

Lutheran Mission Matters



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Vocation in Missiological Perspective¹

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Abstract: For some, additional ministerial offices in the church would lead to more efficient and effective proclamation of the gospel to the unbelieving world. Yet God’s Word and history teach that it is in vocation, the calling of the common Christian, where the gospel is proclaimed in purity and power. Every believer receives a call to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pt 2:9). If Justification is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, vocation can be seen in a similar way, for it is a doctrine where all aspects of biblical teaching are brought to bear on the Christian’s life of good works and witness. In vocation God has given the church the commission and method for bringing light to the darkness of unbelief.

In Lutheran theology, biblical teaching is seen as an integrated whole where all the articles of the faith are parts of a unified set. If one piece is missing or incorrectly understood, the rest of the pieces are likely to lose their integrity and true meaning.² Yet, for Lutherans, one specific article, the doctrine of justification, is *the* fundamental doctrine, called the “heart and soul of the Reformation.”³ If we err in this article, it will be quite possible—even probable—that we will become derailed in other aspects of biblical teaching.

The Centrality of Justification

When considering the theme, “Vocation in Missiological Perspective,” it is essential to remember that our conclusions must be based on a correct and clear understanding of justification—that the believer is saved through faith in Christ, true man and true God, who gave Himself to accomplish the salvation of humankind. Moreover, one arrives at this faith not by one’s own efforts, but by grace. Faith itself is a gift of God, given by the Spirit through the Word of Truth. As Paul says: “Faith

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comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ” (Rom 10:17), and “By grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8.9).⁴

Thus, the unity of theology and the centrality of justification are held in tension. It might be compared (imperfectly) to a wheel, with justification as the center axis from which the spokes project outwards. Everything depends on the correct understanding of justification.

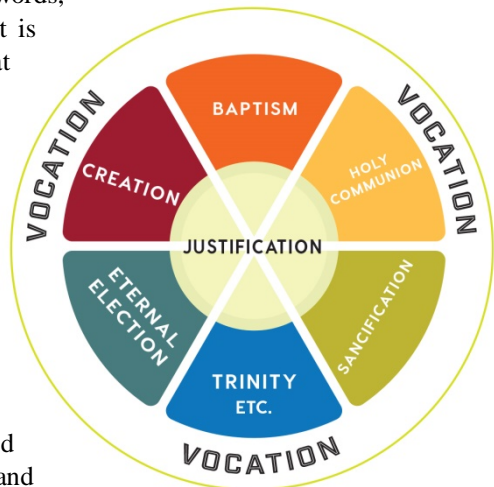
The Centrality of Vocation—the Theology of Life

Yet the thesis of this article is that the Lutheran doctrine of vocation also ties together all other aspects of theology. One cannot speak of Christian vocation without seeing that it touches upon the doctrines of justification, creation, sanctification, the two ways God rules (the so-called “two kingdoms”), Baptism, Law and Gospel, prayer, etc. Perhaps it is legitimate to say that if justification is where all true doctrine is centered, vocation is the place where all the articles of faith find their expression in the life of the Christian. It is in vocation that every aspect of the faith-life that is guided by justification works itself out in the concrete situations of everyday existence. Vocation could be called the “theology of life.”

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Vocation is not about mere words, theories, ideas, or mental concepts: It is about the core beliefs and values that permeate the believer’s worldview and govern the way he or she lives out the faith. Thus, if justification is envisioned as being the center axis of the wheel, perhaps vocation can be seen as the outer rim, which is connected to all doctrine, but which is oriented toward the outside, like the proverbial rubber that hits the road.

This understanding of the role and relationship between justification and vocation brings to light a fundamental



difference between Lutheran and other theological systems. In Lutheran theology, every doctrine has practical application. There is no such thing as a doctrine that only should be recognized and accepted as true but that does not have practical significance. It was an oft-repeated maxim of Dr. Robert Preus: “What is not practical is not theology.”⁵ All theology is to be lived in tangible circumstances, and vocation is the environment or arena where everything we believe and confess as Christians becomes palpably manifest for the benefit of others. It is thus all the more unfortunate to hear, as has been said, that the biblical teaching of vocation is a “lost treasure” in the Lutheran Church.⁶

Vocation means “call” or “calling.” In Greek the word is *klesis*. It is God Himself who calls. It is true that Lutheran theology uses the word “call” or “calling” technically to speak of the profession or office of the ordained pastoral ministry, those who have received a call or calling to exercise the pastoral office. However, the word *klesis* is used in Scripture as much for believers in general as for the office of the holy ministry. The two uses can be seen clearly in First Corinthians, where Paul writes: “Paul, *called (kletos)* by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ . . . to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and *called (kletois)* to be his holy people” (1 Cor 1:1–2). In the former instance, Saint Paul is talking of his call to apostleship, but in the latter he is speaking of the legitimate calling that is extended to all God’s people.

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The word in Greek that in English is (perhaps unfortunately) translated *church*⁷ is *ekklesia*, which simply means “those who are called out,” for example, to meet together in the central plaza or another specified location. It is an assembly. In this sense, all Christians are called by God. We cannot know God outside of this call, as Dr. Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* says: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth. . . .”⁸

We have, then, this doctrine of vocation by the calling of God. Part of this call, but only a part, has to do with the profession or the work that we do in life—the way we earn our daily bread. The reformers, both Calvin and Luther, taught that one can serve God, not only by being a monk or hermit or priest or bishop in the Catholic

Church, but also in any legitimate “secular” (so to speak) profession. Gene Veith described the insights of the reformers on vocation: “Medieval Catholicism taught that spiritual perfection is to be found in celibacy, poverty, and the monastic withdrawal from the world, where higher spiritual life is found. But the reformers emphasized the spiritual dimension of family life, productive labor, and cultural engagement.”⁹

According to the reformers’ understanding, God calls each believer to various tasks and relations. The workplace is one place where the Christian can serve both God and neighbor. One does not need to dedicate oneself to a monastic life to arrive at spiritual perfection; rather, perfection is found in Christ, who is with us in our secular occupations and relations also. One can readily see the great influence that this idea has had in the Western world. The famous sociologist-philosopher, Max Weber, wrote about the “Protestant work ethic” in 1904, arguing that one’s dedication to work, to apply oneself vigorously to his or her work, has its roots in Luther’s doctrine of vocation. Many sociologists and historians have argued that the great advances in medicine, technology, science, and capitalist commerce that have arisen in the Western world—largely Protestant—have been realized because Protestants saw that it was possible to serve God by dedicating themselves to their work with diligence, prudence, seriousness, and honesty. Perhaps Weber and others were correct in part in this assessment, although Weber did not completely understand Luther on vocation, nor does his work provide a more basic understanding of the rationale for hard work.¹⁰

Vocation, however, is not simply our profession or work, as is commonly understood. It is not only that one can serve God through how one earns one’s daily bread, even though it does have to do with and includes that. Vocation is much broader in Luther’s understanding, because it begins with the call to faith and has implications for every aspect of life and how believers live their entire lives.

For Luther, vocation is the calling that every Christian has, not only to worship God, but also, and even principally, to serve the neighbor in the station of life where the believer is found. Primarily, it has to do not so much with one’s occupation or work, but rather with the relationships one has with other human beings as experienced in daily life.

Luther believed that there were three arenas for the exercise of spiritual life: the family, civil society, and the church. We can see this in the “Table of Duties” in the *Small Catechism*, where Luther provides guidelines regarding how the Christian should live according to these three general categories.

The family for Luther includes the area of work, occupation, or employment. Here he points to biblical passages that show how husbands, wives, parents, male and female servants, hired men, laborers, masters and mistresses, young persons in

general, widows, etc., should live. In summary, Luther ends with a point entitled, “For All in Common,” citing Romans 13:8–10.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (ESV)

We can see, therefore, that for Luther vocation has to do fundamentally with how believers live the Christian life and, more specifically, how Christians are to serve their neighbor. The Christian is called by God, not to withdraw from the world, but rather to live a life of service to neighbor—to serve and “love your neighbor as yourself.” This service is carried out by being in the world, not by isolating oneself in the monastery, figuratively or literally.

One can argue that the call is to serve God *and* neighbor, but Luther maintained that when it comes to vocation, God does not need anything from us. What is important is to serve your neighbor. It is the neighbor who needs our service; God, not so much. For that reason, he criticized the hermits and monks saying that that they did not serve anyone outside their own community. For Luther, the most perfectly spiritual arena is the world, and we can exercise our vocation of love and service to our neighbor in the station where we find ourselves in that world. As Veith rightly points out: “Luther stressed that our vocations are not works that we perform ‘for’ God. The monastics talked that way, as if the Lord of the universe needed or was impressed by our actions. ‘God does not need our good works,’ Luther said. ‘But our neighbor does.’”¹¹

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The Priesthood of all Believers and Vocation

An understanding of the priesthood of all believers is fundamental for a right understanding of vocation. Luther began to delineate this priesthood and its significance in 1520 in his open letter “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian State.”¹² In the first part, Luther indicates that he wrote this document “in the hope that God would help his church through the laity.” The problem that Luther confronted was that the officials (priests, bishops, etc.) of the church maintained that the position they occupied was a higher

estate than the rest and that they did not need to subject themselves to the civil authority or the authority of the rest. One example of the argument that Luther makes shows how radical his thinking was in that time. After demonstrating that the ordination of a priest done by a bishop is in reality done in the name of the church, that is, in the name of common believers, Luther makes this statement:

From this argument, it follows that there is no true and fundamental difference between laity and priests, princes and bishops, between the religious and secular, except by the office and work, but not in terms of its status. All are the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. . . . We are all one body of Christ, the head, and we are all members one of the other. Christ does not have two different bodies, one temporal and one spiritual. There is only one Head and only one body.”¹³

Luther’s argument is aligned with the teaching of Scripture. Saint Peter (1 Pt 2:9–25) demonstrates the significance of the priesthood of all believers in all of its richness. He makes clear that common Christians, in a real sense, have been called. Believers have been called by God to experience certain excellencies. Peter indicates that those who have been called are a “chosen race,” a “royal priesthood,” a “holy nation,” and “a people for his (God’s) own possession” (v. 9). Each of those titles would have had a very rich meaning for Peter’s original hearers, as the terms all have their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. Christians are chosen, or elected. As the Israelites were a people chosen by God, today all believers are elected to be a special race in the eyes of God. As the Psalmist says, they are “the apple of His eye” (Ps 17:8).

Those called by God are a “royal priesthood,” which means that the entire body of Christ is a part of this priesthood. It is a fundamental biblical and Lutheran teaching that leads to a correct understanding of vocation. All believers are priests. The idea of the royal priesthood of all believers is fundamental to understanding their way of living as daughters and sons of God. Dr. Robert Kolb asserts that many Lutherans today have defined the priesthood of all believers as the privilege to approach God directly as individuals, i.e., that common Christians do not need to depend on any other person whatsoever (a priest, for example) to draw near to God. While this is true enough, if we limit the priesthood only to direct prayer to God, we have an incomplete vision of the universal priesthood, for it includes matters of the horizontal relationship among human beings as well.¹⁴

Peter says, also, that believers are a “holy nation.” The significance of *holy* is “separated out,” “perfect,” “dedicated to God.” To be a holy nation means that the body of believers has been cleansed by God, declared holy and good, and also that the body reflects this holiness by its way of living. “A people for his own possession” demonstrates the love that God has for His people. It is He who has taken the initiative to establish the relationship that the Christian enjoys. It is He who

has redeemed believers from the chains of death. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

To summarize this passage in the context of vocation, in the first place Christians have been called—called to experience these excellencies. In the second place, the purpose for which Christians have been called is clear: “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” As has been mentioned, an overemphasis on the privilege of going to God directly to the exclusion of the other dimensions of this calling presents us with an incomplete framework for vocation. A very essential aspect of our calling, perhaps the principal purpose, is to announce the wondrous works of God. As Kolb puts it:

There can be no doubt that God wants His Christian people to speak His Word; above all, to bring that Good News of new life in Jesus Christ to those who are writing their own bulletins and guidelines for a life which is dying. This living voice of the Gospel in our mouths is the very power of God for the salvation of fallen human creatures (Romans 1:16), and He has placed this power into the hands of all His disciples (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23). The 16th-century reformers spoke of this commission as the “priesthood of all believers.”¹⁵

Vocation and Bridge Building

Dr. Kolb illustrates the believers’ calling as priests by making a comparison with a Latin word for priest: *pontifex*. For those who understand Spanish, it is not hard to understand the roots of the word *pontifex* as “bridge maker.” According to this definition, the Christian task as priests is to construct bridges between the Word of God and people in the contemporary world. This task or calling is not merely to bark out words, although they may be true in themselves, but to build bridges. Undoubtedly, Dr. Kolb makes an important point because he emphasizes the need to know and understand people, their way of thinking, their opinions, their worries, their dreams, their hopes, their suppositions, their worldview, their passions and sins.

The only way to understand these things is to live among those people, to develop relationships with them, and to become a friend—in short, to become interested in the lives of others. To build a bridge, one must construct upon the firm ground on both sides of the gap. Normally, when a bridge is built, the builders don’t begin on one side and simply keep building until they reach the other side; rather, builders begin on both sides of the river, and the two sides meet in the middle. That is the way a bridge is built, and it provides interesting instruction for the task of Christian witness (recognizing that all analogies limp).

For those who intend to bear witness to the Gospel, it means that they are willing to put in the hard work of trying to demonstrate the connection between the

message of the Word and the world of the person who has no understanding of that Word. As Dr. Kolb has written, the bridge-maker, by studying the text and his own context, seeks “contemporary implications and applications” of God’s Word.¹⁶ A knowledge of the text alone is not sufficient for Christian witness. The task of building bridges demands also that one has an adequate knowledge of one’s neighbor.

Giving witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus is not chiefly to share information but to introduce one person to another. In this sense, common Christians even can have an advantage over “professional” church workers in that they are likely to be more immersed in the world of those outside of the church.

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The Testimony of Life

In the third place, the Apostle Peter presents a fundamentally important facet of the priesthood that belongs to all believers, because the *how* of announcing the excellencies of God is also specified. Here Peter elaborates on what that means: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles (non-Christians) honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

Peter points out the connection with our relationship between the Christian’s way of life and the result of his or her witness. Those called by God are to keep their conduct honorable among non-believers so that through their way of life those who are lost will see the good works of Christ’s followers, join the believers in their faithful lives, and on the day of judgment will glorify God.

Even if people treat believers badly, as happens so often today in a world where Christians are singled out for rape, pillage, enslavement, murder, beheading, etc., the response of Christ’s people is to be blameless, innocent, and enduring, because the believer has the long-range objective in mind, that is, that finally our persecutors will take note of our patience and honorable conduct, will begin to reflect on it, will take the opportunity to hear the Word, and finally, by the grace of God, will come to the true faith.¹⁷

A couple of years ago, Lutheran Hour Ministries changed its logo. In a staff meeting, bumper stickers with the new logo were distributed as a way of publicizing the ministry. Upon reflection, the executive director warned, “Look, put these stickers on your bumpers only if you are going to behave yourselves on the road. If you drive like a crazy maniac, and you are likely to get angry and make obscene

gestures to other drivers, it's better not to identify yourself with the Lutheran Hour. Don't use the sticker." In other words, there must be a congruence between words and actions, and to bear the insignia of an organization that espouses Christian values brings with it a corresponding behavioral expectation.

Indeed, the world is watching every Christian believer to see what difference the Gospel makes in his or her life. Therefore, Peter adds the entire section in his first

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letter (2:13–25) exhorting Christians for the love of God to behave honorably, to respect all, to love the brethren, to fear God and honor the king, and to live justly, having tolerance and patience with all, etc. It is evident what Christians have been called to, the purpose of this calling, and how this calling is to be lived out, that is, how the believer will conduct himself or herself in order to truly announce the excellencies of God.

Vocation, the calling to which Christians have been called, is the plan or the program for life *in concreto*. It is the Christian life, how it is lived, how it is understood, and how it is put into operation. Vocation has everything to do with the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, and thus it is vital that a proper understanding of this doctrine be recaptured and put into practice. More precisely, it is *essential* that the church recapture a healthy understanding of vocation.

Vocation—Life and Words

How does the Church grow? How is the Kingdom of Christ extended? The honorable life of Christians is highly significant. It builds the necessary credibility to be heard, and it demonstrates the transformative power of the gospel. Scripture also clearly states that “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ” (Rom 10:17, ESV). The clear proclamation of the Gospel, in verbal form, is what must be heard. But how does it become possible for a person to hear?

William Weinrich described many years ago, in an article titled “Evangelism in the Early Church,”¹⁸ how the Church grew during those formative years. What is described about that period is relevant for today. The Early Church existed in a multicultural, religiously pluralistic world, much like today. The Early Church did not benefit from a privileged place in the world, but rather was an object of ridicule and persecution, much as it is today. While the Early Church existed in a “pre-Christian” world, today the church exists in a “post-Christian” environment. There is something to learn from the lives of the first Christians—and it has to do with vocation.

Weinrich speaks of the “who” of evangelism in the Early Church, elaborating a list of five different categories of people who had parts in announcing the Good News to the world. He lists (1) the Apostles, (2) itinerant missionaries, (3) local pastors, (4) the philosopher-theologians, and (5) finally he approvingly quotes Adolf von Harnack, who wrote: “The most numerous and successful missionaries of the Christian religion were not the professional teachers, but Christians themselves, in virtue of their loyalty and courage.” Thereafter, Weinrich cites the testimony of a pagan of the second century, Celsus, who commented:

We see, indeed, in private houses workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons often of most uninstructed and rustic character, not venturing to utter a word in the presence of their elders and wiser masters; but when they get hold of the children privately, and certain women as ignorant as themselves, they pour forth wonderful statements, to the effect that they ought not to give heed to their father and to their teachers, but should obey them.¹⁹

The point is that simple and common Christians were evangelizing their contemporaries wherever they were to be found—in the synagogues, in the streets, in the market, in homes, during business transactions, in the courts, in the military. In the same article Weinrich cites the role of women, concluding that “without question women played an important part in the church’s expansion.”²⁰

The book of Acts states that Christians met in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12); the Christians of Laodicea met in the house of a certain Nympha (Col 4:15); Dorcas was known for her acts of charity (Acts 9:36–39); Priscilla was an important helper to Paul (Acts 18:12; Rom 16:3). Weinrich points out that, according to one apocryphal document from the second century, a woman, Thecla, supposedly converted by Paul, baptized herself and dedicated herself thereafter to evangelism and was even called an “apostle.”²¹

Vocation Necessary for the Extension of the Kingdom

Many theologians and missiologists argue that if the Word of the Gospel is to spread in our contemporary pluralistic, materialistic, secular, and post-Christian climate, the activity of common Christians is essential, just as it was in the Early Church. It is the doctrine of vocation that indicates that believers have this possibility and responsibility, and better yet, the privilege and commission, as common Christians (who are not in any way common in reality). God, by the call that He has extended to His people, has made them His own, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, etc., so that this priesthood would announce His excellencies.

This privilege belongs to those who are called through Baptism. Martin Luther, commenting on the priesthood of Melchizedek in relation to Psalm 110:4, uses the occasion to expound on duties of the royal priesthood:

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But after we have become Christians through this Priest and His priestly office, incorporated in Him by Baptism through faith, then each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and the power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from Him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God's Word and publicly to confess it.²²

Here Luther shows the relationship between the faith to which Christians have been called in Baptism; vocation, which is exercised through various relations in life; and the duty and privilege of all believers, of announcing the Gospel continually, in daily life, in every moment when necessary.

More Offices or Vocation?

There are some who believe that what the church needs are more officially recognized and authorized or ordained offices in the church in order to effect the expansion of the church. Some speak of the necessity for a special office of "evangelist," or "teacher," or "missionary," or some other office with an evangelistic and missionary responsibility. However, it seems clear that God gave to the Church everything it needs when He gave the royal priesthood so that each believer can do his or her part in the extension of the kingdom by exercising his or her vocation/calling. Vocation is about word and deed, proclamation and demonstration, to the end that lost sinners may "glorify God on the day of visitation." To quote Gene Veith again: "The doctrine of vocation charges our everyday lives and our mundane activities with spiritual significance, and it is indeed a powerful motivator to perform them with excellence."²³

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A proper and full understanding of Christian vocation is possible only when its

missiological dimension is taken into account. The calling of Christians to faith includes with it the calling to make God's message of salvation known in every context of life. It is the calling for every Christian to do his or her part in the extension of God's kingdom. It involves the believer's way of life, the good deeds, a demonstration of fruits of the Spirit, but it also involves speaking the Word of life boldly and confidently "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2). A recovery of this "lost treasure" in the church could lead to incredible consequences as God's Spirit moves powerfully through His word, whether spoken from the pulpit by the pastor or at the workplace by the lay-believer.

Endnotes

¹ This article is an extensive revision of a paper presented at the IV Hispanic Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, held June 19–22, 2012 at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

² Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians 1535" in American Edition *Luther's Works, Vol. 27: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6*, eds J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 36–39. Luther famously compared Christian doctrine ("the gospel in all of its articles") to a "golden circle," which, if it is destroyed or damaged, even partially, becomes totally useless. He recognized that the teachings of the Word of God are a unity and that all doctrines go together; that is, it is not possible to isolate one doctrinal point and change it without affecting the whole of doctrine. "Therefore, doctrine should be a circle of gold, round and eternal, in which there is no crack; if even a tiny crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect. . . ." See also Robert D. Preus, "Luther and the Doctrine of Justification," accessed December 29, 2015, <http://www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/Luther%20and%20the%20Doctrine%20of%20Justification.pdf>.

³ Eugene F. A. Klug, *Lift High This Cross: The Theology of Martin Luther* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003). The entire fourth chapter of this book is dedicated to the theme, "The Heart and Soul of the Reformation—Sinners' Justification," 57–70.

⁴ The understanding of the place and prominence of justification is where a fundamental difference (albeit often overlooked) between Lutheran theology and Roman Catholic theology becomes obvious. While Roman Catholic theology concedes that justification is "an indispensable criterion" in a correct theological system, for Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, justification is *the* integrating center of all faith and theology. This difference became abundantly clear during the development of the *Joint Declaration on Justification* affirmed by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999. Indeed, it was a point that Rome found necessary to highlight as a significant difference between its view of theology and the Lutheran perspective. "Another difficulty arises in n.18 of the Joint Declaration, *where a clear difference appears in the importance, for Catholics and for Lutherans, of the doctrine of justification as criterion for the life and practice of the Church*. Whereas for Lutherans this doctrine has taken on an altogether particular significance, for the Catholic Church the message of justification, according to Scripture and already from the time of the Fathers, has to be organically integrated into the fundamental criterion of the 'regula fidei', that is, the confession of the one God in three persons, Christologically centered and rooted in the living

Church and its sacramental life” (*Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification*, paragraph 2, accessed October 31, 2015, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_01081998_off-answer-catholic_en.html, (emphasis added).

⁵ Author’s reminiscences from his time as a student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1981–1986. Preus makes the same point in his book, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* Vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970). “Calov’s emphasis on the practical aim of theology, an emphasis that antedates the works of the pietists and goes back to Luther and Gerhard, is most important. He is following the old adage that what is not practical is simply not theological. He is linking inseparably doctrine and life. All theology is for concrete living” (194).

⁶ See John Pless, “Vocation and Evangelism,” (2001) accessed December 28, 2015, <http://www.ctsfw.edu/document.doc?id=280>.

⁷ The English word “church” has its roots in the Greek *kyriake*, implying “the Lord’s house.” Could the domain of meaning have subtly shifted from an emphasis on the *people* of God, to the building where God’s people meet? In Spanish, Portuguese, and even Bahasa Indonesia, the connection to the original Greek is more readily apparent where *Iglesia*, *Igreja*, and *Gereja* are direct descendants of *ekklesia*.

⁸ *Small Catechism*, 3rd Article.

⁹ Gene Edward Veith, “The Protestant Work Ethic,” accessed October 31, 2015, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/protestant-work-ethic>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Veith asserts that Weber saw Protestants as “ascetics,” which he identifies as a weakness in Weber’s model. One might also mention that for Weber vocation was primarily related to work, whereas clearly in Luther vocation has to do with all one’s relations, in work, family, civil life, and church. Moreover, hard work alone does not explain that which is needed to explain the technological advancement of the Western world. Lesslie Newbigin is no doubt right when he sees it as a worldview issue. He argues that the advancement of technology was made possible because of the Protestant biblical worldview, which saw the world as both rational and contingent, thus paving the way for scientific experimentation: “For to put it briefly, if the world is not rational, science is not possible; if the world is not contingent, science is not necessary” (Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 71). Without this worldview, diligence at work would be superfluous. An even more pernicious thought is when the “Protestant work ethic” is used to somehow justify self-glory, for example, that if one is blessed by God with material possessions it must be due to his or her hard work.

¹¹ Veith, *Ibid.*

¹² Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian State” in American Edition *Luther’s Works, Vol. 44: The Christian in Society I*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 129–130.

¹⁴ Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1984), 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷ The response of Christians to the ongoing suffering they have experienced in the Middle East is said to be a most powerful testimony in the region. One example is the tract, produced

by the Bible Society of Egypt, *Two Rows by the Sea*, which is said to have an astounding effect on non-Christians who see Christians responding with mercy and forgiveness in the face of unimaginable persecution (<http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/bible-society-egypt-responds-love-enemy-message-christians-killed>, accessed November 1, 2015). Another is the witness of a young Iraqi refugee by the name of Myriam, who, in spite of having to flee her home to escape possible torture and death, tells a SAT7 reporter that she can only pray for those who are persecuting her in the hope that they too might find the light and freedom of the Gospel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ige6CcXuMg>, accessed November 1, 2015).

¹⁸ William C. Weinrich, "Evangelism in the Early Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (January–April, 1981), 61–76.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

²² Martin Luther, "Psalm 110" in American Edition *Luther's Works, Vol. 13: Selected Psalms II*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1999), 333.

²³ Veith, "The Protestant Work Ethic."