Introducing the Pastoral Luther

by TIMOTHY J. WENGERT

Martin Luther was, more than anything else, pastor and preacher for his Wittenberg flock. The forthcoming volume in Lutheran Quarterly Books will take soundings in that pastoral life from five different perspectives: its theological heart, its proclamation of the Living Word, its teaching ministry, its encounter with the people, and its social milieu. Most of its chapters first appeared in Lutheran Quarterly between 2002 and 2007.¹ Some articles on Luther’s pastoral side already were included in the first volume of collected essays on Luther’s theology and practice.² Between those two volumes, an outline of the pastoral Luther emerges—useful not only to scholars but also to parish pastors and others in ministry.

To repeat: Martin Luther was, more than anything else, a pastor and a preacher. This simple, almost innocuous commonplace holds one of the most important, yet virtually unexplored keys to understanding Luther’s impact on the history of the Christian church. Just how unexplored this topic is may be demonstrated by a recent, exhaustive handbook on Luther studies, edited by the respected German theologian, Albrecht Beutel.³ Next to chapters on Luther as monk, professor and reformer, one searches in vain for a single chapter on Luther as pastor, despite the fact that, next to his work in the lecture hall, more of Luther’s daily life in Wittenberg was taken up with pastoral duties than with anything else.

In a similar fashion, Luther’s biographers—from whom one would surely expect to find thorough discussions of this topic and attempts to integrate it fully into his life story—have consistently treated his parish work in Wittenberg as a sidelight, worthy in some cases of a separate chapter, perhaps, but only near the end of the work and as almost an aside. One notable exception to this lack of interest in the subject came with Gerhard Ebeling’s last major work on Luther, Luthers Seelsorge: Theologie in der Vielfalt der Lebenssituationen an seinen Briefen dargestellt (Luther’s Pastoral Care: Theology in the Variety of Life Situations, Depicted on the Basis of His Letters).⁴ This,
too, however, showed only a small slice of Luther’s broader pastoral work, since it focused on Luther’s correspondence. Nevertheless, at least it points us in the right direction.

It is not as if Luther’s own age did not recognize the importance of this topic. Of all the ways to excerpt Luther’s life and thought for the generation that followed him, Conrad Porta (1541–1584) chose a pastoral approach in his *Pastorale Lutheri*, first published in 1582 in Eisleben, where he was then the pastor at the church of Sts. Peter and Paul. The full title demonstrates Porta’s intent: to aid parish pastors. It reads: *A Pastoral Book of Luther: That Is, Helpful and Necessary Instruction Belonging to the Most Important Parts of the Holy Ministry and Correct Answers to Some Important Questions about Difficult Cases That May Occur in the Aforesaid Office. For Beginning Preachers and Church Ministers Collected from Both Editions of All of His Books Printed in Wittenberg and Jena, and Also from the One in Eisleben and from Other Writings.* It was republished in an expanded version in 1586 and 1591 and then six more times into the nineteenth century. Robert Kolb has shown that Porta offered a somewhat skewed version of Luther’s theology. Nevertheless, this volume stands as an important witness to the high regard for Luther’s *pastoral* ministry among Lutheran pastors and preachers of the late sixteenth century and beyond, especially given the peculiar neglect in modern Luther studies.

Although the topics in Porta’s book may not be all that helpful, especially since it reduces pastoral work to certain *loci communes* (commonplaces) using Philip Melanchthon’s famous method of systematizing Lutheran theology, nevertheless this work from the scholar who lived and worked where Luther was born and died does help to raise the central question of definition. What does it mean for us to call Luther a pastor? First and foremost, of course, we are talking about pastoral acts: baptizing, administering the Lord’s Supper, absolving sin (publicly or privately), visiting and comforting the sick and dying, instructing the young and ignorant, and—above all else—preaching. However, in Luther’s view pastoral actions are not effective *ex opere operato* (by mere performance of the rite) but involve delivering real promises to desperate people in
need of consolation and faith. Thus, for Luther, the pastorate is by definition always a matter of distinguishing law and gospel (that is, terrifying the comfortable and comforting the terrified). Moreover, this distinguishing takes place under the shadow of the cross: the Word itself, the pastor who delivers it, and the ones who receive it are weak and live by grace alone. At the same time, pastoral acts arise for Luther out of God’s gracious declaration justifying the ungodly, a Word received by faith alone. Furthermore, this declared righteousness must always stand over against the external righteousness of this world (justice) to which pastors also call their flocks, members who also live on earth as forgiven sinners. Thus, Luther conceived pastoral admonition and care (Seelsorge; literally, care of souls) as defining all aspects of pastoral ministry, rather than as a separate specialty of the pastor tied to therapy and personal well-being and separated from Word and sacrament. 8

**Becoming a Pastor**

The historical facts are quite simple. Luther was ordained in 1505 to be, using his later derogatory comments, a “Mass priest” or “sacrificer” (sacrificulus), since what was required of him after that time more than anything else was regular celebrations of (especially) private masses. 9 This did not make Luther a pastor. However, as he rose to prominence in his monastery, for example, being appointed sub-prior in 1512, 10 he became more and more involved in pastoral care for his fellow monks. (See, for example, his brilliant exposition concerning the joyous exchange of Christ’s righteousness for our sin in his letter to Georg Spenlein on 8 April 1516.) 11 At von Staupitz’s insistence and over Luther’s objections, this care included preaching to his Augustinian brothers. 12 Then, in 1514 he became an assistant to the ailing pastor at St. Mary’s, the city church in Wittenberg, where he remained a preacher and pastor until his death in 1546. 13

This pastoral concern may well be the chief instigation for the Reformer’s most famous work, the 95 Theses. As Luther fans the world over are already gearing up for the celebration in 2017 of 500th anniversary of their posting on 31 October 1517, too often the
celebrations will probably focus on Luther’s break with Rome or his Reformation breakthrough rather than on Luther’s own stated reason for the dispute: pastoral care for his flock in Wittenberg. In 1541 in his polemical writing against Duke Heinrich of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Wider Hans Worst, Luther looked back on the dispute from a quarter century later and specifically highlighted this pastoral motivation.

When many people from Wittenberg rushed over to Jüterbog and Zerbst for this indulgence and I . . . did not yet understand what indulgences really were (indeed no one knew at that time), I began tentatively to preach that one could probably do better and be more certain than by buying indulgences. I had held such a sermon against indulgences previously in the Castle Church and earned the disfavor of Duke Frederick [the Wise], because he loved his [All Saints’] foundation dearly [established to house relics to which was also attached a large indulgence]14. . . . In this regard, I was informed about how Tetzel had preached awful, horrendous things. . . .15

Instead, Luther’s reminiscence of the pastoral impetus for the 95 Theses (bad preaching and its effects on the people) accurately reflected the events of 1517, clearly expressed in the Theses’ cover letter that Luther wrote to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and dated 31 October. In it Luther called the bishop back to the task of overseeing the indulgence preachers and protecting the people from their exaggerated claims (“The first and only duty of all bishops is that the people learn the gospel and the love of Christ”), and he also expressed his own pastoral concern (“I regret deeply the false understanding [of the indulgence preachers’ sermons] among the people”).16 The 95 Theses themselves are similarly filled with pastoral concerns for the laity and the preaching of the gospel.17

The Literary Pastor

What if, instead of relegating Luther’s pastoral work to an appendix or ignoring it altogether, scholars approached the Reformer on the basis of his office as preacher and pastor in Wittenberg and integrated this overarching concern into descriptions of his biography
and theology? How might this affect our view of him and of his motivations for the various theological positions he took throughout his life? Even some of his most vituperative writings might now find a more appropriate explanation in a pastor's passion for his flock than simply in the ranting of a young heretic or the complaints of an old curmudgeon. What if, as Gerhard Ebeling rightly suspected in 1997, Luther's theology proceeded out of his regular encounter with God's Word and human need in prayer.

Clearly, some of Luther's most poignant writings (beyond those thousands of remarkable sermons) arose directly out of pastoral concerns, a fact demonstrated in a small selection of titles from through his career: *Fourteen Consolations for Those Who Labor and Are Burdened* (1520); *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* (1526); *Whether One May Flee from Deadly Pestilence* (1527); *A Simple Way to Pray for a Good Friend [Master Peter the Barber]* (1535); *A Comfort for Women with Whom Things Have Gone Awry during Childbirth* (1542). These titles, and many more could be added, show Luther at his pastoral best: dealing with specific spiritual problems and demonstrating how the gospel brings sufferers comfort and strength. In many of these and similar pamphlets, the polemical edge that predominates in other writings dissolved, as Luther concentrated on the immediate needs of the recipients: a soldier, a barber, grieving women, frightened citizens.

Perhaps the most pastoral of all his works were, first, his two catechisms of 1529, which arose out of his pastoral work (catechetical preaching in Johannes Bugenhagen's absence in 1528) and out of his pastoral concern (expressed in the most serious terms after his brief stint as an official parish visitor in 1528). Second, his church postil, that running commentary on the texts appointed for Sundays and festivals, of which Luther himself was particularly fond, also demonstrated the pastoral center of his work, as did the many editions of his *Prayer Booklet*, a forerunner to the catechisms.

These two activities, teaching and preaching, defined the pastoral center of Luther's theology and life. To be sure, catechesis, especially understood as instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer (what Luther called the catechism), was hardly Luther's invention. He inherited it from late-medieval
interest in Christian education and from the ancient church's insistence that adult catechumens should know what they believed before they were baptized. From this heritage, Luther's interest in publishing explanations to the catechism stretched back at least to the spring of 1518, that is, long before the legal case with the Rome had heated up, and began with an exposition of the Ten Commandments. In fact, it matched Luther's original, single-mindedly pastoral publishing interests from 1517, when he produced a preface to the anonymous German mystical tract, the *Theologia Germanica*, and a translation of the seven penitential psalms. This first attempt at catechetical exposition was clearly connected to penance and Luther's role as confessor, as was his reaction to bad pastoral care in the *95 Theses*. Thus, it was followed in the same year by *An Instruction for the Confession of Sin* (the Latin translation of the *Erklärung*), *A Sermon on the Worthy Preparation of the Heart for Receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist*, *The Ten Commandments Preached to the People of Wittenberg*, which Sebastian Franck immediately translated into German, and the *Exposition and Meaning of the Holy Our Father*. In 1519, Luther produced sermons on baptism, the Lord's Supper, and preparation for death, and in 1520 he combined his comments on the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer with some on the Apostles' Creed, to create his first "catechism." This he expanded in 1522 in his *Prayer Booklet*, which he himself connected to catechesis in the preface to his German liturgy, the *Deutsche Messe*.

Sebastian Münster's preface to his German translation of Luther's sermons on the Ten Commandments hints at just how much he and others appreciated the pastoral thrust of Luther's early writings, that is, their spiritual use for common people.

Daily many books in both Latin and German are being published that are quite salutary and useful for common people. So one finds everywhere people who are so hungry for and desirous of God's Word that they use every free moment that they have to spare from their obligatory work to invest in such books in order to glean comfort and instruction from them. For them this book, written by the godly, spiritual and highly learned man, Dr. Martin Luther, has been translated into German. He explains and interprets the Ten Commandments in such a spiritual, Christian and evangelical way that one will not find its equal, although many teachers have written about them. In this book spiritual
and secular, good and evil, sad and tempted, young and old, ruler and subject, in short, all kinds of persons are informed as to the way they should go that leads to eternal life (which is what the Ten Commandments are). Here one finds how each commandment is kept according to the letter and the Spirit, and, in addition, how each commandment has several grades and steps.\(^{30}\)

Luther’s preface to *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer* from 1520 demonstrates a similar pastoral concern for the simple folk.

It does not happen to be a special ordinance of God that for the common Christian folk, who are unable to read the Scripture, it is established for them to learn by heart and know the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Truly, in these three things is fundamentally and completely comprehended everything that stands in Scripture and may be preached upon, indeed everything that it is essential for a Christian to know. And it is summarized in such a short and easy form that no one can complain or make excuses that it is too much or too hard to remember what is necessary for salvation.\(^{31}\)

Luther’s sermons, too, were instant hits in German bookstalls. Beginning with some early publications of his sermons for Lent and Holy Week, the market for Luther’s preaching grew until he responded, first, with a Latin postil on the appointed Sunday texts for Advent in 1521 and then, in 1522, an even more detailed examination of the Gospel and Epistle readings for Advent and Christmas. These early attempts at producing “sermon helps,” which is what such postils really were (and not sermons per se), derived from Luther’s own work in the pulpit.\(^{32}\)

For the remaining portions of the church postil, Luther’s assistants, first Stephen Roth, later City Clerk in Zwickau, and then Caspar Cruciger, Sr., Luther’s student and later colleague on the theology faculty, assembled his sermons for the rest of the church year. Of course, not only has the critical edition of Luther’s works published listeners’ notes, often by the faithful scribe Georg Rörer, on thousands of sermons delivered by Luther over the course of his career, but a host of sermons were also published separately during his lifetime, especially those he delivered on special occasions or in special locations. Yet some of the most remarkable sermons were
simply those proclaimed from Wittenberg's pulpit for the weekly uplifting of Luther's own flock.  

Of all of Luther's homiletical work, the set of sermons that had the most lasting impact were not even delivered during the Sunday morning service but arose instead from his preaching on the catechism in 1528. After having preached through the catechism (now expanded to include the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism and the Lord's Supper) three times that year, Luther began in December to rework them into what he called his Deutsch Katechismus (German Catechism) but which came to be known as the Large Catechism. Along with the Church Postil, this work has profoundly shaped Lutheran piety and teaching to the present day.

Parson to Person

As Gerhard Ebeling's foray into Luther's letters demonstrates, Luther's correspondence, too, overflows with pastoral advice. Even before his death, many of these letters were copied over and over again, and some were even published to comfort others the way Luther had initially comforted the original recipients. Next to a host of letters of consolation published during the 1520s for towns and principalities, some of the most interesting letters were those sent to members of Luther's own family. Caspar Cruciger, Sr., published a collection in 1545 that included letters to both Luther's mother and his father.

The same pastoral care may be found in Luther's table conversations. Johannes Schlaginhaufen, who seemed particularly prone to melancholy, recorded the following direct advice in the early 1530s.

Then he [Luther] said to me [Schlaginhaufen], "Why are you just sitting there? Cheer up!"

But I responded, "O dear Doctor, I want to be happy but I just cannot, since I am weighed down by so many serious temptations."

He said, "What kind of temptations?"

I answered, "Alas, I cannot put my feelings into words."
Then the Doctor said, “Your temptations and those of all people, including myself, are all summarized in the Creed. You may be tempted in the first article, “I believe in God the Father.” Do you not believe that the Father is your creator? Second, do you not believe that he is your Father? Third, do you not believe that he is near to us? If he is creator, then he has creatures; if he is Father, then he has sons; if he is omnipotent, then he can draw near to me. The second article is “I believe in Jesus Christ . . . who suffered.” If I believe Jesus to be the Son of God given for me, who suffered and rose again, what else do I lack? Or the third article is, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the forgiveness of sins.” That is where I am most deficient and also struggle against myself. So, in which article is your temptation? This last one is where Satan attacks me: ‘So you only will be God’s sons? Are not many wise, upright, etc.? ’ That is my temptation,” said the Doctor.

And again I [Schlaginhaufen] said, “Every time I think about God and Christ, then it occurs to me, ‘You are a sinner, therefore God is angry with you, and thus your prayers will be useless.’”

The Doctor responded, “If I am not allowed to pray until I become righteous, when will I pray? If, therefore, Satan suggests to you, ‘You are a sinner, God does not listen to sinners,’ you boldly turn that on its head and say, ‘Therefore, because I am a sinner, I pray, and I know that the prayers of the afflicted are efficacious in God’s sight.’ But we would gladly have a tranquil soul not from grace but from ourselves. Why would God want to be gracious to us if we did not feel and acknowledge our sin? ‘But when the right knots are there,’ God says, ‘then I can help.’ Therefore it is acceptable to rejoice and be glad.”

Luther’s pastoral experience also meant that he baptized, celebrated the Lord’s Supper, heard confessions, preached at marriages and funerals, visited the sick, comforted the grieving and even held the dying in his arms. Thus, for example, his proposals for liturgical renewal arose not merely out of speculation about what constituted “correct evangelical worship” but out of care to see that the gospel was preached and celebrated in Wittenberg and among his dear Germans.

The call to take Luther’s pastoral ministry seriously is also a serious plea for placing Luther’s life and ministry in context and wrestling him and his thought away from the clutches of the doctrinaire. Whatever the contributions of the systematic theologian or the historian of dogma to our understanding of Luther, they always run
the risk of hyper-abstraction. Luther was not simply a theologian of an imaginary cross; he was a theologian who, according to his own testimony, experienced that cross. Thus, in his advice to Schlaginhaufen quoted above, he did not merely talk generally about the nature of the devil's assaults (Anfechtungen) and their relation to the Creed, he pointedly told his distraught listener how he, too, suffered.  

Our modern (and post-modern) addiction to theories and ideas may make it difficult for us to assess properly Martin Luther's own theology, unless and until we resituate it within his parish experience. To be sure, Luther was also professor at the University of Wittenberg and defender in his case with Rome. These and other factors also had a major role to play in the contours of his theology and life. But whether he was writing against John Eck, his Roman opponent, or against Ulrich Zwingli, his challenger on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, or against any of a number of other foes, Luther composed these documents in a heated room overlooking Wittenberg’s walls and the Elbe River, with its rich fields beyond. He walked Wittenberg’s streets, climbed faithfully into the pulpit at St. Mary’s, and was very much a part of the civic and religious life of that town. No matter what else Luther was doing, he was always at the same time Wittenberg’s pastor.

His language alone gives us a helpful glimpse into his everyday world. He filled sermons and lectures with the adages and allusions not just of classic Greek and Latin sources but also of everyday life. For example, in 1535 as he struggled to find words to clarify (to Philip Melanchthon of all people!) that works are not a cause of faith but necessarily follow it, he made the following (curious) remark. Works are necessary “not because they bring about or achieve salvation but because, with the faith that achieves salvation, they are present or are there, just as I necessarily will be present for my salvation. ‘I’ll also be present,’ says that fellow.” Only because the first publisher of Luther’s Table Talk, Johannes Auri-faber, who also recorded this written exchange between the two reformers, filled in the missing reference in his German translation, do we know that Luther was alluding to the punch line of some
true gallows humor. Upon seeing people running to get a good seat from which to view his own hanging, the criminal happily replies, "I'll also be present," having the best seat in the house, so to speak. Earthy humor and language were not sidelines in Luther's theology, a quaint quirk in a brilliant repertoire of theological bon mots, but they belong to the very heart of his pastoral approach. His famous dictum for translating ("Look the people in the mouth") actually defined his whole theological method and demonstrated the pastoral heart of the matter.

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NOTES

1. Timothy J. Wengert, ed., The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming). For assistance in preparing the articles for publication, the author is especially grateful to the Rev. Martin Lohrmann, Ph.D. candidate at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

2. Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics and the Church, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), to be cited as Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections.

3. Albrecht Beutel, ed., Luther Handbuch (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005). To be sure, it does contain a chapter on Luther's preaching, but, as we shall see, this is only one aspect of his parish ministry.


6. Published in Eisleben by Petri in 1586 and again in Eisleben by Hörnig in 1591. In 1597, 1604 and 1615 it was published in Leipzig by Grosse; in 1729 in Jena by Johann Meyer in an expanded version; in 1842 in Nördlingen by Beck, and in an excerpted version in 1897 in Braunschweig by Reuter.

8. This is the point Gerhard Ebeling made when in "Luthers Gebrauch der Wort­familie 'Seelsorge,' Luther-Jahrbuch 61 (1994): 7–44, he argued that Luther himself invented the verb *seelsorgen* (a grammatical impossibility in the original Latin, *cura animarum*) and that his use of *Seelsorge* matched his evangelical understanding of pastoral ministry.


12. WA TR 3:187 (no. 31434), where, according to Cordatus, Luther gave fifteen rea­sons to von Staupitz why he should not be professor and preacher.

13. For this essay, we will use the more general English term, "pastor," when describ­ing Luther's work. In the sixteenth century, the offices of pastor and preacher were separate callings. Wittenberg's chief pastor from 1523 was Johannes Bugenhagen. He had respons­ibility for both preaching and presiding at the Lord's Supper, as well as for other pastoral acts. Luther was his assistant. There were also some preaching positions in Wittenberg. For example, starting in the 1540s, Georg Major was preacher in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

14. For a sermon to this effect, see the sermon from 24 February 1517 (WA 1:138–41, especially 141, 22–38; LW 51:26–31, especially 31).

15. WA 51:539, 4–13; LW 41:231–232.


17. See WA 1:229–38, especially theses 35, 42–51 ["docendi sunt Christiani"; Christians are to be taught"], 53, 72, and 80–88; LW 31:25–33.

18. For an example of the former, in his 1518 tract against the papal theologian, Sylvester Prierias, Luther attacks his opponent's appeal to uncertainty partly on the basis of the effect on the people (WA 1:665, 37–667, 2). For the latter, see his attack on the papal definition of church in *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* of 1539 (WA 50:488–553; LW 41:8–178) in contrast to the weak believers for whom Luther claims to speak.


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28. WA 7:194-229, with 890.
29. WA 10:376-407; LW 43:3-45. For the Deutsche Messe, see WA 19:77, 11-12; LW 53:66.
30. WA 9:780.
31. WA 7:204-05. He continued the preface by distinguishing and ordering the three basic parts of the catechism: the Ten Commandments show human illness, namely, sin; the Creed reveals God's medicine (grace) for dealing with our illness; and in the Lord's Prayer the sick person begs for this medicine.
33. This was especially the case during those times when Johannes Bugenhagen was absent from Wittenberg in his various attempts to reform other churches (for example, in Braunschweig, Lübeck, and Denmark). See Martin Luther's Sermons from Holy Week and Easter, 1529, trans. Irving Sandberg (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999).
35. Etliche Trostschriften und predigten, für die so in tods und ander not und anfechtung sind [Some writings of comfort and sermons for those facing death or other crises and are under attack] (Wittenberg: Luft, 1545). Besides the sermons, this work contains Luther's letters to his parents (WA Br 5:238-41 [no. 1529], LW 49:267-272; WA 6:103-06 [no. 1820], LW 50:17-21), to Barbara Lißkirchen (WA Br 6:86-88 [no. 1811] and 12:134-36 [no. 4244a]), Jonas von Stockhausen (WA Br 6:386-88 [no. 1974], one from 1521 to an unknown recipient (WA 7:785-91), and one perhaps to Queen Margaret of Hungary (WA Br 6:194-97 [no. 1866]). For the complete table of contents, see WA Br 14:572-73. For a modern collection of similar letters in English, see Martin Luther, Letters of Spiritual Counsel, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955).
37. On 19 August 1527, Luther reported to Georg Spalatin, his confidant at the Saxon court, about the extent of the plague in Wittenberg and the efforts of Bugenhagen and himself to provide care for the people (WA Br 4:232-33). The wife of the Tilo Dhene, the Saxon judge, died in Luther's arms.
39. Another example of the grounded nature of Luther's theology comes in his exhortation to receive the Lord's Supper, appended to the Large Catechism. "This is my struggle as well," he wrote (Large Catechism, "Lord's Supper," par. 55 in BC, 472), referring to how unworthy he felt to receive the Supper.
40. In part, this is what Heiko Oberman achieved in his Luther: Man between God and the Devil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
42. WA Br 12:193, 97-99.
43. WA TR 6:152, 16-21 (no. 6727).
44. See WA 30:637, 17–22; LW 35:189: "For a person must not ask the letters in the Latin language about how one should speak German, as these jackasses do, but instead one must ask the mother at home, the children on the street, the commoner in the marketplace and look them in the mouth to see how they talk and only then translate, so that they understand and notice that one is speaking German to them." Similarly, his use of such categories as adiaphora (in Luther always in the Latin equivalent: indifferentia, undifferentiated matters) and epieikeia (balance or fairness) shows how important parish life and peace were for his ethical thinking.