Study Notes for on *Luther on Vocation* by Gustaf Wingren

I. Chapter 1: "Earth and Heaven" (1-77)

1. The Earthly Kingdom

   A. *Vocatio* has a variety of meanings:

   - The proclamation of the gospel through which human beings are called to be children of God.
   - The work which each does as a farmer, craftsman, etc. See I Corinthians 7:20.
   - Call to the office of preaching.

   B. *Beruf*

   - "As far as we can determine Luther does not use *Beruf* or *vocatio* in reference to the work of a non-Christian. All have station (*Stand*) and office; but *Beruf* is the Christian's earthly or spiritual work, not vocation in any other sense" (2).
   - *Stand* is one's station in life. These stations are external and are so arranged to serve others. "It is only before God, i.e., in heaven, that the individual stands alone. In the earthly realm man always stands in relatione, always bound to another. From this it is clear that every Christian occupies a multitude of offices at the same time, not just one: the same man is, for instance, father of his children, husband of his wife, master of his servants, and office holder in the town hall" (5).
   - The stations do not effect change or transformation of the human heart. This happens only *coram deo*. The stations rather sustain and preserve creation. "Even persons who have not taken the gospel to their hearts serve God's mission, though they be unaware thereof, by the very fact that they perform the outer functions of their respective stations" (7).
   - It is within the station that the rightness of the action is determined. For example, an individual must not kill. Yet the executioner does the work of God has he carries out the death sentence.
   - God works through means: "Even though a father is an instrument of procreation, God himself is the source and author of life" (9).
   - "God himself will milk the cows through him whose vocation that is. He who engages in the lowliness of his work performs God's work, be he lad or king. To give one's office proper care is not selfishness. Devotion to office is devotion to love, because it is by God's own ordering that the work of the office is always dedicated to the well-being of one's neighbor. Care for one's office is, in its very frame of reference on earth, participation in God's own care for human beings" (9).
   - Vocation belongs to heaven, not earth. Vocation is not our reaching up to God but reaching out to the neighbor in creation.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven
"The work of Christ is victory over the law in any form: good works lead to salvation by neither one route or the other. The conscience alone, through faith in the work of Christ, is freed from a false faith. Christ frees neither the hand from its work nor the body from its office. The hand, the body, and their vocation belong to earth. There is no redemption in that, but that is not the idea. The purpose is that one's neighbor be served. Conscience rests in faith in God, and does nothing that contributes to salvation; but the hands serve in the vocation which is God's downward-reaching work, for the well-being of men. From the viewpoint of faith, vocation has no relevance" (11).

The Christian is not bound to a particular station for salvation. He or she lives in the freedom of faith.

Before God a man is simply a man. Before the world he occupies a particular office or station. "Faith's kingdom is a realm in which all are alike; but vocation in the world is full of grades and differences" (13).

Equality in heaven does not translate into equality on earth. "What makes the difference on earth is the structure of many offices, with their respective works. But in heaven all are alike. There all simply receive, and receive alike, the grace of God. Thus equality in the heavenly kingdom depends only on the fact that it is the kingdom of Christ, ruled by a divine gift, the gospel, not the law" (13).

To draw works before God in the kingdom of heaven disrupts both the heavenly and the earthly realms.

Earth and heaven each has its own kind of righteousness. Luther: "So these things ought to be noted: that you place the gospel in heaven and the law on earth; that you call the righteousness of the gospel heavenly and divine, and the righteousness of the law earthly and human" (15).

Freedom of the will applies only to the earthly realm, the things that are below man. Before God the will is only enslaved. "Free will thus exists before God only as evil" (16).

The earthly and heavenly kingdoms correspond to the two kinds of righteousness. "On earth we receive from God gifts which are transitory; but in the heavenly kingdom we receive God himself, who never passes away" (19).

"Life based on civil righteousness is of such character that it must always seek to escape death, which brings such righteousness to naught" (21).

The righteousness of faith anticipates death with hope and awaits it for in our dying Christ's resurrection will be fully realized in us. "Thus faith stands between two resurrections, the resurrection of Christ, which has already taken place, and our own resurrection, which lies before us" (22).

3. The Spiritual and the Earthly Governments

Luther often speaks of two "hierarchies" within early government: the political (secular government) and the domestic (family).

Law and the sword belong together. Earthly government is not ruled by the gospel but the law in its usus civilis. "Vocation falls within the kingdom of the law" (26).

The Christian simultaneously lives his life "with the Spirit in the paradise of grace and peace, and with the flesh in the world of toil and cross" (26). In the Galatians
commentary, Luther writes: "So as the law holds sway in the flesh, the promise rules most graciously in the conscience. When you have thus recognized the proper sphere of each, you walk most securely with the promise in heaven and the law on earth, with the Spirit of grace and peace in Paradise and in the body of works and the cross on earth" (26).

- Both governments are expressions of God's love. God gives good gifts through each of these realms.
- Vocation is the place of the cross. "In one's vocation there is a cross - for prince, husband, father, daughter, for everyone - and on this cross the old human nature is to be crucified" (29). Through the cross of vocation the neighbor is benefited. Luther: "I ask where our suffering is to be found. I shall soon tell you: Run through all stations of life, from the lowest to the highest, and you will find what you are looking for" (29).
- Suffering is not sought after nor is it self-chosen. It will come to those who are faithful in their callings. Luther: "Therefore do not worry where you can find suffering. That is not necessary. Simply live as an earnest Christian, preacher, pastor, burgher, farmer, noble, lord, and fulfill your office faithfully and loyally. Let the devil worry where he can find a piece of wood out of which to make a cross for you, and the world where it can find a branch out of which to make a scourge for your hide" (30).
- Vocation is a matter of both life and death: "The Christian is crucified by the law in his vocation, under earthly government; and he arises through the gospel, in the church under the spiritual government. Both of these take place on earth; but both are directed toward heaven. Through both the individual is incorporated into Christ; through vocation, into his cross, and through the church, into his resurrection. Christ is the king in heaven, in the kingdom beyond death. That is the destination toward which a Christian is to be carried along. Baptism is therefore completely fulfilled only in death" (30-31).
- Luther observes that when God wants to save a monk, he compels him to become occupied with earthly things.
- Works empty us and compel us to faith in Christ alone. "Through earthly and spiritual government God drives men to good works and faith" (36).
- "In earthly orders God and the devil are both actively at work. Therefore these orders never stand still. They are always corrupted because men depart from God's will. But they are improved and reformed anew by God, among other things, in true Christian faith and love" (37).

• "As man is crucified by the law, through the cross of his vocation, he is made alive and raised through faith in the gospel. As works go forth toward one's neighbor and the world, faith reaches up to God in heaven. As works have this life in view, faith stretches forward to life after death, away from the present" (38).

• Luther: "There is nothing higher or more inward in character than faith; for it clings to God's Word and is stripped naked of everything which is not the Word of God" (39).

• "When faith works in love, it descends and is incarnated, as God became man in Christ" (41).

• "Love born of faith and the Spirit effects a complete breakthrough of the boundary between the two kingdoms, the wall of partition between heaven and earth, as did God's incarnation in Christ" (46)

• The need of the neighbor determines how love acts. Such love is concerned with the neighbor's well-being and not one's own salvation.

• Luther exhibits shyness in describing what such love looks like. It cannot be construed in advance.

5. Cross and Desperation

• Obedience to God's command against the desire of the heart, forced friendliness and faithfulness in work that we do grudgingly are not works of love.

• "Faith, or the conscience, is in heaven; and since not law but gospel rules in heaven, no sin is there. There is sin only where there is law. On earth law and worldly government rule; and there too is the body of man which must be crucified with its sinful lusts" (51).

• The restoration of the sinner is finally eschatological. In this life, the struggle against the effects of sin is ongoing. Luther: "All things are forgiven through grace, but all things are not yet corrected by that gift" (51).

• The Gospel rescues from despair over the sin that remains in the life of the believer: "Even while men contends on earth with a specific outer sin which is hard for him to master, that sin is forgiven in heaven, before God. The battles lies outside of the conscience and leaves faith undisturbed, since it rest secure in God's promise. Sin is resisted in such a way that man is not cast into despair; the outcome is certain, through God's word about eternal life after death. If a man cannot believe that the sin with which he struggles is forgiven, the law has risen up in the conscience (that is, in heaven) and faith gives way to works before God. Then eternal life does not depend on God's promise but on man's progress in the battle against his sin. That is desperation" (52).

• In his earlier writings, Luther still sees mortification as something that we do. In his later writings, he sees the cross as not self-chosen death but death that God

We conclude, Therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor (AE 31:371).
lays on us. "The cross is not to be chosen by us; it is laid upon us by God, i.e. the cross comes to us uninvoked in our vocation" (53).

- In the mature Luther, "vocation is the place where God himself lets the cross take form" (54).
- "In daily activity baptism is realized as a daily repentance. Thus the Christian is both old and new man, not only in relation to God's judgment, God's forgiveness, but also in his encounter with vocation and neighbor" (55).
- Vocation is the area of death to the old man: "We are disciplined in vocation, in labor, and in the demands of social life. Vocation is earthly, just as shockingly earthly as the humanity of Christ, apparently so void of all divinity. In the crucifixion of Christ the divine nature was only hidden, not absent; it was present in the lowly form of love for robbers and soldiers" (57).
- The Christian lives in this life in vocation where he is crucified in anticipation of the resurrection to the life everlasting.
- "Grace would not be grace without prior terror of conscience" (60).
- The function of the law as preserver of order on earth is subordinate to its theological work of disturbing man and driving him to the gospel (62).

6. Relationship with God, Vocation

- "Ministry, marriage, and earthly government" are the three hierarchies that are the three "holy orders and true institutions, established by God" (63).
- There is nothing within these three stations that will save man. "Faith and love are above all stations" (65).
- "The hard, legalistic character of vocation, the cross, appears to be only in relation to the old man. For him the same external relations, free and neutral for faith, are filled with constraint, bearers of the law, laden with the wrath of God" (65).
- "The freedom of faith does not dissolve vocation. On the contrary, it sustains it and gives it new life" (66).
- The Christian is both old and new man at one and the same time. This is so much the case that "unwillingness and joy, antagonism and love are so intertwined that God alone sees which is which" (68).
- Restraint and renewal are tow activities that exist side by side as works of God.
- God's providence gives us the neighbor that we have. The carpenter's tools are the vehicle of God's call: "Use us for the well-being of your neighbor" (72).
- Sanctification is hidden in the lowly and ordinary tasks given in our vocation.
- "Faith in God and willingness to serve one's neighbor constitute an organic unity" (74).
- Vocation is not the gospel.

II. Chapter 2: God and the Devil (78-161)

1. The Concept of Government

- Subjection to God or subjection to the devil are the only two alternatives.
• Government does not derive from the will of the people but from God. "The authority of the government is not derived from the fact that it gives expression to a people's genius, but from the fact that God has ordained it to thwart the devil" (79).
• The law works coercion. Thus worldly government operates through law and the sword.
• Life in this world is lived in the struggle between God and the devil. "God wishes man to be saved from the power of sin, and the devil wants man kept in it. Out of that invisible combat, which goes on even when man does not think of it, comes all the agony and anxiety that enter into human life. A creature must know suffering when two powers lay hold of it, struggling to 'win and possess it'….Therefore Luther says that man's cross and despair come from both God and the devil" (80).
• God's alien or "strange" work uses the instrumentality of the devil. Yet the devil remains God's enemy. We are to pray and struggle against him.
• "Prayer is a door through which God enters into vocation in transforming action against the devil" (84).
• The devil wars against both the earthly and heavenly kingdoms.
• "The combat between God and Satan is fought over persons. Offices are on God's side, but persons who occupy offices can belong to God or to the devil, which makes an enormous difference in the way the duties of office are met" (85).
• The devil's attacks consist of temptations to disbelief and mistrust of God and so "to misuse a good and divine office, to mismanage one's vocation"(87).
• Doubt and despair in vocation are evidence that you are in your proper position. Luther: "Take it as a sure sign that you are in a right station which is pleasing to God, if you feel disgust and dislike for it. God is certainly at hand. He permits the evil spirit to attack and tempt you, to see whether you are fickle or steadfast, or not; and he provides an opportunity for your faith to fight and grow stronger" (88).
• The devil works treachery as he attempts to draw people away from their vocation to self-chosen works. He incites tyranny and anarchy.
• Satan's most pernicious attack is on the faithful preacher. "The devil makes especially severe attacks on him who fills the office of the ministry according to God's Word. For through correct preaching the devil is unmasked, so that people understand that what is called holy is the work of the devil, and what is called earthly is God's work by which evil is checked. Therefore he who preaches God's Word faithfully threatens to bring to naught the very center of the devil's activity, religious works" (91).
• "Man's office gives tangible direction about works, but 'faith and love' modify the work done in the office. Apart from relation with God, man has an office, established by God, but not a vocation" (91).
• Earthly rulers are held in check by God Himself. Christians must suffer under such tyrants. "Under a tyrannical sovereign a Christian can only suffer; revolt is a sin. Within God's order there is no power which may legitimately punish a tyrannical sovereign ruler. Here God himself stands guard and reaches in from outside the order…..God can foster a revolt, using that which is clearly sin on the
part of men to punish the sin of the ruler, and he can arouse a foreign ruler to make war against the tyrant” (92).

2. The Concept of Freedom

- The conscience is free through the Gospel; the body is bound through the law.
- The law rules on earth; the Gospel reigns in heaven.
- "The gospel is something which man hears and receives, not something which he does. But this hearing and receiving, this 'freedom' is identical with helplessness before God, identical with the bound will" (94).
- Luther's point of departure for his paradoxical understanding of freedom/servitude is I Corinthians 9:20-22.
- There is freedom in vocation to do or not to do according to the need of the neighbor. "Life according to vocation never becomes fixed or rigid" (96).
- Luther: "Although the gospel may not subject us to the decisions of Moses, nevertheless it does not free us completely from obedience to all laws of society; rather in this bodily life it subjects us to the laws of the regime in which we live" (99).
- "The unchanging element in vocation lies in the office itself, which reaches out as a barrier against the old man, inasmuch as the old man is not free to 'do and to omit'; he is simply bound to obey. For if the old man deviates from the requirements and substitutes something new, the new will be worse and more injurious to others than the accustomed" (99).
- As God is hidden, human beings can oppose God. "Work hostile to God can take the form of negligence in vocation, indifference, and idleness, all of which are barriers in the way of God's ongoing creation and care for human beings, that divine care which aims to attain its purpose through the proper use of every office"(100).
- The devil makes us of religion as he misleads human beings into false thinking. "Misled by this perverted religion, man turns freedom and bondage upside down. He thinks himself bound where he is free, and considers himself free where he is bound" (100). Luther sees monasticism as a primary example of this perversion. Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* is an attack against the theological basis of this perversion. Free will represents hostility to God.
- Man between God and the devil: "On the one hand, when man is bound by God in faith, he has no free will before God. He has only freedom in outer matters to do good on earth against the devil. On the other hand, when in false belief man is bound by the devil, he abandons his freedom in outer matters and, a slave to the law there, turns his free will upward before God, making his freedom of will evil, a tool in the hand of the devil, against God" (105).
- "In God's power man's entire status is called freedom; in the devil's power it is called thralldom" (106).
- In both unbelief and faith the human will is bound in its relation to God: "So in both cases his will is bound in relation to God, i.e., he has no choice. He has to take God as he is and suffer him" (107).
3. The Confusion of the Kingdoms

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- The kingdoms are mingled when law is shifted from earth to heaven and the Gospel from heaven to earth.
- "When man believes, there is no law in the conscience but Christ. Therefore works to do aim at supporting faith or the religious life. Faith is already complete and needs no support from any Christian living, for Christ is perfect. Works have an utterly different significance. One's neighbor does not possess all he needs; he is in need of one thing and another, of counsel and strength. There is a task for good works, a reaching down to the earthly situation" (109).
- "When law becomes the way of salvation, it goes against God's commandment and order" (110).
- "It is vital for each to limit himself to his own vocation and remain in it. He must not forsake it, as do both revolting subjects and tyrannical princes. Even those who are mightiest on earth must, according to the will of God, stop before the Word" (114).
- "For his part, a churchman must abstain from all earthly weapons, from all coercion and lust for worldly power; for the Word is to use no outward force. The preacher who goes forward, simply trusting in the inner, invisible power of the preached Word, is thus one who is faithful to his vocation" (114).
- "In the law's spiritual use God himself lets the law act on the conscience. The anxiety which God awakens is the law's upreach to heaven" (115).
- God uses people as instruments of His wrath as in the case of the pagan sailors who tossed Jonah overboard. They are God's masks - *larvae Dei*.
- "Faith demands that every moment and action be accepted in faith and borne in faith; the works are to be done in faith. Faith is severely tested when in outer circumstances God brings us suffering and troubles, such as hatred and slander by our enemies, sickness, and other bitter misfortunes" (118). Desperation results when such happenings are not received in faith.
- "Cross and despair come together in vocation, and drive a man to prayer" (119).
- Love is the fulfillment of vocation.
- "Temptation in vocation is the devil's attempt to get man out of his vocation" (121).
- Both God and the devil hid themselves behind things. The devil conceals himself in order to ensnare man. God hides Himself so that He might save and sustain man. Only the Word can unveil the devil for the liar and murderer that he is. "Only the Word uncovers him, so that he cannot hide himself" (122).
• Faith and vocation go together. Luther: "As long as he (e.g. a shoemaker or a blacksmith) clings to these two, to the Word of faith toward God by which the heart is made clean, and to the word of understanding which teaches him how to act toward his neighbor in his station in life, everything is clean to him, even if with his hands and his whole body he deals with nothing but dirt" (123).
• "A Christian lives in vocation and in the church. Vocation is the concrete form of the law, and the church is the concrete form of the gospel" (123).

4. Co-operation

• Luther conceives of man as a "fellow worker" with God in the same sense that a serf has the ability to use his hands and feet without his lord determining every movement.
• "Co-operation takes place in vocation, which belongs on earth, not in heaven; it is pointed toward one's neighbor, not toward God" (124).
• Before God, the Christian is ever passive. Before the neighbor, He is always active. Vertically, we are receptive. Horizontally, we are in motion as we the channels for the giving of God's gifts to the neighbor.
• "Man has no ability of his own, independent of God, with which he can act before God. This power would be from the devil; it would not mean freedom. On the other hand, Paul co-operates with God when he instructs the Corinthians or speaks in the Spirit of God. Even the ungodly co-operate with God, for God alone has made all things and set all in motion. But when God works through the ungodly, he works without his Spirit" (131).
• God gives good gifts even through evil people even though whatever is not of faith is sin.
• "Turning to God in prayer for help without using the external means which God has given is tempting God…But not to turn to God in prayer for help in vocation, when all outward available possibilities are exhausted, is to blaspheme God and treat his promises as lies" (136).
• "The concepts of co-operation and masks of God belong together. Natural occurrences such as storms and thunder, or sun, or rich harvests are also God's masks, behind which his wrath and love are hid" (137).
• "Instead of coming in uncovered majesty when he gives a gift to man, God places a mask before his face" (138).
• "One who does not have the gospel cannot differentiate between God and his mask" (140).

5. Regeneration

• The law cannot be quantified in such a way that one is through with it. "Accordingly the law constantly requires something new and unexpected. One is never through with it. It always has a character that tries man" (143).
• While an office or station is good as the creation of God, it can be rendered corrupt by an evil person. The corruption is not in the office per se but in the misuse of the office.
• "Where works and external behavior are concerned it is not merely difficult to make a sharp demarcation between Christians and non-Christians; it is erroneous" (151).
• "God the Creator acts through both the talent given in natural birth and the love of the new man given by new birth in the Word" (153).
• For Luther, actual justice is found not simply enshrined in a legal code but is a "joint product of co-operation of the law book and the judge in the setting of the ongoing legal procedure, where justice is being administered" (154).
• The "superman" or "heroic man" may be of God or the devil.
• Fairness and moderation are to characterize those who hold office. "Fairness opens a rift in the law and lets mercy trickle in" (159).
• "I cannot turn my neighbor away without thereby turning God away - and that is falling into unbelief. In faith all good works are encompassed" (161).

III. Chapter 3: Man (162-251)

1. His Situation

• "Luther's concept of the world and his view of life are characterized by the dualism between God and Satan on the one hand, and on the other, eschatology or the tension between earth and heaven" (162).
• "When evil has captured a man, no animal can vie with him in fiendishness; he is leavened throughout with Satan. But a human being is also the only creature in which the miracle of being born again or made new can take place. Every animal is created by God; but he does not make a new creature of it. The new man is a new creation, with no counterpart in nature. He is a new creature in conflict with the powers of sin and death, in conflict against the devil" (163).
• Creation and eschatology belong together in Luther's doctrine of vocation.
• Dualism of human existence for Luther is seen in light of the law/gospel distinction:

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• "The boundary between the two kingdoms is constantly broken through in the conflict between God and the devil" (169).
• The pattern of Christian love is that of a love willing to be lost on the unworthy and ungrateful.
• "The aspect of the work of one's vocation that labor is given forth and lost is very important; and it is a great temptation for the individual as he confronts his vocation. He is tempted to do something other than his vocation, something that has more meaning and receives some measure of recognition from the world" (171).
2. **Vocation - Imitation**

- "Luther places vocation in sharp contrast with imitation" (171).
- "He whose conduct copies some pattern seeks to act independently not only of time, but also of place" (172).
- "Christ is not to be imitated by us, but rather to be accepted in faith, because Christ also had his special office for the salvation of man, an office which no one else has" (172).
- There is an equity of being but a diversity of activities and functions. "Accordingly differences in the earthly realm do not imply factions, for all orders and vocations are bound together from above. Behind all of them is a common point from which they issue - God - and they are all 'masks' of his. From this common center their functions are directed outward. Man's co-operation with God is not directed towards God, but outward, toward his neighbor" (180).
- "The sign of a right ethics is not found in a certain fixed outward behavior, but in the ability to meet, in calmness and faith, whatever may come" (181).
- Only in the resurrection will our eyes be opened to see rightly.
- "But since vocation bars imitation, it involves loneliness and despair for him who faces his task without a single pattern to follow" (184).
- Our trust is not in men, living or dead, whom we are to imitate but in God alone.

3. **Prayer**

- Luther urges daily prayer (see his morning and evening prayers in the Small Catechism) as well as prayers in times of desperate need.
- "Prayer and faith become identical. For one in need and lowliness of spirit to expect, to await, to be receptive to what God does, while one endures injustice without existence, that is the work of faith, and such faith is in itself prayer" (187).
- "In him who prays a special work of God occurs, a work which subsequently finds expression outwardly" (188).
- Prayer is an expression of the First Commandment. Vocation drives us to prayer.
- "Inwardly one must always be passive and prayerful, while the body labors" (192).
- Note Luther's exposition of Psalm 127. "When a person has spent his strength in work, and can do no more, he leaves in God's hands the undertaking in which he is engaged, and God enters in and gives the matter the advance and outcome which is best and most needed" (194).
- Faith imposes no conditions on God as to how He must answer prayer.

4. **God's Commandment**

- Only in light of the Gospel does man understand what God actually commands-\textit{mandatum Dei}. 

Reflect on the place of prayer in your preparation for the Ministry. See Doberstein, \textit{The Minister's Prayer Book}, 287-289 for Luther's exposition of prayer as the "right way to study theology."
"Legalism is a continual flight from God's command. Faith is a way toward understanding God's command" (200).

"Faith receives a gift which is not to be 'used' toward something else; it is simply a gift, a promise of participation in Christ's eternal kingdom. Faith is joy at a gift which man received without becoming as good as he hoped (the gospel is for sinners). When he also receives God's commandment, he heeds it, not that he may thereby become a better person - that would still be bondage to the law - but simply because God commands it. Such 'single' obedience is the work of the Holy Spirit" (200).

"What love of my neighbor will ask of me next year, I cannot know this year....Precisely for the neighbor's sake, one ought to be free to do what becomes necessary, free from vows (the law), to obey the command" (201).

"For every man his neighbor is a moving reality to which God's command is joined, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Without his having any choice, his neighbor is given to him" (203).

"Christian love is not an untroubled spontaneity in the psychological sense. The devil always has a hold on man as long as he lives; and the divine love has to make its way through a sinful medium, in which it encounters obstacles and resistance. In every self-sacrificing act which man would do for his neighbor, the old man asks what the self will get from it. The old man is slack and hostile in the things the new man does gladly" (204).

"Complete change of occupation and work may come as a demand from which there is no escape. To be sure, anything like that is attended by uncertainty and peril, since God's will is veiled" (206).

Man is a medium "which receives from above and gives forth downward - like a vessel or a pipe" (207).

Luther makes a distinction between those who sin in doctrine and those who sin in life. Doctrine is complete because it is from God. Here no error can be tolerated. Life is from man and is weak and subject to failure. Here one must deal in gentleness.

"God's wrath is an instrument of his love" (211).

"We are in a dark world, yet God is not far away but near at hand. Therefore it is a joy for man's action to be under commandment. Man does not have to grope, for he has a vocation" (211).

In the heavenly kingdom, "the old man, with his resistance to God's will, is no longer to be found. There is only the new, spiritual, risen man. There Christ can be Lord without commands" (212).

5. Stuendelein

"Luther's expression of 'the time' and 'the hour' are part of his general view of God's sovereignty and of man as 'fellow-worker' with God. In brief, they mean that man cannot determine the moment for an action, since everything happens according to God's will (this is one side, an expression of man's bondage before God)" (213).

Luther sees Ecclesiastes 3:1 as a direct contradiction of free will.
"Man is not to rack his brain about the future, but to live in the hour that has come. That is the same as living in faith, receptive to God, who is present now and has something he will do now" (214).

Luther: "For the best blessings are those which are not sought after, but which come to one as they are given" (223).

"God bestows his gifts on him who labors faithfully in his vocation and surrenders all attempt to determine the course of his life himself" (223).

"As gospel the Word of God impels man to faith, rather than to pious searching into God's plans; and as law the Word of God impels man to the work of his vocation. In the course of man's work in his vocation God's will is fulfilled step by step" (224).

"The double-sidedness of God's Word cannot be resolved by man's penetration behind the double Word to God himself; for man has nothing beyond the Word" (225).

In his exposition of Ecclesiastes 9:11, Luther introduces I Samuel 10:7 ("Do whatever your hand finds to do"). "Since the course of our life is shaped by factors beyond our own plans and ideas, we are to address ourselves to the present hour, to whatever is at hand, to whatever is waiting for me now and belongs to my vocation" (226).

Vocation is not for self-fulfillment, the achievement of one's own goals but for the service of the neighbor.

6. Hiddenness and Eschatology

Troubles and tribulations drive us closer to God; they benefit rather than harm us.

Faith lays hold of a future that will become apparent only in the resurrection. "Faith moves life's center from earth to heaven. When the center is moved, the burden that falls upon us on earth appears in another light: it now presents itself as a 'cross'" (235).

"In the gospel man possesses the power of Christ's resurrection. His simple occupation with his work on earth is to continue until death, and to be borne in faith. In that way one is really 'in Christ.' What is hard and burdensome is transformed into good" (235).

Luther: "This faith creates rest, satisfaction, and peace and dispels weariness. But where faith is lacking and man judges according to his own feelings, ideas, and perception, behold, weariness arises" (236).

"In Luther's view lack of faith is in itself an active thing, for there can be no neutrality between faith and unbelief, between God and the devil. The vacuum, where there is no faith, is filled by unbelief, and that is action against God" (237-238).

The Gospel acts in man's conscience to extinguish sin. The law acts in the body where it curbs and expels sin. "The gospel acts in man's conscience, and extinguishes sin; wherefore the new man has no sin. The law acts in the body, and there it does not at once efface sin, but drives sin out slowly. The old man thus retains his sin till the death of the body, and in the meantime he is disciplined by the law, cross, and suffering. Law and gospel both come from God, and for God
the two are one, a single reality. For man, however, the two cannot even appear to be in harmony until the old man is annihilated, that is, not at any time in this life, but only after the death of the body" (239).

- Anxiety and desperation have their "time." This "time" is brought to an end in the resurrection where Christ's triumph is made manifest and is so decisive forever. Faith then gives way to sight. Only then will the real harmony of law and gospel be seen.
- The fear regarding predestination does not arise in abstract speculation but in the daily life where one experiences defeat in the battle against sin.

The battle between God and the devil is fierce as the abandonment of Christ to the cross. "Christ did not escape the cross, and the Christian does not escape desperation. Hiddenness lies in the two facts that God's own Son suffered agony on the cross, and that no man escapes death, fearing and dying in uncertainty. These are simple facts, and in them is hiddenness. The hiddenness is resolved in clear light both in the resurrection of Christ, which is victory over hell and the devil and transition from earth to heaven, and in man's resurrection when death has been vanquished" (245).

- The Christian life is a life of hiddenness because of faith. Luther: "Thus he hides his eternal kindness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under unrighteousness. It is the supreme step of faith to believe him to be kind who saves so few and condemns so many" (247).

- Vocation is lived out in hiddenness under sin and death. "But when, after death and the resurrection, hiddenness ceases, the burden and labor in vocation also cease. Then earth's time will be past, the devil defeated, and the old man who is to be put to death has died. There 'offices' are to be more; and 'the law shall not rule up there.'"(248).

- Vocation finds its consummation eschatologically. The earthly realm and the sway of the law are past. The kingdom of Christ proclaimed in the gospel and received by faith is revealed in power as the devil is forever banished. The old man is forever dead and the new man lives forever in sinlessness.

- "The old man must bear vocation's cross as long as life on earth lasts and the battle against the devil continues. As long as he continues in his earthly vocation, there can be no end to the struggle. After death comes a new kingdom free from the cross; heaven has taken the place of earth, God has conquered the devil, and man has been raised from the dead. Then man's struggle is at an end" (250-251).

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What insights from *Luther on Vocation* have challenged you to think more deeply about your calling to faith and your aspirations for the pastoral office?