

Luther and Culture

By George W. Forell

It would be impossible to present a paper dealing with Luther's understanding of culture along the lines of Karl Holl's famous essay of 1917, »What did Luther understand by religion?«.¹ The reason is obvious. The word »culture« (cultura, Kultur) in our sense as »the intellectual side of civilization«² is not part of Luther's vocabulary.³ But even if the meaning of the word »culture« as used today was unknown to Luther, the reality of what we call culture surrounded him as it surrounds us and he interacted with the culture of the sixteenth century creatively and powerfully during his entire life.

An analysis of Luther's influence on culture, though obvious and profound even from a non-German or non-European vantage point, would lead us too far afield.⁴ For the relationship between faith and culture is a permanent and inescapable problem in the life and history of the church. The solutions offered

1 Karl HOLL: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*. Vol. 1: Luther. 6th ed. Tü 1932, 1-110.

2 OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY. Vol. 1. Oxford 1971, 622.

3 The word »cultura« is used by Luther, of course, e.g. »Porro idolum significat culturam, religionem, testimonium extremum, quid senciant et in animo habeant homines etc.« (WA 31 II, 27, 17f). The word denotes »worship« as in Tertullian and Lactantius (e.g. TERTULLIAN: *Apologeticus* 21, 27). See also the somewhat different meaning in CICERO: *Tusculunae disputationes* 2, 5, 13: »cultura animi philosophia est.« The German word »Kultur« occurs first towards the end of the 17th century (Hans SCHULZ: *Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch*. Straßburg 1913, 410f). E.g. Johann Gottfried Herder: »Die Cultur eines Volkes ist die Blüthe seines Daseyns, mit welcher es sich zwar angenehm, aber hinfaellig offenbart« (ibid., 411).

4 Cf. George W. FORELL; Harold J. GRIMM; Theodore HOELTHY-NICKEL: *Luther and culture*. Decorah, Ia. 1960. See also Heinrich BORNKAMM: *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte: mit ausgewählten Texten von Lessing bis zur Gegenwart*. 2nd ed. GÖ 1970; Otto SCHEEL: *Die weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung der Wittenberger Reformation*. (1921). In: *Wirkungen der deutschen Reformation bis 1555/ hrsg. von Walther Hubatsch*. DA 1967, 30-67; Ernst TROELTSCH: *Luther, der Protestantismus und die moderne Welt*. (1907/08). In: ders.: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Bd. 4: *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*. Tü 1925, 202-254.

are impressive in their variety and complexity. Culture has been seen as the enemy of Christ and the Gospel and Christians have been urged to withdraw and isolate themselves from the prevailing culture of their age. Some of Luther's contemporaries advocated this solution and their descendants the Amish and Hutterites, for example, are still practicing their separation from culture in isolated farm communities in USA and Canada.

Culture can also be seen as redemptive and the establishment and preservation of »Christian culture« may be hailed as God's will for His people. According to Winston Churchill the survival of Christian civilization was the object of the Battle of Britain. The United States of America as the last best hope of Christian civilization is a commonplace of political rhetoric in that country, not too subtly reflected in the inscriptions of the U.S. dollar bill: »In God we trust; annuit coeptis, novo ordo seclorum.«

Because of the pervasiveness and complexity of the relationship between religion and culture we would like to restrict our examination of our topic to the significance of culture, as we understand the term today, to Luther's theology.

A generation ago an American theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr, proposed an analysis of the enduring problem of the interrelation of Christianity and civilization in a book called »Christ and culture«.⁵ He submitted five patterns expressing this relationship: 1. Christ against culture; 2. The Christ of culture; 3. Christ above culture; 4. Christ and culture in paradox; and 5. Christ, the transformer of culture. This is not the place to present a detailed analysis of Niebuhr's morphology.⁶ Only one of the patterns shall concern us here, »Christ and culture in paradox«, which Niebuhr called »the theology of the dualists«, though he does not mean to accuse the representatives of this position of some Manichean division of reality into realms of light and darkness, the kingdoms of God and Satan. Rather, he sees these people as committed to the task of avoiding a radical separation between Christ and culture as well as an easy synthesis or adaptation. They »seek to do justice to the need for holding together as well as distinguishing between loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture«.⁷

To Niebuhr the classical representative of this point of view was Martin

5 H. Richard NIEBUHR: *Christ and culture*. NY 1951.

6 I have questioned the adequacy of H. Richard Niebuhr's approach in his classification of Tertullian in George W. FORELL: *History of Christian ethics*. Vol. 1: *From the New Testament to Augustine*. MP 1979, 50-60.

7 Niebuhr: *Op. cit.*, 149.

Luther. While Niebuhr discovered dualistic motifs in Paul and Marcion, neither was truly »dualistic«; Paul because his dualism tended in the direction of an eventual synthesis,⁸ Marcion because he wanted to draw Christians out of this world altogether since he saw the world as the creation of an evil god.⁹ Luther is the paradigm of Niebuhr's »dualistic« approach to the relationship of Christ and culture.

While the term »dualistic« is both unfortunate and inappropriate, Niebuhr has, indeed, identified an essential element in Luther's understanding of what we call »culture«. He points out that Luther takes culture seriously without idolizing it. But Luther's assessment of the significance of culture is not the result of some vague »responsibility for culture« as Niebuhr would have it, but rather a central element in his theology, his doctrine of creation. God the creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible is the ultimate source of every culture which He creates and maintains through the cooperatio¹⁰ of His human creatures. He uses the startling variety of human cultures in the service of both Law and Gospel. For Luther every aspect of culture – in the widest possible sense of this word – belongs to the larvae dei the masks of God. Culture is creature, in fact God's creature and thus a means through which God is active in the world. This does not mean that God's activity is dependent on any particular culture. Cultures and nations come and go. They may become a dominant influence at a certain period of time as were Greek and Roman culture. But they pass away and are only vaguely remembered or forgotten. Some cultures are superior to others. Luther admired the accomplishments of Greece and Rome and used them as models for his age. Their system, he wrote, »produced intelligent, wise and competent men, so skilled in every art and rich in experience that if all the bishops, priests and monks in the whole of Germany today were rolled into one, you would not have the equal of a single Roman soldier«. ¹¹

But Luther also admired aspects of the Muslim culture as he confronted it in the empire of the Turks.¹² Not only was their works righteousness far more impressive than that of the most dedicated monk among the Christians,¹³ they

⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁹ Ibid., 167.

¹⁰ To the term »cooperatio« note material below.

¹¹ Am 45, 356 ≙ WA 15, 35, 4–8.

¹² WA 30 II, (149) 160–197. 713 (Eine Heerpredigt wider den Türken).

¹³ WA 30 II, 187, 1–4.

also behaved admirably in their worship services and lived most disciplined lives: »They do not drink wine, indeed do not eat and drink to excess as we do; do not dress wastefully, or show off, swear or curse and they show obedience to their emperor. They have organized their government and administer it as we would like to have it done in Germany.«¹⁴

In his analysis of culture Luther is eloquent in describing the infinite variety of other possibilities which are always available to God besides the culture and its varied manifestations we happen to enjoy. God saves us through the Word. It is for Luther in its specific linguistic appearance at a particular time and place a product of culture destined to serve God. But God could also have accomplished His purpose in other ways. He nourishes human beings through bread even though He is in no way dependent on it. »It has thus pleased God to impart the Spirit not without the Word, so as to have us cooperators with Him [I Cor. 3:9] ... Similarly He could nourish us without bread, and in fact has provided a means of nourishing us without bread as Matthew 4[:4] says.«¹⁵

Thus God is the sovereign source of human culture, as He is the source and creator of everything that is and nothing would be without Him.¹⁶ He uses whatever He creates to accomplish His ultimate purpose. Luther writes: »All creatures are God's masks [Larven] and disguises [Mummereyen] which He allows to assist Him and help to bring about all kinds of results which He could also bring about without their cooperation.«¹⁷

Each child is God's creation, brought about by the creator through the cooperation of parents. The care and education of these children is God's work, using the family to accomplish His ends. The sowing, growing and harvesting of crops [agriculture] is ultimately God's work, though it is penultimately the labor of the farmer which attains these results.¹⁸ God uses all His creatures for His

¹⁴ WA 30 II, 189, 27–190, 1.

¹⁵ Am 33, 155 $\triangle$ WA 18, 695, 28–35.

¹⁶ Am 33, 242f $\triangle$ WA 18, 754, 1–4. Note also Luther's explanation to the First Article of the »Apostle's creed« (BOOK OF CONCORD/ ed. by Theodore G. Tappert. Phil 1959, 411–413 $\triangle$ BEKENNTNISCHRIFTEN DER EVANGELISCH-LUTHERISCHEN KIRCHE. 2nd, rev. ed. GÖ 1955, 647–650).

¹⁷ WA 17 II, 192, 28–30; Am 3, 274 $\triangle$ WA 43, 71, 7–11: »God no longer wants to act in accordance with His extraordinary or, as the scholastics express it, absolute power but wants to act through His creatures, whom He does not want to be idle. Thus He gives food, not as He did to the Jews in the desert, when He gave manna from heaven, but through labor, when we diligently perform the work of our calling.«

¹⁸ WA 16, 262, 36–263, 32: »The means are God's masks and disguises which He uses on earth.

purposes. »For even if God creates nourishes and governs all the sons of men, nevertheless He does not want any to be idle but gives them members with which they should bear, cherish, and govern one another, whereby God is given the occasion for creating, nourishing and ruling. Thus the power of God hidden under the human activity is seen by faith to do all things; and the unbelieving, who see only the work of man and do not know the power of God are deceived . . . What then are human powers, where faith and the Word reign, except masks of God, as it were, under which He hides and does His wonders, while through their weakness He stirs up the proud, brave, wise and holy against Himself . . . Yet if someone knows that the power and wisdom of God are of such a sort, he trusts wholly, not in the masks of God but in the Word behind the mask.«¹⁹

God uses the cooperatio of all His creatures, thus even culture, the effect of human effort within God's creation, is ultimately God's means to bring about His ends.²⁰ »In this life we cannot deal with God face to face. Now the whole creation is a face or mask of God. But here we need the wisdom that distinguishes God from His masks.«²¹ The God who is present everywhere is present also in the human achievements which we call culture.

Luther spoke eloquently of this divine presence in his defense of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the altar but insisted simultaneously that such a general presence apart from the Word does not imply God's presence *for us*. In fact, the effort to find God where He has not given us His promise that He wants to be found is idolatry. Luther's attitude towards culture is not »dualistic« but shows that culture is a means by which God allows human beings to cooperate with Him in many different ways. It is never redemptive and every effort to claim such redeeming power for any culture, even a »Christian culture« would from his point of view be tempting God and committing idolatry.²²

...Without my work He does not want it to happen yet it is not accomplished through my work. He does not want me to sit at home, be lazy, leave everything to the »dear Lord« waiting for a fried chicken to fly into my mouth. That means to tempt God. He does not let things grow for me when I have done nothing.«

19 Am 9, 40f ≙ WA 14, 576, 38–578, 22.

20 Am 26, 95 ≙ WA 40 I, 175, 17–22.

21 Am 26, 95 ≙ WA 40 I, 174, 12–14.

22 Am 36, 342 ≙ WA 19, 492, 19–25: »Though he is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water, or even in a rope, for he certainly is there, he does not wish that I seek him there apart from the Word, and cast myself into the fire or the water or hang myself on the rope. He is present everywhere, but does not wish that you grope for him everywhere. Grope

The positive significance of human culture as an instrument of God's purpose is never questioned. God is present and active in nature and in culture to bring about His creative design. This explains Luther's lifelong commitment to a variety of cultural expressions such as education, not merely as the acquisition of skills but as a means of cooperation on the part of human beings in the ultimate purpose of the creator.

During his entire life Luther supported all forms of education from grade schools for boys and girls to improved universities. Much of this interest was related to his conviction that the study of the Holy Scriptures, which he advocated as part of every curriculum from the first grade to the university supported the Reformation and would guarantee its ultimate success.²³ Similarly his concern for the study of foreign languages was first of all based on their theological significance. He wrote: »Although the Gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages, was spread abroad by that means, and must be preserved by the same means.«²⁴ Here we see the penultimate cooperation of language skills in the proclamation of the Gospel which is ultimately a gift of the Holy Spirit alone. Languages, a most basic aspect of culture, are for Luther the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained, the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held and the larder in which this food is stored.²⁵

But not only the Gospel is at stake in the cultural endeavour of studying foreign languages but if we neglect the study of languages, »the time will come when we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German«. This would affect our very humanity. Luther uses the dreadful example of the decline of language and culture among some of the monks excoriated by the German humanists in the »*Epistolae obscurorum virorum*«²⁶ to make his point.

rather where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of him in the right way. Otherwise you are tempting God and committing idolatry.«

²³ Am 44, 205 f $\triangle$ WA 6, 461, 11–15: »Above all the foremost reading for everybody, both in the universities and the schools, should be the Holy Scriptures – and for the younger boys, the Gospels. And would to God that every town had a girl's school as well, where the girls would be taught the Gospel for an hour every day either in German or Latin.«

²⁴ Am 45, 358 f $\triangle$ WA 15, 37, 3–6.

²⁵ Am 45, 360 $\triangle$ WA 15, 38, 8–11.

²⁶ *EPISTOLAE OBSCURORUM VIRORUM*/ the Latin text with an English rendering and historical introduction by Francis Griffin Stokes. LO 1909.

He comments that as the result of the corruption of language these miserable folk have been turned almost into animals.²⁷ Thus language, one of the basic elements of culture, is a significant component of our humanity.

Luther's concern is not limited to the study of Bible and Theology. In spite of his profound aversion to Aristotle's »Ethics« he advocates the use of pagan authors in the schools because of their contribution to learning. He considers Aristotle's »Logic«, »Rhetoric« and »Poetics« useful in educating young people,²⁸ and supports the study of Cicero's »Rhetoric« as well.²⁹ Important authors should be studied, »regardless of whether they were pagan or Christian, Greek or Latin, for it is from such books that one must learn grammar«. ³⁰

He is proud of the achievements of the German humanists in making the resources of classical literature available, observing that: »We have today the finest and most learned group of young as well as mature men, adorned with languages and all the arts, who could also render real service if only we would make use of them as instructors of the young.«³¹ Occasionally he quoted with approval the medieval saying, »It is just as bad to neglect a student as to despoil a virgin«, and he liked to point out that the neglect of education had pernicious results for the life of the entire commonwealth: »The welfare of a city does not consist solely in accumulating vast treasures, building mighty walls and magnificent buildings and producing a goodly supply of guns and armor. Indeed, where such things are plentiful, and reckless fools get control of them, it is so much worse and the city suffers greater loss. A city's best and greatest welfare safety and strength consists rather in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable and well-educated citizens.«³²

This requires not only the study of languages but also an understanding of

27 Am 45, 360 $\triangleq$ WA 15, 38, 14–21: »The time will come when we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof of this, let us take the deplorable and dreadful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men have not only unlearned the Gospel, but have in addition so corrupted the Latin and German languages that the miserable folk have been fairly turned into beasts, unable to speak or write a correct German or Latin, and have wellnigh lost their natural reason to boot.«

28 Am 44, 201 $\triangleq$ WA 6, 458, 26–28. This praise of some of Aristotle's books follows immediately after Luther has called him a »blind heathen teacher« and given the advice: »That Aristotle's *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Concerning the soul*, and *Ethics*, which hitherto have been thought to be his best books, should be completely discarded« (Am 44, 200 $\triangleq$ WA 6, 457, 35–37).

29 Am 44, 201 $\triangleq$ WA 6, 458, 29f.

31 Am 45, 351 $\triangleq$ WA 15, 31, 11–14.

30 Am 45, 376 $\triangleq$ WA 15, 52, 6f.

32 Am 45, 356 $\triangleq$ WA 15, 34, 28–33.

history. Young people should »hear of the doings and sayings of the entire world«. ³³ This would enable them to learn from the past and to draw the appropriate inferences. Even if one can also learn from experience outside of formal schools, to acquire through personal experience what one might be able to learn from the experience of others, if properly instructed, takes a great deal of time and life is very short. ³⁴

Even Luther's well-known love of music is not merely a matter of aesthetic consideration; music is for him also one of the finite means which God may use to accomplish His purpose. It is an »outstanding gift of God and next to theology«. ³⁵ He said: »I would not want to give up my slight knowledge of music for a great consideration. And youth should be taught this art; for it makes fine, skilful people.« ³⁶ »Next to the Word of God«, Luther asserted, »music alone deserves to be celebrated as mistress and queen of the emotions of the human heart.« ³⁷

Despite Luther's love for music, expressed everywhere in his life and work, he remains aware of the ambiguity of even this cultural achievement. While he assumes that music began as an aid to religion it was »in the course of time pressed into the service of luxury and lust«. ³⁸ Luther believed that the art of music had attained new heights in his time. Were king David to rise from the dead he would be astonished how people had improved in their musical skills. ³⁹ This appreciation for the musical achievements of his age helped him to deal constructively with the musical heritage of the Reformation. As he observed in his »Formula Missae et communionis pro ecclesia«: »... quod bonum est tenebimus.« ⁴⁰

But not even music is redemptive in some autonomous sense. It can and should be used in the service of God and His Word. »I am not of the opinion«, he wrote, »that all the arts are to be overthrown or cast aside by the Gospel as some superspiritual people claim. But I would gladly see all the arts and especially

³³ Am 45, 368 $\triangle$ WA 15, 45, 15.

³⁴ Am 45, 368 $\triangle$ WA 15, 45, 15-26.

³⁵ WA TR 3, 636, 5 (3815), 5 April 1538.

³⁶ WA TR 3, 636, 5-7 (3815).

³⁷ Am 53, 323 $\triangle$ WA 50, 371, 1f - translation altered.

³⁸ WA 5, 98, 38-40 $\triangle$ AWA 2, 162, 15-17.

³⁹ WA TR 5, 274, 5-7 (5603), Spring, 1543.

⁴⁰ Am 53, 22 $\triangle$ WA 12, 208, 7.

music, in the service of Him who has given and created them.«⁴¹ Luther was pleased that he had succeeded in saving some of the beautiful music of the »papists« by freeing it from the old texts and attaching it to the »living and holy Word of God«, thus demonstrating how music could serve both destructive and constructive purposes.⁴² This procedure created certain technical problems which Luther tried to address. One could not simply attach musical notes written for a Latin text to a new German text. Thus he wrote to Nikolaus Hausmann in 1525: »I return this mass to you, as far as I am concerned you may use it but I don't like it that you keep the musical notes designed for the Latin text and use them for the German text.«⁴³ In the same year he wrote in his book »Against the heavenly prophets« that he advocated a German mass which would do justice to music as well as text: »For to translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes, I let pass, though it does not sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise all of it becomes an imitation in the manner of the apes.«⁴⁴

In his reform of worship Luther does not only consider the words, judging them according to theological criteria, he also refers to *ratio musicae*, musical reason, for making changes.⁴⁵ It is not pleasing to God or human beings to abuse music. Just as the rules of language must be respected to use it in God's service, musical reason is a legitimate consideration in selecting music for the service of God. Culture is always a tool, an instrument, but like all instruments it must be treated with great care in order to do its work.

While Luther's appreciation of music is well-known and has always served as an illustration of his positive approach to culture, his attitude towards painting

41 Am 53, 316 $\triangle$ WA 35, 475, 2-5 – translation altered.

42 WA 35, 479, 17-27. – »They [the papists] also possess a lot of splendid, beautiful songs and music, especially in the cathedral and parish churches. But these are used to adorn all sorts of impure and idolatrous texts. Therefore we have unclothed these idolatrous, lifeless and foolish texts, and divested them of their beautiful music. We have put this music on the living and holy Word of God in order to sing praise and honor it. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians.« Luther adds here that ordinarily melodies should be kept to which the different churches are accustomed since people are justly irritated if the familiar melodies are changed (Am 53, 328 $\triangle$ WA 35, 480, 1-16).

43 WA Br 3, 462, 2f (847), 26 March 1525.

44 Am 40, 141 $\triangle$ WA 18, 123, 20-24.

45 WA 12, 218, 28f.

and sculpture is generally considered to be less favorable. Much has been made of the alleged Roman Catholic emphasis on the eye as over against the Reformation's emphasis on the ear. Since Oswald Spengler and Paul Tillich this distinction in the emphasis of the two great Western Christian traditions has become commonplace in the analysis of Luther's attitude towards culture. But like so many other popular generalizations this needs careful examination. Luther saw the ambiguity in the religious significance of the art of the painter just as he did in that of the musician. Years before the Reformation, as early as his commentary on Romans, he rejected the notion that Christians are bound to a particular form of artistic expression. It does not belong to the »new law«, he observed, that we build this or that church or that we decorate it in a particular manner or style, or that the singing be of a certain kind or the organ, the altar decorations, the chalices, the pictures and all the other paraphernalia which are contained in our churches.⁴⁶

Luther's pervasive social-ethical concern made him question the priorities used in expending the limited resources available to the Christian church. He quoted with approval an anecdote concerning St. Elizabeth associated with the Wartburg and Thuringia, who, it was said, had criticized the wall-paintings at a certain monastery asserting that the money used for the paintings would have been spent better by feeding the poor. Luther called this remark of St. Elizabeth, »a plain, divine, and powerful judgment«.⁴⁷ But later, when some of his opponents claimed that paintings are inherently evil and when these enthusiasts made a theological issue out of the destruction of paintings he stated his own conviction that the cultural accomplishments of men and women do not by themselves bring people to God or separate them from their Creator. From a Christian point of view their value depends on the way in which they are used.⁴⁸ Images must be torn out of the hearts of people through God's word rather than from the walls of churches. »For when they are no longer in the heart they can do no harm when seen with the eyes.«⁴⁹

Indeed, paintings may help people to remember and understand God's Word. They do no more harm on walls than in books.⁵⁰ And Luther exclaimed: »Yes, would to God that I could persuade the rich and the mighty that they would

46 Am 25, 487 $\triangle$ WA 56, 493, 27-494, 7.

47 WA 10 I 1, 257, 18-258, 5.

48 WA 10 III, 35, 22-26.

49 Am 40, 84 $\triangle$ WA 18, 67, 12f.

50 Am 40, 90 $\triangle$ WA 18, 82, 27-29.

permit the whole Bible to be painted on houses, on the inside and the outside, so that all can see it. That would be a Christian work. . . . If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ in my heart, why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes?«⁵¹ But here, too, the defense of the use of paintings or statues in the service of God was not unaffected by technical artistic considerations. In one of his table-talks he mentioned Albrecht Duerer. He reported that the Great Nuernberg artist used to say that he did not like to work with too many different colors but preferred to paint plainly and simply. Comparing the technique of the preacher with that of the painter Luther commented approvingly that he thought preaching should be like painting, plain and simple, in order that people might understand the sermon.⁵²

Thus Luther's attitude towards culture in its many manifestations was to see it always as an instrument created by God through men and women and for their sake. Culture serves even those who may not be saved by making their life in this world better and contributing to their earthly welfare. The arts and sciences function in this manner for the entire human race. But one must not attribute saving power to even the highest accomplishments of human culture. Ultimately, even in the most brilliant attainments of culture it is God who works through human beings.

Luther had explained this cooperation of God with human beings in some detail in his »Bondage of the will«. Describing divine grace and human cooperation, he used numerous illustrations from ordinary life and observed that God preserves the ship, the sailor brings it into port, the farmer reaps the harvest when God has given it. In short, »God works, the creature cooperates with him [Creatura Deo operanti cooperatur]«.⁵³ This is the key to Luther's understanding of culture: »Everything, even the ungodly, cooperate with God [omnia etiam impia illi cooperantur]. When God acts by the Spirit of grace in those whom He has justified, that is in His kingdom, He actuates and moves them in a similar way, and they inasmuch as they are His new creation, follow and cooperate, or rather as Paul says, are led.«⁵⁴ In this cooperation culture is an important instrument. Luther thought that Christians should participate in the life of

51 Am 40, 100 $\triangle$ WA 18, 83, 3-13.

52 WA TR 6, 350, 22-27 (7036).

53 Am 33, 242 $\triangle$ WA 18, 753, 21.

54 Am 33, 242 $\triangle$ WA 18, 753, 32-35.

culture intelligently and imaginatively and use this instrument created by God using the cooperation of men and women not in order to be saved but in order to serve.

If we now summarize the result of our investigation we could state it in the following brief propositions:

1. Luther demythologized human culture. This affected sacred language as well as sacred objects, sacred times and sacred men and women.

2. Neither a pantheist nor on the way to pantheism (as certain interpreters especially in the 1930ies and 40ies would have it) nor a dualist (as Ernst Troeltsch and his American followers would suggest) he rejects the notion that culture is redemptive.

3. Human beings are cultural beings and therefore saved or lost as such. We are saved *in* our culture not *through* our culture.

4. While making value judgments concerning different cultures (e.g. Luther's high regard for Greece and Rome and his considerable respect for certain aspects of Muslim culture) these judgments are based on reason not revelation.

5. Culture is a tool and like all tools must be treated with care.

6. Luther saw culture as a dimension of our humanity. Certain aspects, such as language, music, painting involve our being human. Thus the neglect of the study of language threatens our humanity.

7. Even for those who are ultimately not saved culture adds meaning and pleasure to their life in this world.

8. Culture is a penultimate good but a real good.

9. Everything and everybody, even the ungodly cooperate wittingly or unwittingly with God. There are no specific »Christian« cultures. A variety of cultural expressions (styles) may enrich human life.

10. Culture contributes to the earthly welfare of human beings, it does not contribute to their salvation. Christians should cooperate in human culture in order to serve.