lies, will be educated and trained.¹⁷

Such reform was not aimed at the education of clergy as such but of all Christians who would lead and work in both society and church. Doctors of Scripture were not made by men but by the Holy Spirit alone, wrote Luther, and the Spirit has no regard to “whether a person is young or old, lay or cleric, monk or secular, unmarried or married.” As such, Luther wanted the Scriptures to be the central text in the classroom and that meant the displacement of the more traditional scholastic texts like Lombard's *Sentences*, and Aristotle's logic and ethics. These curricular changes already began in 1516—Johannes Lang, one of Luther's colleagues, excitedly reported the progress to the elector's secretary: the study of the Scriptures and the early Fathers were now eagerly received by the Wittenberg students so that lectures on the scholastic doctors were left with only two or three auditors.¹⁸ Luther echoed the same a year later:

15. Eric Leland Saak, *Luther and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2017), 85-90.

16. Cf. WABr I, 69-71, no. 27.

17. LW 44, 200, 202. Cf. WA Br I, 170; Lewis Spitz, “Impact of Reformation on the Universities” in *University and Reformation: Lectures from the University of Copenhagen Symposium*. Edited by Leif Grane. Leiden, 1981, 9-31.

18. Kenneth Hagen, “An Addition to the Letters of John Lang. Introduction and Translation,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 60 (1969), 30: “Talia sunt studia, quae iam reviviscere cum

Our theology and St. Augustine are advancing as hoped and reign in our university by God's working. Aristotle has gone down, little by little, to almost eternal ruin. The students are surprisingly disgusted with lectures on the Sentences, and no one can hope for any auditors unless he wants to promote this theology, that is, the Bible or St. Augustine or some other teacher of ecclesiastical authority.¹⁹

On the one hand, the desire for these kind of changes was not unique to Luther. Enthusiasm for a return to the early fathers and the Scriptures coupled with a general antipathy to scholastic theology characterized the attitudes of many German intellectuals who, through the rebirth of classical studies, sought a renewal of Christian faith and piety. There was a sense among these humanists²⁰ that the ancient sources of Christianity, esteemed along with other works of classical antiquity as *bonae litterae*, could serve both spiritual and educational goals and aid in the reform of the church. And Luther found much in these goals both appealing and useful. In particular, he valued efforts to learn the Scriptures in their original languages and argued for professors who could teach Greek and Hebrew in the arts faculty. In the autumn of 1518, his wish was granted—far beyond what he could have hoped or imagined—with the arrival of the young rising star, Philip Melancthon, the new professor of Greek. The University of Wittenberg—not even in existence for a score of years—was on its way to being the most celebrated school in Europe.

All of this was a cause of celebration among the reform-minded—education and church reform seemed to go hand in hand. And like the humanists, Luther had a generous and practical view of who theological education was for and to what end. Still, Luther's educational changes were not just the shifting of sources or methods; it was also the content—the *doctrine* of the gospel word of God—that was central. The gospel, as he had come to know it by his own focus on the Scriptures and Fathers, changes people, frees their consciences, gives them hope in a tumultuous

gaudio cernimus, dum sacram bibliam antiquosque scriptores complures et anhelant et laetanter audiunt, dum scholastici doctores (quod appellant) vix aut duos aut tres habent auditores. Dabit deus iis molestis perplexis et multo plus quam praebeant promittentibus studiis finem"; "Such are the studies which we now see revived with joy, while many are eager and listen joyfully to the Holy Bible and the ancient writers, the scholastic doctors (as they are called) have scarcely two or three auditors. May God put an end to those troublesome, perplexing studies which promise much more than they deliver."

19. WABr I, 99, 8-13, no. 41 (18 de mayo 1517): "Theologia nostra et S. Augustinus prospere procedunt et regnant in nostra universitate Deo operante. Aristoteles descendit paulatim inclinatus ad ruinam prope futuram sempiternam. Mire fastidiuntur lectiones sententiarum, nec est, ut quis sibi auditores sperare possit, nisi theologiam hanc, id est bibliam aut S. Augustinum aliumve ecclesiasticae autoritatis doctorem velit profiteri."

20. The term "humanist" here refers to those reformers of culture and education during the Renaissance, especially through the retrieval of classical sources and the *studia humanitatis*. This should not be confused with later 19th and 20th century secular "humanism," which arises from different parentage.

and difficult world, and quickens them for service to the neighbor. Attend to the gospel in the universities, he argued, and it will eventually trickle down, leaven and change all of society. The Word, sown and cultivated like seed, would one day produce a harvest thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

But in the short-term people desperately needed the gospel now and part of that meant that they needed evangelical preachers. Pastoral concern, perhaps coupled with a sense of apocalyptic urgency, moved Luther and his faculty colleagues to produce an abundance of resources that helped educate and shape the existing clergy. Following the same path as the university schoolmen several centuries before, Luther produced treatises, translations, biblical commentary, and especially collections of sermons—*Postils*—as way to form pastors in their understanding of the faith and as aids to their own pastoral responsibilities. By leveraging the printing press, they hoped to at least effect some changes at the parish level and among the laity.

The Saxon visitations of 1527 largely disappointed that hope, however. Education of the clergy had to become a higher priority and would require a more thorough program of study. Though Lateran IV regarded preaching as the chief pastoral work for the *cura animarum* (care of souls), the ritual side of the ministry—performing the divine office and offering the mass—had continued to be more closely identified with the work of the priesthood. Practically, that was much easier to maintain—to perform liturgical ceremony and recite sacramental formulae required minimal theological education nor even much education in general. If pastoral care was primarily and properly ringing bells, brandishing thurifers, and repeating Latin prayers then theological education was neither very necessary nor urgent. But Luther and his Wittenberg colleagues saw the matter quite differently. The center of Lutheran theological formation was not the *chancel* but the *classroom*.

At the heart of all things was education in the Word of God—the evangelical promise that in Christ God was being reconciled to his sinful world. This Word was a word of creation—like the first word that created light and all things through God’s speaking, the Word of Christ fashions a new people, bestows new hearts, and binds our future to the eternity of God.²¹ The power of this Word was the power to evoke faith—not a formulaic, magical power, not *ex opere operato*—but the power to communicate God’s heart and his promise. The Holy Spirit is a rhetorician instructing the mind and moving the heart.²²

Therefore, a human being is doubtless redeemed, but as long as he does not believe it he does not *feel* it, it is still not *in his heart*. Here comes now this

21. For an in-depth study of the theological, pedagogical, and pastoral centrality of the Word in the Lutheran Reformation period, see Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther, and The Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Backer Academic, 2016).

22. WA 40/III, 270a, 3-4: “And you will see that the Holy Spirit is the best Poet and Orator, who knows the rules of the art of speaking and persuasion.”

third part, that God pours the Holy Spirit into the hearts, who speaks it so into the hearts that we know that what He says is truly so and not otherwise.²³

And so, at the heart of the ministry of the church was the proclamation of this Word. Pastors were to shepherd God's people with this Word, to be "ready in season and out of season . . . to reprove, rebuke and exhort." To be thus "apt to teach" pastors needed to be educated, serious students of the Scriptures from which they were to preach and teach.

The curricular changes at Wittenberg introduced an eclectic reorientation inspired especially by the *ad fontes* ideals of the humanist "new learning." This was an exciting and creative time, leading to some of the highest enrollment numbers in the university's history. The drawback, however, was the questionable status of the university in its authority to grant degrees. Distancing itself from the traditional late medieval requirements of lectures on the *Sentences*, the diminishment of Aristotle in the arts faculty, and the elimination of disputations put Wittenberg at a disadvantage. But as negotiations with the emperor broke down, Wittenberg leaned into a new curriculum aimed at forming a new clergy that would adhere to the evangelical confession at Augsburg.²⁴

In 1528 Melancthon crafted Articles of Visitation, a new kind of syllabus of what was to be expected of and taught by evangelical pastors. Melancthon began with a presentation on the need to preach repentance and faith, clarifying for the pastors the central pastoral task of distinguishing law and gospel. Knowledge of the catechism, the sacraments, confession and a few other aspects of pastoral ministry were likewise detailed. By 1536, the university curriculum at Wittenberg was more thoroughly revised with the intention of bringing greater cohesion between what was taught there and what was expected of pastors in the visitations.

Ordination was introduced in 1535—not that there was a theological necessity for it (Saxony had been placing preachers without ordination throughout the 1520s)—but it tied the selection and call of pastors more tightly to examination by the university.²⁵ Other universities followed the example of Wittenberg's curricular changes. Philip of Hesse's new university in Marburg was already imitating Wittenberg since its founding in 1527. The Lutheran university in Königsberg was

23. WA 45:22-12-16.

24. See Timothy Wengert, "Philip Melancthon and Wittenberg's Reform of the Theological Curriculum," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, eds. Joran J. Ballor, David Sytsma, Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), for an extensive examination of the theological statutes of 1533.

25. Martin Krarup, *Ordination in Wittenberg: Die Einsetzung in das kirchliche Amt in Kursachsen zur Zeit der Reformation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). See also James M. Kittelson, "Historical and Systematic Theology in the Mirror of Church History: The Lessons of "Ordination" in Sixteenth-Century Saxony" in *Church History*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (December 2002): 743-773.

founded in 1544 and the university of Jena tried to outdo Wittenberg after its founding in 1558.

Even so, it took some time for the new clergy to come from the university. Ordinations by Wittenberg from 1537-1550 were largely from other occupations, especially teachers, sextons, and craftsmen (e.g. printers and clothmakers), rather than from university students.²⁶ This means that while universities oriented themselves as part of a central effort to bring evangelical pastors into congregations, university education was not an obligatory qualification for ordination in the 16th century. In addition to the university reforms, clergy education and formation throughout the 16th century continued to rely on theological resources produced for pastors in the parish. Postil literature—not just from Luther but from pastors and theologians of the next generation were popular and continued to be important for the education of clergy.²⁷ Biblical commentaries were often keyed for preaching by including loci as a way to thematically shape didactic sermons, and homiletical texts and treatises were published regularly throughout the second-half of the 16th century. By the mid-century, pastor's manuals—a kind of single volume handbook on preaching, theology of the office of the ministry, and pastoral care—were being produced as well.²⁸ The content of these manuals shifted towards the end of the 16th century as more and more pastors were receiving university instruction.

The sixteenth-century reformation was a reformation of education, and that included, in no small measure, the reformation of pastoral education. The statistics that we can observe are striking. James Kittelson offers just a few examples from along the Rhine, spanning mid-century to its end. In 1560, only 23% of the clergy in Sponheim had a university education. By 1619, this had risen to 78%. Likewise, in Zweibrücken, the percentage shifted from 33% to 92%.²⁹ Projecting back in the beginning of the century, we are looking at a fundamental shift with only 10-15% of clergy having a university education at its beginning compared to 90% at its end—and educated in the *tres linguae sacrae*, no less!

There is a certain centrifugal effect that Wittenberg had in these educational efforts. "Missionary" was not a word available to the reformers in the 16th century but Werner Elert is right that what we see is the Lutheran "*evangelischer Ansatz*"—the intentional impact of the gospel from the Wittenberg reformation on the rest

26. See Susan Karant-Nunn, "Luther's Pastors: The Reformation in the Ernestine Country-side," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 69, No. 8 (1979), 1-80.

27. John M. Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). See also Benjamin T. G. Mayes' excellent introduction to Luther's Church Postils in LW 75, xiii-xxxi.

28. Amy Nelson Burnett, "The Evolution of the Lutheran Pastors Manual in the Sixteenth Century," in *Church History*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Sep. 2004), 536-565.

29. James M. Kittelson, "The Reformation's Impact on the Universities—and the Reverse," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 48 (1984): 23-38.

of Europe.³⁰ Whether it involved the sending of pastors in to other territories, or reformers like Bugenhagen to Denmark and Norway, or the international character of the student body in which nearly a third of students came from outside of Germany, Wittenberg's educational undertaking extended beyond its matriculation roles and lecture hall.³¹

The Lutheran effort on clergy education was significant and the Council of Trent responded in kind. In 1563, in the 23rd session, canon *Cum Adolescentium Aetas* required the establishment of diocesan seminaries, under the authority of the bishop, for the formation of priests. Here we should point out that the word "formation" is more fitting for these Catholic seminaries than it is for the Lutheran efforts. The Catholic seminarian certainly received education in the liberal arts, but spiritual disciplines and scholastic theology reinforced the idea that the person of the priest was peculiar—set apart to stand, *in persona Christi*, as a bridge between God and the people. But this view of priesthood was antithetical to the Lutheran view. For Lutherans, baptism "formed" *Christians*—the true priesthood—through the ministrations of preaching, catechesis, and hymnody on the secular field of their daily vocations. Accordingly, the church "educated" pastors in the doctrine of the gospel, and the university as well as the schools and academies modeled after it were the fitting place to carry out this task.

There is an irony here, it would seem. As long as theological education arose *from* and *for the sake* of Christian formation, the Wittenberg way had the potential to effect the wider reform hoped for. But the tendency was for education to separate and specialize, to create a new clerical elite over and against the "simple" Christian. This put the clerical vocation into a peculiar category of its own credentialed by professional expertise in university theology rather than a public ministry of the universal Christian priesthood. The greater this separation the more susceptible was Protestant theological education to a different spirit than Christ's own.

Concluding thoughts

This overview has tried to highlight some of the distinctive features and influences of the reform of theology expressed in the pastoral education that developed in the Wittenberg Reformation and beyond. As with most historical research, the intent is more descriptive than prescriptive. One doesn't pick up examples from sixteenth-century electoral Saxony and simply drop them into the Americas 500 years later and think we should have the same results. There are new challenges for the

30. Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 385-402.

31. See Douglas L. Rutt, "Theological Education and Mission" in *Let the Gospel Lead: Essays & Sermons in Honor of Dale A Meyer*, edited by Travis J. Scholl (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Seminary Press, 2020), 69-82.

church in the 21st century and we need to examine them clear-eyed with both courage and humility. To return to Rosin's thoughts continued from the beginning:

Beware booth building but revel instead in all the work to do. Renaissance humanism recaptured a rhythm to life: there was more to life than being a *viator*, a pilgrim enduring and passing through. The *vita contemplativa*, that is, a life of contemplation and reflection, had a foil in the *vita activa*, the active life that put reflection and learning into practice. The Reformation with the Lutheran idea of vocation had an even richer foundation for rolling up one's sleeves and taking on life each day, sorting through context to serve people in their varied circumstances. In so doing, they may benefit, but we most surely do. Marcel Proust, "recommended reading" for today's liberal-arts crowd, wrote, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes...."

Some years ago, Yale law professor Stephen Carter argued in *A Culture of Disbelief* that not only was American society actually structured at its founding to welcome a theological/philosophical voice, but he insisted that the absence of a theological voice today has skewed how we tackle problems and leaves us with incomplete solutions. With a context that seems to increasingly dismiss theology's place in the public square, its voice grows ever more distant, even as politics—a kind of faux religion—promises its version of a new heaven and a new earth via this program or that set of regulations designed to fix, direct, and control. In contrast, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once remarked that democracies are an attempt to find proximate solutions to insoluble problems. Don't we know it! But it is precisely because of life's ragged edges that theology ought to pull up a chair at the table and weigh in on the discussion. You may first have to defend your right to be there. Hopefully it will not be necessary to defend that in the way and to the extent Luther and others of his day found necessary. Assured by the gospel and mindful of life's vocations God gives—theological insights from the Reformation—we are not going to sit this one out.³²

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32. Robert Rosin, "Luther, Learning, and the Reformation A Look at Then with Some Thoughts for Now," in *Concordia Journal* 43, 1-2 (Winter/Spring 2017): 101-102.

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