



Reformation History #4: The Papacy

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Part of a year-long series on Reformation history and theology, from November 2016—October 2017, in commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

What can we say? The institution of the papacy was the major cause of the mess in the Roman Catholic Church through the middle ages. That is not to say that if the Church had progressed on different grounds than the authoritarian rule of one man, the corruption would have been avoided, but it does seem that the West was much more corrupt than the East. There's a proverb connecting absolute power with corruption. Perhaps there is some truth to it.

Yet, it is sad to witness the fall of the Bishop of Rome because this position was a champion of orthodoxy in the early Christian Church. The Bishop of Rome stood squarely against the heresies that arose in the first three centuries, steadfastly confessing the truth of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. Because of his orthodoxy and the prominent city in which he was seated, this Bishop became the leader of Christendom, respected by all his fellow bishops as "first among equals". Some of these early Roman bishops were honorable men of strong faith and exemplary character whose leadership was a profound and beneficial influence on the Church's history. And then the Church and her leaders became hopelessly enmeshed in the State, and overwhelmed with new-found wealth and prestige. The high positions of Christianity in the West were now attractive for all the wrong reasons. They were positions of wealth and authority, leading men of base character and deplorable motives to seek them. Eventually, these clergy positions became so lucrative



and powerful that they were purchased at great expense. Corruption was rife in the bureaucracy of the Church, and the leaders became sheer tyrants, ruling with an iron fist and ruthless law. The

Church hierarchy was vested with the power of punishing the wicked and condemning heretics to death. Excommunication was feared by all, even kings, not only because it deprived the soul of eternal life, but because no king could keep his kingdom together if he was no longer in the Church.

It was inevitable that the position of Bishop of Rome would eventually be filled with scoundrels like all the other positions of the Roman hierarchy. The natural power of the position was coveted by extremely arrogant and self-seeking men with corrupt morals. Oddly enough, the more corrupt the Church and her leaders became, the more ostentatious the worship forms and piety assumed. There was precedent for this in Old Testament Israel. Perhaps outward display soothes the guilty conscience. Whatever the reason, the outward ceremonies and traditions became primary and the Gospel was largely lost under the commandments of men. Lutherans were willing to follow traditions for the sake of order and tranquility, but refused to recognize them as a necessary part of worship or means of meriting forgiveness of sins. Rome and the Pope insisted that such traditions commanded by the Pope DID justify the sinner. Luther discovered that the Pope he originally respected and honored, was the chief persecutor of the Gospel. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Pope's exalted claims are compared to Daniel's description of the Antichrist:

Perhaps our opponents demand some such definition of the church as the following. It is the supreme outward monarchy of the whole world in which the Roman pontiff must have unlimited power beyond question or censure. He may establish articles of faith, abolish the Scriptures by his leave, institute devotions and sacrifices, enact divine, canonical, or civil, as he wishes. From him the emperor and all kings have received their power and right to rule, and this at Christ's command; for as the Father subjected everything to him, so now this right has been transferred to the pope.

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That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31

Reformation, cont..

*Therefore the pope must be lord of the whole world, of all the kingdoms of the world, and of all public and private affairs. He must have plenary power in both the temporal and the spiritual realm, both swords, the temporal and the spiritual. Now, this definition of the papal kingdom rather than of the church of Christ has as its authors not only the canonists but also Daniel 11:36-39.**

Eventually, the subtle suggestion became a clear identification. In 1537, Melancthon penned "The Power and Primacy of the Pope," in which marks of antichrist described in Scripture are specifically attributed to

the rise of the papacy. Reconciliation would become impossible if the Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith was condemned by the Pope. After Luther's death, the Council of Trent, under the Pope's authority, formally and specifically, for the first time in history, utterly condemned the Gospel of Christ:

Thesis VI, 12: *"If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified; let him be anathema"*

Thesis VI, 20: *"If anyone saith that the man who is justified and how perfect soever, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the church, but only to believe, as if indeed the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of observing the commandments, let him be anathema"*

Luther did not intend to attack or destroy the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy. He only desired to preach the Gospel. The great Reformation happened because Rome would not and could not tolerate it.

Roles and Goals for the Church — by Pastor Tom Chryst

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

In this passage from Ephesians 4, Paul lays out some "roles and goals" for the Christian congregation at Ephesus. These may also serve as a model for any Christian congregation.

In light of some recent discussions about Messiah's own mission, I'd like to add some comments to the mix in the next several months. What follows will be a series of articles, based on this passage. I'll focus on these key ideas inspired by the Holy Spirit and set forth through St. Paul to the Ephesians:

Different gifts and roles
Unity of Faith
Knowledge of the Son of God
Mature Manhood
Speaking Truth in Love
Grow in every way

Different Gifts and Roles

It may seem obvious to you, but not everyone in the church is the same. Not everyone has the same talents, abilities, interests or inclinations. But just as importantly, not everyone has the same vocations.

Sure, we all share a calling as children of God in Christ. We are all equally members of his body, the church. We are all equally covered by the righteousness of Christ in Holy Baptism, and equally members of the royal priesthood with all its rights and privileges.

But not all are called to be apostles (in fact, there were only ever 14). Not all are called to be evangelists, or prophets, or shepherds (pastors) and teachers. In the church, some are charged with the exercise of the public ministry on behalf of the people. Others are charged to be hearers of the word. Some hold the Holy Office that Christ instituted for the blessing of his church. Others hold churchly offices that the church herself created, but which serve good order and support the ministry of the

Gospel in various ways. Elders, Trustees, Presidents, Financial officers – all play a role and discharge duties for the benefit of the whole. But not all are the same.

For me, this is a great relief. I'm happy to stay in my lane, and do what is given to me as a pastor. And the church works best when we all do what is given us to do. Likewise, you are probably glad to not be charged with preaching sermons, leading Bible classes, and doing many of the other duties given to the pastor. That God happens to make us different, and calls us to different roles within the congregation is not just common sense, it is divine wisdom. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden in which God first made man and woman as complement to each other.

Paul speaks in other places (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12) about the various members of the congregation as analogous to parts of the body – eyes, feet, hands, etc. All need each other. None can say "you're different, and we don't need your kind here". We are designed to work best when we work together in peace and harmony, each using his unique gifts for the good of all.

The church needs extroverts as much as it needs introverts. The church needs creative types as much as

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Roles, cont..

bean counters. We need visionaries and strategists as much as we need the doers who get 'r done.

All of this may seem obvious. But it also begs an obvious question, **“where do you fit in?”**



I doubt the Lord will bonk you on the head with a vision or whisper marching orders in your ear telling you exactly how you ought to serve, in what role you ought to function. But Scripture does call us to serve, to minister. We, the saints, are to be “equipped for ministry”. We are all, universally, equipped with the word of the Gospel, with the “plenary” gifts of the Holy Spirit – faith, righteousness,

everlasting life, etc... But the specifics of your role in the church, your particular calling when it comes to serving your neighbor – well that's not spelled out.

And that leaves the what, where, when and how to each of us. Prayerfully consider where your gifts lie, and how you might offer them. Ponder what good you might do for your neighbor – perhaps in a volunteer capacity at your church, or perhaps in an unofficial capacity somewhere else. Think of the neighbors God has placed in your life, of their needs, and of your resources. Can you teach? Are you a natural encourager? A writer? A talker? A baker or butcher (are there any candlestick makers anymore)?

Chances are good that you already serve in a variety of vocations: Parent, friend, family member, citizen, employee, student, volunteer. All of these are good and godly ways to

serve our neighbor. It doesn't even have to be at church that we do so (gasp!) In all of these, we can and do show Christian love to those in need, as we are able.

But maybe someone around here will ask you to serve in a new capacity. If so, it means that at least they think you have something to offer. Maybe you'll see an appeal printed in the church bulletin and answer the call, “I can do that!” Or maybe you have hidden gifts that others don't know. Why not humbly offer them at an opportune time?

The Lord Jesus, who gave his body into death for you, who gives his body and blood for you in the sacrament, has also made you a member of his body, the church. How might you fulfill your role as member of the body? How might you join in the building up of that body, in response to his grace and for the good of all?

Life Preserving by Deaconess Student Pamela Buhler

In January, the annual March for Life event was held at our nation's capital. It was the first time in this pro-life movement's history, of 43 years, to have a president or vice-president speak out at these gatherings. Vice President Pence encouraged Americans with his presence as he spoke out in passion for the life of our voiceless neighbor:

“Life is winning in America and today is a celebration in that progress. We've come to a historic moment in the cause of life and we must approach it with compassion for every American. Life is winning in America because of you.”

The unmotherly act of abortion is why people gather at the March for Life. Why? Christians come together because God calls His people to “carry each other's burdens” (Gal 6). Sharing one another's pain is showing the love of Christ to our neighbor. Abortion is the ending of life and therefore breaks the Fifth Commandment. Because Christ is our savior and died for the sins of the world, we can call abortion exactly what it is: a sin Christ has died for. In

Christ, there is forgiveness for the mother who had chosen abortion.

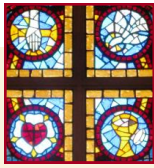
God gave mankind dominion over the earth and all birds, fish, livestock, and creeping-things. This dominion does not extend authority over another person, including the unborn. What is extended between God's people, is love. We are created in God's image and are called to love one another; not to our standards, but to that of God's. Loving someone does not mean we tolerate their fleshly desires, but that we train up people in the way they should go. Although we have political freedom in America, that doesn't mean we should always use or practice it. God's word, in Galatians 5:13-14, explains the freedom we have in Christ and commands us not to use our freedom to sin but to serve:

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out

that you are not consumed by one another.

“Choose Life” is an oxymoron that suggests life is a choice or is created out of choice. This is not possible. We don't choose life, nor can we, it already exists if it is alive. “Protect Life” or “Defend Life” would be more accurate, because what we mean to say is, “Do not choose death for the life that already exists within your womb.” There is no such word as unmother or unfather; it does not exist. A person who has lost their child or terminated their pregnancy is still a mother or father. Speaking for myself and delivering a stillborn son, I am still my child's mother though he never lived outside the womb. The woman's womb represents the baptismal font where life is created and the place through which life is preserved. Viewing our bodies in the mirror, we are reminded of our dependency. John T. Pless reminds us in A Small Catechism on Human Life that we “were not self-created.” Our bellybutton is evidence that our parents preserved the life God knitted

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made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. Psalm 139:13-16

Babies are made through the act of lovemaking, but life is created without the skill or knowledge of man. Our lack of knowledge to remember life in the womb and as far as up to our first two years of life, Martin Luther says, "is most certain proof that God wants to preserve man in a wonderful manner altogether unknown to him."

He commands us in the Fifth Commandment, "You shall not murder." *What does this mean?* "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need" (SC). Abortion is a decision to end the earthly life of a child God gave to its mother. Life exists without our interference; however, our sinfulness and freedom can reject this gift and forfeit eternal life with God. We can make the choice to end life, but should we? No. There is a Natural Law and to

reject this natural law is to rebel and reject God. Only God has dominion over life and death and He has commanded us to help and support our neighbor. This is the neighbor Vice President Pence spoke out about at the March for Life. Perhaps Pence understands that if a house is divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25).

The womb is the means which God provided to bring forth Salvation. As promised in Genesis 3:15 after the fall, the offspring for our salvation is Jesus Christ who through his life, death, and resurrection crushed the serpent's head. At the font, with the waters of Holy Baptism, we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Christ has redeemed us "from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil" (SC#134). When we confess and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Gospel frees us from our sin and gives us eternal life. Glory be to God that He has died for every sin and that we may gather on Sundays to hear His Word and partake in Holy Communion. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That whosoever believes in Him is washed of their sin and has eternal life. Amen.

Life, cont..

and formed before and through conception and that our life began in the womb:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully

Sing a new song by Vicki L. Main, Kantor

Our February Hymn of the Month is *When to Our World the Savior Came* – LSB 551. **Timothy Dudley-Smith** (born in 1926) is the writer of the text. He is an English hymnwriter and a retired bishop of the Church of England. He was born in Manchester, England. We are blessed to have sixteen hymns in our hymnal from his pen – *Be Strong in the Lord* (LSB#665), *Christ Be My Leader* (LSB #861), *Fruitful Trees, the Spirit's Sowing* (LSB#691), and *Tell Out, My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord* (LSB#935) just to name a few.

The hymn tune ("Canonbury") was written by the German composer **Robert Schumann** (1810-56). This is the only tune we have in our hymnal by him. Although he had a short and rather tragic life, he is regarded as one of the greatest and most representative composers of the Romantic era (1780 – 1910). He left the study of law to become a virtuoso pianist but a hand injury ended that dream and so he continued composing music instead. This particular hymn tune appears in over thirty-five different hymnals under various titles (*Lord, Speak to Me, that I May Speak; How Blest Are They; How Beauteous Were the Marks Divine; O Jesus, Youth of Nazareth* etc.)

It is a very compact summary of our Lord's mission when He walked the earth in five stanzas. And the final stanza points out His purpose has yet to be fulfilled . . . there is still work to do.

When to Our World the Savior Came

- 1 When to our world the Savior came
The sick and helpless heard His name,
And in their weakness longed to see
The healing Christ of Galilee.
- 2 That good physician! Night and day
The people thronged about His way;
And wonder ran from soul to soul,
"The touch of Christ has made us whole!"
- 3 His praises then were heard and sung
By opened ears and loosened tongue,
While lightened eyes could see and know
The healing Christ of long ago.
- 4 Of long ago: yet living still,
Who died for us on Calv'ry's hill;
Who triumphed over cross and grave,
His healing hands stretched forth to save.
- 5 His sov'reign purpose still remains
Who rose in pow'r, and lives and reigns;
Till ev'ry tongue confess His praise,
The healing Christ of all our days.

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You may also wish to read the scripture references, Acts 10:38 and John 9:1-41, to further expand your understanding of this hymn.