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# Martin Luther on Preaching:

## Promises and Problems of the Sermon as a Source of Reformation History and as an Instrument of the Reformation

Patrick Ferry

The effort to disseminate the tenets of the Reformation to the common folk was no small task. Transmitting ideas so that they could be understood by the predominantly illiterate people of sixteenth-century Germany was only part of the problem. From the perspective of those who sought to implement reform measures within the church the goal was not achieved until the people embraced the ideas of reform and confessed them as their own. Reformers utilized various means to propagate their message in reaching for that goal.

The spread of new ideas throughout Germany has often been attributed to the impact of printing. However, while the literate elite may have been influential, they comprised only a small minority of the population in the first half of the sixteenth century. Printing, therefore, must be placed into the broader context of this mainly oral culture, and the diffusion of Reformation ideas must be understood to be the result of other forms of communication as well.<sup>1</sup> One of the more obvious ways in which those who were proponents of the Reformation sought to address the masses was through preaching. Few were able to read but almost all were able to hear. The sermon, therefore, lent itself very naturally to the reformers' cause. For this reason the sermon should lend itself naturally to the Reformation historian's cause as well. This essay will demonstrate the high esteem Martin Luther had for preaching and the very positive expectations he had for the sermon as an instrument of reform. At the same time, Luther discovered that people did not always put into practice what he preached, and this lack of receptivity disappointed him. The following analysis of Luther's own views on preaching and his assessment of its impact will reveal that as a means for reforming religious ideas the sermon promised much but delivered much less. Luther's own enthusiasm was tempered by the absence of popular enthusiasm for Reformation sermons. By way of introduction to this topic, however, it would be useful to assess more carefully just how much promise Reformation sermons in general, and Luther's sermons in particular, have to offer as a source for the Reformation historian. Enthusiasm need not necessarily be tempered, but neither should it be reckless.

Sermons probably tell us more about those who preach than they do about those who hear. The ideas a preacher would like to convey to the people in his message may be poles apart from those which are actually received. This difference, of course, imposes a limitation on using the sermon as a historical source, just as the sermon had limitations as a vehicle of new ideas during the Reformation in Germany. In other words, preaching was largely a one-sided means of communication, and it should not be assumed that listeners always agreed with and accepted the sermon's content.<sup>2</sup> It would be an error to presuppose a passive and receptive audience that regularly received the message as convincing and authoritative.<sup>3</sup> The historian should, therefore, also approach the sermon with respect and sensitivity for those who heard it, particularly inasmuch as Reformation preachers themselves did not likely expect their listeners to agree readily with everything they said. Finally, perhaps an even more fundamental problem with the sermon as a historiographic source is that of accessibility to the oral event. The ephemeral nature of the sermon makes it impossible to reproduce preaching. This would seem to prevent any definitive historical investigation of preaching since even printed transcripts of sermonic messages cannot contain the all-important chemistry of their original circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Each of these limitations also applies to intensive studies of the sermons of Martin Luther, and there are other difficulties as well. Along with the more general problems relating to the original situation in which Luther preached are those relating to the transmission of written texts. Luther did not preach from a full manuscript prepared in advance but rather made use of an outline called a *Konzept*. Few *Konzepte* are still extant. Those that have come down to us are more or less summaries of what Luther intended to say rather than well organized and neatly arranged outlines.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, apart from these summaries, of the 2,300 some sermons of Luther that survive (roughly one-third of the total number that he preached), it is possible that not one of them was used by him in the pulpit while he was delivering his message. The versions of Luther's sermons that are available are the result of other efforts, and they exist in various forms. Among the extant sermons are some texts that Luther himself edited for

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publication. Some are his church postils (*Kirchenpostille*), which were collections of sermons intended for reading in the church service by men who could not or were not willing to prepare their own sermons. Another group of sermons consists of notes written during Luther's actual preaching by various scribes. Some of these notes were later reworked into texts for publication while others exist as they were originally taken down.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the effort to determine how Luther's own preaching might have been an instrument of reform among the people requires the exercise of considerable caution. In trying to determine on the basis of Luther's own notes what he preached to the people, his own *Konzepte* might seem like a good place to start. The fact that Luther took seriously his preparation for preaching is indicated by the fact that he was often troubled in his sleep by dreams that he had to preach with no *Konzept* along in the pulpit.<sup>7</sup> However, as indicated, his outlines provide only a summary of his preaching, and not many exist. Furthermore, though Luther may have been bothered by bad dreams, when he awoke and stood up to preach, his outline did not necessarily constrain him. Luther once stated, "Our Lord God wishes Himself to be the preacher, for preachers often go astray in their notes. . . It has often happened to me that my best outline became undone."<sup>8</sup>

Other sermons that Luther himself edited for publication, such as the church postils, do not necessarily give an indication of what he actually preached. Depending upon the extent to which other preachers borrowed from the postils for use in their own pulpits, they may offer some insight into what was being heard in other churches in Germany. But, if the quest is a closer look at what Luther himself was proclaiming to the congregation at St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, where he preached most of his sermons, then it is necessary to rely on his redactors. Among the men who assiduously took notes while Martin Luther preached were Caspar Cruciger, Stephen Roth, Veit Dietrich, Andrew Poach, John Aurifaber, George Rörer, and Anthony Lauterbach. They were probably aided in their endeavor by the fact that Luther was considered a slow speaker.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, often when several of them were present at the same sermon, their notes differed significantly from one another.<sup>10</sup> In Luther's

perspective this interpretative function of the scribes was not all bad. He once remarked, "I think Cruciger has made the sermon better than I preached it."<sup>11</sup>

This extended caveat is intended to suggest not that sermons cannot be used profitably as a historiographic source, but that they should be used discriminately. Indeed, if the eminent Reformation historian, Harold Grimm, is correct, then sermons are essential sources of historical information. Grimm writes:

The Protestant Reformation would not have been possible without the sermon. Regardless of how the reformers gained their new theological insights, they used the sermon to bring their doctrines directly to their followers in the vernacular and to apply those doctrines to the immediate and practical religious needs of the people. Since the pulpit was one of the most important means of communicating information in the sixteenth century, the role of the sermon in making the Reformation a mass movement can scarcely be overestimated.<sup>12</sup>

Full credit must be given to the fact that the sermon brought the ideas of the Reformation to the ears of the masses. The extent to which preaching also reached their hearts and transformed their thinking, according to Luther's perceptions, will concern us momentarily. For the moment it should be noted that there is evidence to suggest that the pulpit was not merely a means of communicating information, as Grimm points out, but also that efforts to introduce religious reform were often the direct result of local revivals of preaching. In other cases communities developed interest in the new reform ideas first and would then work to secure a preacher who would proclaim God's word to them.<sup>13</sup> Lay people would pay out of their own pockets to support a good preacher in an effort to improve local religious life, and lay-endowed preacherships (*Prädikaturen*) often became key bases of operation for Protestant preachers to promote the Reformation.<sup>14</sup> Preacherships were established in large measure because of local dissatisfaction with the irregularity and low quality of the preaching of the local secular clergy and the unpopularity of preaching mendicants. Reform-minded preachers were asked to take up the slack by preaching a hundred to a hundred and fifty sermons a year. There was frequently friction between preachers and priests, or preachers and monks, and the people

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would generally rush to the support of their most popular preachers.<sup>15</sup> The ejection of an acceptable preacher by unsympathetic magistrates could even result in rebellion.<sup>16</sup>

Though later in the Reformation popular zeal for preachers of the gospel seems to have waned, early in the Reformation their role was considered essential. Martin Luther consistently treated the office of preaching as indispensable to the cause of reform, and he believed that without it the ideas of the Reformation could not have reached the ears or attention of the people. For this reason Luther highly esteemed the place of preaching in the Reformation. At the same time, Luther very much opposed preachers ascending to the pulpit without proper authorization. He was most certainly an advocate of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but Luther made a distinction in connection with the office of preaching. To him all Christians were priests, but only those men were to preach who had been called by God, through the mediation of the congregation, to fill the pastoral office.

Luther was critical of those who publicly addressed the people without a regular call and yet claimed authorization for doing so on the basis of being led to speak by the Holy Spirit. Radical reformers like Andreas Carlstadt and Thomas Müntzer were often the targets of such criticisms. Referring to the Peasants War of 1525, Luther wrote, "If Müntzer and Carlstadt and their comrades had not been allowed to sneak and creep into other men's houses and parishes where they had neither call nor command to go, this whole calamity would not have happened."<sup>17</sup> Concerning those he called "sneaks" and "false preachers," Luther warned the people, "no one should let them in or listen to them, even if they were to preach the pure Gospel, nay even if they were angels from heaven and all Gabriels at that!"<sup>18</sup> To preachers who insisted that they were sincere and boasted that they were led by the Holy Spirit, Luther urged the people to say, "Go preach to the geese. You are a devil. Don't molest and confuse me with your spirit. Christ does not want me to listen to you."<sup>19</sup>

Luther's insistence upon the integrity of the preaching office might be interpreted as an effort to exercise control over what was being preached in German pulpits. Anabaptists considered the Lutheran retention of the rite of ordination and

insistence upon the call an abandonment of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and a means of suppressing opposing points of view.<sup>20</sup> However, Luther seemed less concerned about controlling everything that was being preached and taught than about upholding the significance of the preacher's call. He wrote:

It is not lawful for me to forsake my assigned station as a preacher, to go to another city where I have no call and to preach there. . . I have no right to do this even if I hear that false doctrine is being taught and that souls are being seduced and condemned which I could rescue from error and condemnation by my sound doctrine. But I should commit the matter to God, who in His own time will find the opportunity to call ministers lawfully and to give the Word.<sup>21</sup>

Retrospectively, the pronounced clerical stamp of the Lutheran Reformation can be seen to have been a contributing factor to the more conservative nature of its reform measures in comparison with those of the more radical reformers. The emphasis upon the need of the rite of ordination and of a proper call for preachers was not something Luther wished to eliminate in reforming the church. Others might have assumed that this traditional framework inhibited the work of the Holy Spirit, but Luther believed that the office of preaching was an essential means through which the Holy Spirit would reach people with the gospel. He maintained: "the preacher's mouth and the words that I hear are not his; they are the words and the message of the Holy Spirit [through which] He works within me and thus He makes me holy."<sup>22</sup>

In his writings and in his preaching Martin Luther expressed considerable optimism that through the instrumentality of the preaching office reform of beliefs could be brought about and that people would be drawn to Christ. "Here we also see the power of this preaching of the Gospel," Luther wrote. "Beyond all the might and the power of the world and of all creatures, Christ proves His ability to draw the hearts of men to Himself through the Word alone. . ."<sup>23</sup> In a sermon preached on November 25, 1531, Luther acknowledged that from all outward appearances preaching seemed rather insignificant. However, he argued that, in fact, all else was insignificant in comparison to the preaching of God's word. He proclaimed:

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In the eyes of reason the preaching of the divine Word is unimpressive next to kings and princes. But what are princes or emperor, yes, the entire world, heaven, earth, and all creatures compared with the Word? They are dirt."<sup>24</sup>

Luther firmly believed that the preached word was nothing less than the *viva vox Dei*, and, thus, he had little time for those he called "wearisome, obnoxious spirits" who had little sense for spiritual matters. They asked, "What more than a fleeting breath are the words of a preacher?" Luther's only reply to them was that, "if they had ever experienced the power and effect of Baptism, of the Sacrament, or of the oral Word, they would indeed keep their mouths shut."<sup>25</sup> Luther emphasized the centrality of the oral word in the life and the work of the church. He said, "The church is not a pen-house but a mouth-house."<sup>26</sup> Again he said, "The Gospel should not be written but screamed."<sup>27</sup> It is generally agreed that Luther made very productive use of the medium of print to communicate his message, but it was his opinion that people were reached most effectively through the medium of the human voice. In a sermon on July 21, 1532, Luther preached against the idea that people could read the Word of God at home with as much profit as having to listen to a preacher. "Even if they do read it," Luther insisted, "it is not as fruitful or powerful as it is through a public preacher whom God has ordained to say and preach this."<sup>28</sup> Commenting on Malachi 2:7, "the lips of a priest guard knowledge," Luther further claimed:

The Word is the channel through which the Holy Spirit is given. This is a passage against those who hold the spoken Word in contempt. The lips are the public reservoirs of the church. In them alone is kept the Word of God. You see, unless the Word is preached publicly, it slips away. The more it is preached, the more firmly it is retained. Reading it is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error. Satan does not care a hoot for the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word.<sup>29</sup>

Much of Luther's optimism about the power of preaching was based upon his view that the preacher's words were really God's own words. Though to the observer and listener what was beheld was only a man, and what was heard was only a man's voice, the picture was not complete unless it was



understood that God Himself was preaching there.<sup>30</sup> Preaching as the power of God, therefore, implied that through the proclamation of God's word much could be accomplished. As an example of this power, Luther, in his commentary of 1526, holds up the prophet Jonah. Jonah is described as an object of comfort for all who administer the word, inasmuch as he, through a single sermon, brought about the conversion of the city of Nineveh, the mightiest kingdom of his day. This conversion, Luther argued, was as great a miracle as Jonah's rescue from the belly of a fish, if not an even greater miracle, "for just as the whale had to spew Jonah forth in obedience to the words of God, so Jonah by the Word of God also tore the city of Nineveh from the belly and jaws of the devil, that is, from sin and death."<sup>31</sup> This thought, no doubt, would have been an inspiration to preachers of the Reformation facing Ninevehs all their own.

Luther's emphasis upon the principle *praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei*, did not imply that the content of the sermon was not important or even of secondary significance.<sup>32</sup> To a preacher who could not proclaim God's grace, but who instead raised doubts in people's minds, Luther suggested that it was reasonable to say, "If I am to hear no other comfort from you than this, that I can never know how I stand with God, then be the devil's confessor, and be a preacher in the abyss of hell."<sup>33</sup> It was Luther's contention that foolish preachers actually did more to hinder the gospel than overt enemies of the gospel.<sup>34</sup> Especially early in his career, Luther deplored what he considered to be the woeful state of preaching in his day, and he held it responsible not only for an absence of understanding among the laity, but also for the many souls that were perishing.<sup>35</sup> In a sermon preached at Erfurt on his famous journey to Worms in 1521, Luther lamented, "The reason why the world is so utterly perverted and in error is that for a long time there have been no genuine preachers. There are perhaps three thousand priests, among whom one cannot find four good ones—God have mercy on us in this crying shame!"<sup>36</sup>

Early in the Reformation Luther maintained that the low state of preaching was largely responsible for what he perceived to be the decline of the church. He further insisted, however, that ignorance of the Scriptures was responsible for the low state of preaching. He was enraged at what was being

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passed off as preaching and realized that the oral word of God had to rely upon the written word of God. For that reason he translated the Bible into German and devoted much of his career as a theologian to the exposition of the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup> In his exposition of Psalm 68 Luther wrote, "Where God does not provide the message, a sermon is useless. . . For wherever God does not suggest the words, there is no sermon at all, or it is a vain and pernicious sermon."<sup>38</sup> As a minister of the word, a preacher was to be sure not only that he had a divine office but also that his doctrine was correct. "If I were not so sure of this that in my heart I could build upon it and depend upon it," Luther commented, "it would be much better for me to keep my mouth shut."<sup>39</sup> A preacher with this certainty, on the other hand, could with firm confidence declare at the conclusion of his sermon, "Haec dixit Dominus," following the example of the apostles and prophets.<sup>40</sup>

Luther was deeply concerned about preaching that hindered the gospel. Above all, he opposed what he considered to be misleading sermons which pointed people to their own merits before God rather than to the saving works of Christ. In his pastoral concern for people Luther also had some things to say about sermons that, although redemptive and cruciform in character, were unable to be easily understood. In order for the Reformation to succeed at the popular level it was necessary to preach to the people in such a manner that the gospel message could be grasped. The sermon as an instrument of reform had to be preached with hearers in mind.

In the well-known collection of many of Luther's after-dinner remarks known as the "Table Talk" (*Tischreden*), the reformer commented occasionally on this matter. Luther once said to his companions, "In my preaching I take pains to treat a verse of Scripture, to stick to it, and so to instruct the people that they can say, 'That's what the sermon was about.'"<sup>41</sup> When describing the model preacher, however, Luther was much more apt to point to the example of Christ than to his own sermons. For example, he states, "When Christ preached He proceeded quickly to a parable and spoke about sheep, shepherds, wolves, vineyards, fig trees, seeds, fields, plowing. The poor lay people were able to comprehend these things."<sup>42</sup>

The example of the preaching of Jesus was not wasted on Luther; he treated his texts with his hearers' interests at

heart.<sup>43</sup> He preached on the nativity from the point of view of Mary and on the Epiphany lesson of the twelve-year old Jesus in the temple from the viewpoint of the anxious parents, because in his congregation there were young women who knew what it meant to give birth in a cold house and there were parents who felt guilt over the neglect of their children.<sup>44</sup> What Luther said about his efforts at translating, no doubt, also applied to his preaching: "We must inquire about this of the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly."<sup>45</sup> These remarks of Luther summarize his insistence that preaching be understood:

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 here 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. . .we preach in public 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 common people might understand. Good God, there are sixteen-year-old girls, women, and farmers in the church, and they don't understand lofty matters.<sup>46</sup>

Preachers who had the ability to bring the gospel to the people in an understandable manner were much needed, and Luther was earnest in encouraging men to prepare for this office. In fact, Luther even urged parents of young boys to prompt their sons along in this direction. In 1530 he published a message entitled "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School." The emphasis was upon the value of educating children, something often treated with derision in the sixteenth century, but within the sermon Luther once again expressed his high regard and optimism for the preaching office. Addressing parents of young boys, Luther wrote:

If you were sure that your son would accomplish even one of these works in a single human being, that he would make one blind man to see or one dead man to rise, snatch

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one soul from the devil or rescue one person from hell, or whatever else it might be, ought you not leap with utmost joy that with your money you are privileged to accomplish something so great in the sight of God? . . . Now just look at what your son does—not just one of these works but many, indeed, all of them.<sup>47</sup>

Whether or not reform of the church would be achieved on any large scale, Luther believed that individuals would be changed through the ministrations of the incumbent of the office of preaching. Of course, the preacher would need to be prepared to proclaim the promises of the gospel, and in such a manner that they might be readily understood, but in theory popular, evangelical reform waited only upon preachers with popular, evangelical sermons. This assertion might create the impression that in Luther's estimation good gospel preaching would enable the reformers to implement their full program with very little obstruction. Such, however, was not the case, and more needs to be added before a clearer picture comes into view. The theoretical possibilities must be seen in the light of practical accomplishments.

In his book, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young to the German Reformation*, Gerald Strauss has sparked considerable discussion among Reformation scholars by asserting that the reformers' efforts to indoctrinate through catechesis were mainly ineffectual. Some of the evidence that he cites to support this conclusion includes many of Luther's own rather negative assessments of the progress of reform.<sup>48</sup> Luther made similarly negative observations about popular reactions to preachers and about the low impact which their preaching seemed to have. The gospel was not producing the fruit for which he had hoped. At one point Luther observed: "Many a man listens to sermons for three or four years and does not retain enough to give a single answer concerning his faith."<sup>49</sup> He complained that people left church no wiser than when they came in because all they did once they were inside was sleep and snore.<sup>50</sup> They might sometimes prick up their ears to hear clever stories, but "the common people sleep and cough when the article of justification is preached."<sup>51</sup>

In a sermon preached in 1532 on John 7:37, "if anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink," Luther reflected upon a change of attitude which he perceived among the people. Whereas only

twelve or fifteen years before that time the people were thirsty for the gospel of Christ and joyfully thanked God that they now had water to drink, by this time they were sated and had already had their fill.<sup>52</sup> This change was something Luther lamented to the end of his days. As a matter of fact, in Luther's final sermon, preached at Eisleben only a few days before his death, he echoed much the same theme:

In times past we would have run to the end of the world if we had known a place where we could hear God speak. . . "Oh," people say, "what is that? After all, there is preaching every day, often many times every day, so that we soon grow weary of it. What do we get out of it?"<sup>53</sup>

Weariness of hearing preaching was accompanied by declining support of preachers—not only moral support, but also financial support. Luther considered it nothing less than contempt for the gospel that people would amass everything for themselves in their extreme greed while allowing their ministers to die of starvation.<sup>54</sup> In his commentary on Isaiah Luther compared the predicament of preachers with that of the prophets who had to endure the ridicule of contemptuous people. He wrote:

All the country folk and the common people laugh at and deride the preachers by not giving them food and clothing, and people say they even mock those whom they ought to provide for, as we see today. They say, "we do not need a pastor," and the prophets and godly appear stupid to them. They point their fingers at them and disparage them. But one day it will rain mud.<sup>55</sup>

Asserting that it would one day "rain mud" was Luther's way of warning that ingratitude toward the gospel and its messengers would result in certain retribution. He often insisted that the gospel would be taken away from them if the German people continued to resist it so shamefully. One day, he predicted, there would be no more faithful preachers to be found. More than once he threatened to quit preaching himself, though he was not at all sure that the people would even mind. He wrote, "Thus, people today also say of me, Dr. Martin Luther: 'If he does not care to preach, let him stop. We have his books. Just begone! Go to the devil!'"<sup>56</sup> Often he would have been more than happy to oblige saying, "I would rather be stretched on a wheel or carry stones than preach one

sermon."<sup>57</sup> There was one point when he did quit briefly. Following his sermon of January 1, 1530, Luther announced his resolve to preach no longer to the St. Mary's congregation in Wittenberg because the people despised the gospel. He said, "I would rather preach to mad dogs, for my preaching shows no effect among you, and it only makes me weary."<sup>58</sup> His expressed intention was to confine himself to his classroom lectures and leave the preaching responsibility to Bugenhagen, the pastor of St. Mary's Church. However, within a few weeks Luther was back in the pulpit.

Luther always returned to the pulpit because he believed it was his office. If it were not for God's own order and institution, Luther insisted, "I would not want to preach another sermon to the end of my days."<sup>59</sup> As mentioned above, Luther did continue to preach to the end of his days. But the optimism he held about what could be done through preaching was always restrained by the reality of what was or, indeed, was not actually being accomplished. Theoretically he believed that the sermon could be a vital and useful instrument of reform, but in practice its impact often seemed minimal at best. He reconciled himself to the fact that no preacher would be able to remove or change all that was wrong with the church.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, he still held out hope and encouraged fellow preachers to believe that they were not preaching in a void even though "barely two listened to their sermons."<sup>61</sup> He compared their predicament to a fire that could not be controlled or extinguished and said that their task was to try to rescue a few. Luther would not quit and he urged others not to give up either:

For one should not quit simply because so few are changed for the better in hearing the preaching of the gospel. But do what Christ did: He rescued the elect and left the rest behind. This is what the apostles did also. It will not be better for you.<sup>62</sup>

Neither, it seems, was it any better for Luther. The sermon, for all of its promise and all of its promises, was reaching only the few rather than the many. Luther seemed to derive consolation from the fact that it reached any at all.

## ENDNOTES

1. For a more complete analysis of means that were used to spread ideas in the oral culture of the Reformation period see Robert Scribner, "Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas," *History of European Ideas*, 5 (1984), pp. 237-256. Along with preaching Scribner assesses the role of discussion groups, kinship connections, ballads and hymns, and other forms of oral communication in transmitting ideas.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
4. Richard Lischer, "Luther and Contemporary Preaching: Narrative and Anthropology," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 36 (1983), p. 487.
5. Elmer C. Kiessling, *The Early Sermons of Martin Luther and Their Relation to the Pre-Reformation Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), p. 55.
6. For a concise description of the various problems involving the transmission of texts of Luther's sermons see Lowell C. Green, "Justification in Luther's Preaching on Luke 18:9-14," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 43 (1973), pp. 732-734.
7. *Luther's Works: American Edition*, ed. Jarislav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955 ff.), volume 54, p. 214. Citations from this translation will henceforth be indicated by *LW* together with volume and page number.
8. *LW*, 54, p. 213.
9. Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983) p. 52.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
11. Green, p. 734.
12. Harold J. Grimm, "The Human Element in Luther's Sermons," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 49 (1958), p. 50.
13. Scribner, p. 238. Scribner also provides more background on this matter, including a social, economic, and educational background sketch of the Reformation preacher in his article "Practice and Principle in the German Town: Preachers and People," in *Reformation Principle and Practice*, ed. Peter N. Brooks (London, 1980), pp. 95-117.

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1. Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 39.
  5. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.
  6. Scribner, "Oral Culture," p. 238.
  7. *LW*, 13, p. 64.
  8. *LW*, 13, p. 65.
  9. *LW*, 23, p. 175.
  20. Scribner, p. 100.
  21. *LW*, 26, p. 18.
  22. *LW*, 24, p. 170.
  23. *LW*, 13, p. 291.
  24. *LW*, 23, pp. 388-389.
  25. *LW*, 24, p. 109.
  26. *LW*, Companion Volume, p. 63.
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 64, n. 66.
  29. *LW*, 18, p. 401.
  30. *LW*, 22, p. 526.
  31. *LW*, 19, p. 37.
  32. See Heiko A. Oberman, "Preaching and the Reformation," *Theology Today*, 18 (1962), pp. 27ff. Oberman argues that, while preachers of the Reformation held to an essentially *ex opere operato* view of the preached word (that, when preached by properly ordained ministers, it was *ipso facto* effective), it was presupposed that the content of the sermon would be consistent with the Scriptures.
  33. *LW*, 24, p. 218.
  34. *LW*, 15, p. 66.
  35. *LW*, 44, pp. 55-58.
  36. *LW*, 52, pp. 63-64.
  37. *LW*, Companion Volume, pp. 68-69.
  38. *LW*, 13, p. 12.
  39. *LW*, 12, p. 186.
  40. *LW*, 41, p. 216.



41. *LW*, 54, p. 160.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
43. For a good account of Luther's ability to make biblical preaching contemporary see Lischer, pp. 487-504.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 491.
45. *LW*, 35, p. 189.
46. *LW*, 35, p. 235; p. 383.
47. *LW*, 46, p. 225.
48. Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young to the German Reformation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). See also Gerald Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation," *Past and Present*, 67 (1975), pp. 30-63. For a reply to the Strauss thesis see James Kittleson, "Successes and Failures in the German Reformation: The Report from Strasbourg," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 73 (1982), pp. 153-174.
49. *LW*, 53, p. 67.
50. *LW*, 51, p. 45.
51. Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 3 volumes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 1115.
52. *LW*, 23, p. 269.
53. *LW*, 51, p. 390.
54. *LW*, 17, p. 343. For more on the economic position of pastors during this time see Susan Korant-Nunn, *Luther's Pastors: The Reformation in the Ernestine Countryside* (1979), pp. 38-52.
55. *LW*, 17, p. 291.
56. *LW*, 23, p. 264.
57. *LW*, 51, p. 222.
58. *LW*, 17, pp. 128-129, n.6.
59. *LW*, 22, p. 372.
60. *LW*, 7, p. 364.
61. *LW*, 16, p. 204.
62. *LW*, 15, p. 124.