

**THE MASK OF GOD SEMINAR
ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
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The Doctrine of Vocation

I. Introduction

- Doctrine of vocation...a lost treasure?
- Vocation-more than a job.
- The doctrine of justification as “basis and boundary” for the doctrine of vocation in the *Small Catechism* (Creed/Table of Duties) and the *Augsburg Confession* (IV, VI, XVI, XX, XXVIII). Note especially Article XVI of the *Augsburg Confession*: "Also condemned are those who teach that Christian perfection means physically leaving house and home, spouse and child and refraining from the above mentioned activities. In fact, the only true perfection is the true fear of God and true faith in God. For the gospel teaches and internal, eternal righteousness of the heart, and not an external, temporal one. The gospel does not overthrow secular government, public order, and marriage but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works according to each person's calling" (Kolb/Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 49-50)

II. God Does the Calling

- The Christian life is a matter of being before it is doing.
- Calling to faith.
- Calling to a life of love.
- Luther in *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520): “We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and the neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, and in the neighbor through love” (AE 31:371).

III. Liturgy and vocation

- “...in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another...”

- Luther in "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ-Against the Fanatics" (1526): "For it is necessary for each one to know that Christ has given his body, flesh, and blood on the cross to be our treasure and to help us receive forgiveness of sins, that is that we may be saved, redeemed from death and hell. That is the first principle of Christian doctrine. It is presented to us in the words, and his body and blood are given to us to be received corporeally as a token and confirmation of this fact. To be sure, he did it only once, carrying it out and achieving it on the cross; but he causes it each day anew to be set before us, distributed and poured out through preaching, and he orders us to remember him always and never forget him. The second principle is love. It demonstrates in the first place that he has left us an example. *As he gives himself to us with his body and blood in order to redeem us from our misery, so we ought too give ourselves with might and mane for our neighbor*" (-Emphasis mine; AE 36:352).
- Romans 12:1 "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."
- *Beneficium* and *sacrificium*

Beneficium (Benefit)	Sacrificium (Sacrifice)
Grace	Works
Faith	Love
Passive Righteousness	Active Righteousness
Office of the Ministry	Royal Priesthood
Divine Service	Worship

- Vocation: "Liturgy after the Liturgy"

III. The Christian Life in the World: Two Governments

- Christian existence is both vertical and horizontal. In his 1534 commentary on Psalm 101, Luther writes "The spiritual government, or office should direct the people vertically toward God that they may do right and be saved; just so the worldly government should direct the people horizontally toward one another, seeing to it that body, property, honor, wife, child, house and home, and all manner of goods remain in peace and security and are blessed on earth" (AE 13:197).

- One God, two governments.
- The calling is the place where the two governments intersect.

GOD RULES OVER BOTH GOVERNMENTS

God's Left Hand Rule	God's Right Hand Rule
Creation	Redemption/Sanctification
Law	Gospel
Reason	Revelation
Works	Faith
Retribution	Forgiveness of Sins
Preservation	Salvation
Secular	Spiritual
Temporal	Eternal

IV. Implications for our life in the church and the world

- The two poles of Christian existence: Forgiveness of sins and the calling in the world (Billing).
- Vocation and cross.
- The "holy orders" (see "Table of Duties" in SC) of congregation, civil government, and family/daily work. Luther in "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper" (1528): "For these three religious institutions or orders are found in God's Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God's Word must be holy, for God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it. Above these three institutions and orders is the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders but also serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc. Behold these are called good and holy works. However, none of these orders is a means of salvation. There remains only one way above them all...faith in Jesus Christ" (AE 37:365).

- Deception of self-chosen works. "Reason is the devil's bride, which plans some particular course because it does not know what may please God....The best and highest station in life is to love God and one's neighbor. Indeed that station is filled by the ordinary manservant or maidservant who cleans the meanest pot" (quoted from Luther's "Exposition of the Sermon on Mount" in Wingren, 88).
- The freedom of faith is the freedom for love.

V. For Further Reading and Study

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