



## Martin Luther's comments on house groups/churches:

*“The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for allsorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacraments, and to do other Christian work...”*

**The quote above is a preface to Luther's comments about the third order of service of The German Mass and Order of Service and is found in volume 53 – page 62-63 the context is the private proclamation of Christian life – (house churches).**

In Luther's "Vorrede zur Deutschen Messe" (The German Mass and Order of Service), published in 1526, he distinguishes three "orders of services":

- 1) the Latin Mass, a public meeting for all in Latin, which Luther specially designed for the young people (Latin was the cosmopolitan language, the "English" of that time;
- 2) the German Mass, a second public liturgy in German;
- 3) and a third kind of worship-meeting about which he writes (W.A.19,44):

### **Luther comments that first two services were for the public proclamation of faith:**

*“The public orders of service should be such that they address the people who are not yet believers – some who come out of curiosity and others to stand and gawk – but some who will eventually come to believe by what they see and experience in these services.”*

Opinion: under girds the need for churches to be mindful of their impression on "pre-Christians" and make sure to intentionally "speak" to them.

**The last order (see # 3 above), is the topic of the preface to the orders.** Luther instructs that this order of service is **for the private proclamation of Christianity** – using texts such as Matthew 18, 2 Cor 9, etc for the "guts of Christian relationships" that are "centered on love." This is echoed by the Priesthood of all believers (Galatians: no Greek, no Jew, no male, no female) that is also the focus of much of Volume 53 of Luther's Works American Edition. (see preface quoted above).

Luther even saw the need for a celebration type service, attracting the masses, like having "an open air – worship amongst Pagan and Turks. I am happy if you ring all the bells, play all the organs and trumpet on anything which is loud", he writes (WA 73, 23).

### **Luther never came round to do this most revolutionary restructuring of the church.**

The history of the church lists, until today, a long story of prematurely aborted attempts of restoring the house church structure, falling short of this, as many others, who would follow him in those attempts, had to discover for themselves.

### **Luther said about his own failure to implement the house church structure:**

*“But as yet, I neither can, nor desire to begin such a congregation...for I have not yet the people for it, nor do I see many who want it. But if I should be requested to do it and could not refuse with a good conscience, I should gladly do my part and help as best I can.”*

**You might note in reading further about Luther, that, under political pressure, he never pursued house churches.... regardless of his thoughts about their significance to spiritual growth and relationships - hence, phrases like – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reformation....**

More commentary and resources regarding the following quote from Luther:

*“The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for allsorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacraments, and to do other Christian work...”*

**This quote is found in two books we currently recommend:**

- 1) “The Second Reformation; Reshaping the Church for the 21st Century” by William A. Beckham (TOUCH Publications, Houston, TX, 1995, 253 pp).

Dr. Herb Hoefler reviews this book at this link

<http://www.nowlcms.org/Resources/ExpMin/Books/NewTimes-review-122004.pdf>

Also <http://www.dse.nl/~tce/outlook/0302/0302book.html> is a link to a review of "The Second Reformation" on line – from Trinity Church in Eindhoven, Germany.

- 2) This Luther statement is also quoted in the book "Houses that Change the World" by Wolfgang Simson (Reprinted 2003 by Authentic Lifestyle/division of Authentic Media <http://www.paternoster-publishing.com> It is located on page 64