



"Meditate  
upon these things;  
give thyself  
wholly to them;  
that thy profiting  
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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Journal  
of  
Theology

**Church of the Lutheran Confession**

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VOLUME III

February 1963

NUMBER I

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# The Failure of Unbelief

See Matthew 17:1-20

"We have no child-problems.

We have only personal problems."

A sensitive study of our approach and performance  
in the vital area of Christian education.

The Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, together with what follows it in the sacred record, provides an absorbing study in contrasts. Geographically, we are taken from the lofty peak of the Transfiguration to the deep, hot shores that lie in the valley of the Sea of Galilee — a journey from above the clouds to below sea level; spiritually, we are transported from the transcendent majesty of a Christ taking counsel with Moses and Elijah concerning His forthcoming sufferings to the pitiful squalor of human unbelief wrestling in futility with the problem of sin.

We could hardly fail to be thoughtfully impressed as we compare the powerful, purposeful advance of the Savior from the hour of His Transfiguration into the valley of His Passion — and His effective treatment of the first human casualty that met Him upon His return to Capernaum — with the fumbling, hapless, ineffectual efforts that His disciples had been expending upon a solution of the same problem. And when we note that this problem involved a child, those of us who are called to deal with youth, at home, in school, in the church, begin to suspect that this Gospel account may have some specific bearing upon the difficulties of our task and could help us toward greater efficiency in its performance.

## I.

From the exaltation of His experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, the heart of our Savior seemed to plummet to a new low as He came back to Capernaum to be confronted by overwhelming evidences of the burden He was committed to bear. It appeared to Him in the tragic form of a child whose condition we can fully visualize only when we set together the various descriptions given of him by the three Synoptists. This boy was controlled by an evil spirit. As a result, he was completely unmanageable, had lost his speech, his hearing, his mind, and was subject to horrible fits which cast him, sometimes into the burning hearth, sometimes into the water. A remedy for the disastrous dislocation was quite beyond the reach of ordinary human powers or skills, for it was primarily a spiritual affliction. The child was beset by a devil. That is the blunt, factual diagnosis, affirmed by divine inspiration and not to be called into question merely because it has found no place among the theories entertained by modern psychiatry.

Here was a living witness of the towering kingdom of darkness which dominated the earth and whose destruction would cost the Son of God His life. But was it this prospect which assailed the spirit of Jesus when the distressed father brought the child to Him with a cry for mercy and help?

Christ was prepared to face the entire might of Satan's dominion. In the strength of His Transfiguration He was marching forward with utter firmness of step and certainty of purpose. The presence of one little devil would not stagger or depress Him. He was ready to shoulder the spiritual burden of the whole world, and could not be crushed by the affliction of one child. The defeat of this devil and the deliverance of his victim would be but an incident in the mighty Redeemer's journey through suffering to victory.

And yet, the light of joy seems to flicker and die in His eyes as the Savior stands before the wretched child and cries: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long must I suffer you?"

The true cause of this outburst is a matter of record. It came with the information that the disciples had tried to restore this boy, and had failed. They had failed despite the fact that the Lord had commissioned them and empowered them to this very end, that in His Name they might perform such works of deliverance (Matt. 10: 8). Though they were devoted to Jesus, though they took their calling seriously, though without doubt they applied the right words and accepted measures, they had failed. With what harshness did not this defeat underscore the fundamental uselessness of men in the war against the Prince of this world! Well though He know it, Jesus in this hour must have felt with redoubled force the truth that He trod the wine-press alone.

If only the disciples had been more fully aware of this. They were much aroused and considerably disgusted by the futility of their labors with the afflicted child. Had they not done the right things? Of course they had! Then why didn't they work? After the Lord had delivered the child of the enemy, the disciples requested an explanation of their failure. It was immediately forthcoming. It was brief. It was a resounding indictment and a revelation.

"Because of your unbelief!"

Let us seek to grasp the import of this shattering accusation. We would not be justified in assuming that Jesus intended to denounce His chosen Apostles as heathen, as men without faith. Such an interpretation would be monstrous and entirely unwarranted. The Lord did not say that His disciples had no faith. He said they had unbelief; and this unbelief operated against them in the hour of their effort to cure the afflicted child. As in the case of the father who cried: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," Mark 9: 24, so there could be and there was unbelief in the hearts of those who were most devoted to the Savior.

What was the nature of this unbelief? Perhaps we may put it this way: The disciples, who believed in Jesus as their Savior, did not regard Him as the real and only rescuer of the devil-ridden child. For the moment, at least, they had lost the sense of being mere applicators of the saving power of the Lord and attempted to meet the challenge of the devil

by virtue of their commission and their methods. In the physical absence of Jesus they had substituted their persons for His. No matter how small, how weak and imperfect their trust in Jesus' power over Satan were, if only they had acted in this faith and called forth the power, they could have accomplished anything. Sadly the Lord assured them of this.

## II.

We know that it is always unwise to draw too sharp a parallel between the disciples and ourselves, or to compare our experiences too exactly with theirs. But the light of such an event as the one we have been studying does indeed cast a gracious and welcome radiance upon the dark corners of the field in which we labor as servants of Jesus, and sometimes outlines certain principles with startling clarity.

Despite their terrifying and unusual details, the affliction of the demoniac boy and the disciples' struggle to free him bring with them a certain feeling of warm familiarity. In a less spectacular but no less emphatic manner those who are entrusted by Christ through the Church with the schooling and training of our youth are confronted by such "child-problems" continually. It is their very life and calling to meet with Satan in the hearts of children and drive him out. I am not thinking now especially of so-called problem children, although such cases certainly must be included and our conclusions will apply to them in fullest measure. But all children are problem-children. Their hearts are scarred by sin, their flesh is flesh, and their souls and bodies are Satan's choicest prey. Do we not seek to cast devils out of them every day? And do we not sometimes fail?

Essentially the building of Christian character, which we as educators consider to be our primary task, is a contest with the forces of evil, the devil, the world and the flesh, for the control of young bodies, souls and minds. To this task we prayerfully endeavor to bring each day such measure of consecration, loyalty and devotion to Jesus and His Gospel as the Holy Spirit generates and maintains in us. And in the application of our strength to the task we avail ourselves of tested and accepted forms and methods. These

receive much attention in our midst. They come in for lengthy discussion, debate and analysis. For we must deal with the complexities of child psychology and discover or rediscover adequate ways and means of integrating our approach to those whom we teach through an understanding of their intellectual and emotional life. Since it is our task to train them to "put away childish things" as they become men and women in Christ, we need to appreciate to the fullest the peculiar traits of the young; to understand, for example, that characteristic of childishness which Toynbee has called "momentary momentousness;" to adapt to its brief powers of concentration; and to set the pace toward the heights of Christian maturity by the length of the child's stride. Moreover, we have certain convictions regarding the relative merits of the various technical instruments by means of which we apply the power of God at our disposal. We rate the Christian day-school, the Sunday School, the Saturday school, the Summer school, the Bible class as they severally seem to answer the purposes to which we set them.

Yet in the midst of all this concern over individual consecration and outward form, however fruitful it may be in its place, shall we lose sight of the fact that, as and when we fail in our contest with Satan for the children that are brought to us, it is because of our unbelief?

Those of us who operate a Christian day-school and work with its superior facilities are apt to be complacent, considering our success as assured and our failures as due to causes beyond our control. Those of us who are not blest with a day-school incline toward gloomy reflections on the inadequacy of our facilities and heap the blame for lack of success upon the known weakness of the Sunday School or Saturday School as a means for dealing with the overwhelming forces of Satan.

In view of this attitude it seems necessary to point out what should be self-evident: that the methods and systems so essential to our work are human implements. They are imperfectly developed to put muscle into human effort and are adapted to meet the limitations of earthly dimensions of



time and space. Thus the Christian day-school is the best possible system for Christian character-building simply because we are what we are and because the conditions under which we and our children live are what they are. In like manner, consecration and loyalty are essential factors in the task, but only because without them we could not properly apply ourselves and would not be able to answer before God Who requires of stewards that they be found faithful.

But neither consecration nor system is the determining factor in the question of ultimate success or failure. Loyalty does not drive out devils, and neither does the method of operation. The experience of the disciples established this beyond argument.

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior; but do we tend to deny in practice His power to be the saving force in the children entrusted to us? I ask this because we sometimes find ourselves seeking to deliver them from the power of the Evil One by indirection. We want to channel Christ's saving grace to the child through the adequacy of our faithfulness and our methods. We are inclined to elevate our loyalty and our systems to the status of conductors of the saving power of God. In our minds we are tempted to rest our cause upon the quality of these conductors; if they are good, we succeed, if they are poor, we must expect failure.

That is a form of unbelief. We fail to appreciate the marvellous, all-sufficient power of the Christ Who alone was glorified unto the suffering and death which achieved the victory. He has already succeeded, for us all, and for the children under our care. It is futile and reprehensible to consider our contributions to the task as booster stations through which we must wire the saving power of Christ and step it up to effectual voltage. Christ is effective; we and all that we have, our personal attitude or our self-developed methods, add to Him not one whit. While it is true indeed that through indolence, through a lack of attention to duty or by a refusal to employ the means within our reach or at our disposal we prove to be obstacles rather than instruments for the power of God, we ought not draw the conclusion that



success is dependent upon our contribution to the processes of Christian growth and sanctification.

We have but one course to pursue: To trust implicitly in the absolute power of Christ to drive out devils and to bring this Christ with His authority and love to the hearts of the children. Simply put Christ and a child together and keep them together by the Word; and regard the result as a foregone conclusion. If we short-circuit the mighty grace of the Redeemer by grounding it in our personal effectiveness, we exhibit the unbelief which results in failure even under the most favorable circumstances.

Let us bear this ever in mind: That when the glorious Christ descended into the valley of men and directly contacted the curse-ridden child and his enemy, the issue was settled instantly. It will always be so. We have no child-problems. We have only personal problems: To adopt the best methods of work as God makes them available to us, and to be altogether faithful in the use of them; but above all, to believe without qualification, to believe implicitly and utterly, that Christ can and will put to rout the Kingdom of Darkness in the hearts of our youth and set up His rule of grace in them, under all conditions and by any methods, if we but faithfully speak and live the Gospel of Him before their ears and eyes in season and out of season.

E. Schaller

# The Place of Compromise in the Church

Reacting against the modern trend to compromise everything, one may fall into the opposite extreme of refusing to compromise anything. Hence a careful analysis of this problem is very much in order.

## I. WHERE COMPROMISE IS OUT OF PLACE

### In Matters of Doctrine.

Compromise is absolutely out of place in the church in matters of doctrine. The reason has been very simply stated by Luther when he repeatedly spoke of the doctrines of Scripture as belonging to God, not to man. If the doctrines of Scripture were of man and so of human origin, then man would have the natural right and authority to add or subtract, or to alter those doctrines in any way and so compromise them for the sake of temporal peace, organizational efficiency and well-being or for any other reason of expediency. But the doctrines of Scripture are of God and so not of human origin. Although they were recorded by men, they were recorded by holy men who wrote not in response to human motives, but who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21) They expressed God's doctrines in human language with words that had been taught them by the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:13) Without exception every single doctrine of Scripture originated in God, was revealed to man by the Spirit of God, and was recorded in human language in the books of the Bible by inspiration of the Spirit of God. In the fullest sense of the word, without any exceptions or limitations, the doctrines of Scripture are God's.

As soon as man begins or even contemplates compromising any doctrine of Scripture, he insults God. He makes himself guilty of the sin of blasphemy which in the Old Testament times was punishable by death. He violates the first commandment of the Law by honoring and trusting himself, his own insight or judgment, his intuitive feelings or religious consciousness, his joint understanding or agreement with others in his local congregation or synod rather than the naked Word of God in the Scriptures. When man compromises God's doctrines, he dethrones God and installs himself as judge supreme over things divine. No greater crime can be committed against the majesty of God. For this reason compromise is absolutely out of place in the church in matters of doctrine!

#### Scriptural Basis — Exhortations for Unity:

A. Not compromise, but unity in the confession of the one true faith is the repeated goal of scriptural exhortation. Consider the prayer of Paul for the Roman Christians: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5-6) Note that the unity that is to be the constant goal of believers is described as being of "one mind and one mouth." The meeting of minds and hearts in the Truth is to be expressed in a unanimous confession of mouth. There is no room here for the conflicting babble of voices which is so characteristic of the modern church scene and which betrays the disunity of minds and hearts and reveals the unchallenged reign of compromise in matters that allow of no compromise.

Well known also is the exhortation of Paul to the Ephesian Christians: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . . Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above

all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 1:1-6) Paul's great plea for unity in the church is based on the fact that there is but one Church of God, for the Body of Christ is neither multiple nor mutilated. There is but one Spirit of God who is not given to self-contradiction. He does not and cannot teach one believer one truth and a conflicting truth to another. He never espouses the cause of error. There is but one Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled all righteousness by keeping the Law of God and made full atonement by offering up His life's blood on the cursed tree of the cross. There is but one faith that saves, the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. All doctrines of Scripture lead to or flow from that saving faith. They are an integrated whole, not a fragmented assortment of conflicting and contradictory doctrines. There is only one baptism, the one instituted by Christ and administered with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. There is only one God and Father of all, for our God is not a multitude of deities, but one. Believers of all times and all places share a single common hope, the hope of living forever through faith in Him who is The Life. All these things being true and all of them emphasizing oneness, how can our God expect anything less than unity in His Church? That is why we are exhorted to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The prerequisite for such unity is acceptance of all the doctrines our God has caused to be revealed and recorded in the Scriptures. There is and there can be no room for compromise in matters of doctrine.

A third well-known exhortation of Paul's is the one to the Corinthian brethren: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10) Notice once again that the specifications for the desired unity are both agreement in speaking and agreement in the meaning of the words spoken. Here is no room "to agree to disagree," to find some formula of doctrinal confession that will allow two or more sides to interpret the confession according to their previous positions.

Dr. F. Pieper was one of God's greatest gifts to the Lutheran Church in America. For years he taught Christian Dogmatics (doctrines) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Here is a quotation from his text on "Christian Dogmatics" in which he discusses the above passage of Paul and its bearing on Christian unity.

In 1 Cor. 1:10 we have an exact definition of Christian unity: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing ( ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες ) and that there be no divisions among you." This is a demand for uniformity in speech ( λέγειν ) or in the profession of the Christian doctrine. Then the Apostle continues: "but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," ( ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ γνώμῃ ) Here he clearly says that Christians are to use the same words also in the same sense, Agreement in words with disagreement in meaning is altogether contrary to the unity God calls for, and to seek such a "unity" ("we agree to disagree") is immoral, a trifling with sacred, divine things, which is unseemly for Christians.

The Christian Church can and should have patience with the erring and seek through instruction to remove the error. But never can or should the Church grant error equal right with the truth. If it does, it renounces the truth itself. It is the very nature of truth to antagonize error. Truth which no longer excludes error, but grants it domicile, is eo ipso (by that very fact) resigning as truth. Pertinently Luther remarks: "Whoever really regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine." (St. L. XVII: 1180) Unionism in principle abolishes the difference

between truth and error, so that only through a "happy inconsistency" can the erring retain their hold on essential truth. For this reason unionism is a grave threat to the Christian Church. A person is fortunate indeed if, ignoring the words of Scripture enjoining him to avoid those who teach another Gospel, he yet retains his faith in the words: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

As for talk current in our day, even among so-called conservative theologians, that "various trends," that is, variations in doctrine and profession, are intended by God, one can merely say that it is shocking that within Christendom the testimony of Scripture should thus be contradicted. (Christian Dogmatics, Volume III, pages 426-427)

This quotation reveals that we stand today where the sainted Pieper stood when in his day the Missouri Synod was a fearlessly confessing orthodox Lutheran synod. May God grant that we continue to be as "shocked" over compromise in the area of Christian doctrine as was Pieper!

#### Scriptural Basis — Exhortation for Separation from All Who Compromise Doctrine:

In our own separation struggle a number of years ago we emphasized Paul's well-known plea in Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." At that time we were chided for emphasizing this passage so much and we were criticized for speaking and acting as though this were the only passage in all of Scriptures. It isn't, by far, but it was one of the passages that fitted the situation in which we found ourselves at that time. But still it was

only one of many passages that speak on this same subject, for the doctrine of separation from all compromisers of God's doctrine runs as a steady clear stream through all of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. One of the most powerful of these separation passages is the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians as found in his second epistle, the sixth chapter, verses 14-18. This passage on separation we also accept as a doctrine which dare not be compromised. In so doing we take our stand with faithful witnesses of the past. To demonstrate the continuity of our testimony with faithful men of the past we again refer you to —

A Voice from the Past — Francis Pieper, D.D.

This quotation is taken from a conference paper delivered by Dr. Pieper to the Southern District in 1889 at Klein, Harris County, Texas. The title of the paper is "The Difference Between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches." We quote the entire section entitled "2 Corinthians 6:14-18" —

2 Cor. 6:14-18 says most expressly: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Objections have been raised against the application of this passage as proof that God has forbidden fellowship with heterodox churches. The objectors



maintain that this passage speaks of unbelievers, and not of erring believers. But erring churches, insofar as they err, are also unbelieving. They are unbelieving with respect to quite a number of Bible passages. And to this they add the great evil that on the basis of their errors they have established sectarian communions in the Christian church. Thereby they split up Christendom and fight against the orthodox church.

Word for word 2 Cor. 6 applies to the erring churches insofar as they are such. It says: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" To preach false doctrine and to believe false doctrine is the greatest wickedness there is: a sin against the First Commandment. Luther stresses this so frequently. He always repeats: "False doctrine is sin against the First Commandment." Whoever sets God's Word aside, twists God's Word around, puts his own meaning into God's Word — he does not permit God to be his God; he acts wickedly. God often says in His Word; "Thou shalt not steal." But just as clearly and even more often we find it said in Scripture: Thou shalt not believe false doctrine; Thou shalt not preach false doctrine; Thou shalt not hear false doctrine. Now just as He is wicked who transgresses God's Word by stealing, so he is especially wicked who, contrary to the equally clear commandment of God, preaches, accepts, or promotes false doctrine, in any measure or form. When God says that you must not steal, then you must not steal even a little bit. The same applies to the matter of hearing and preaching false doctrine. One becomes a partaker of wickedness by spreading or advancing even only one doctrinal error. The first part of Christian righteousness and Christian life is the trusting acceptance of all of the Word of God.

We read further: "What communion hath light with darkness?" False doctrine is darkness, and true, revealed doctrine is the light in this world.

"What concord hath Christ with Belial?" All false doctrine is the work of the devil. It is the lie in spiritual things against God. And the real father of this lying is the devil. Whoever deals in false doctrine is doing the devil's service.

*Strong's over*  
"What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" The church is God's temple because God's Word resounds in it. Whenever a man's doctrine — error — is preached in the church, the worship of a different god is taught than the true One who has revealed Himself in Scripture. Yes, whenever a doctrine different from God's Word is proclaimed in the church, the house of God is turned into a temple of idols.

That the coming-out-from-among-them (2Cor. 6) applies in particular to separating from the heterodox, is set forth in Rom. 16:17 where we read: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and avoid them."

The objection is raised: "You yourselves admit that also in heterodox bodies there still are children of God, and yet by separating yourselves from these churches, you separate yourselves from the children of God in them; yes, you condemn these believers. In that case, isn't it better to practice fellowship with the heterodox?" First we answer No! It cannot be better because God expressly forbids us to do this. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves from the children of God among the sects, but from the sects as such. The sects separate these dear children of God from us.

They hold those who belong to us captive among themselves. So these believers must outwardly support a wicked cause while in their heart they belong to us. These children of God would, of course, come over to us at once if they were better instructed.

It is also for the benefit of the children of God among the heterodox that we refuse fellowship to the churches. Thereby we are constantly reminding them that they are in the wrong camp.

A reading of this testimony from the past is both refreshing and comforting. It reveals that our present position on no-compromise-in-matters-of-doctrine was the position of a Pieper in a generation before us and a Luther in a generation further removed.

#### The Former "Synodical Conference" Position on Compromise

The Synodical Conference was organized on the scriptural platform that compromise in doctrine is out of place in the church. Full agreement in all doctrines of the Scripture was declared to be the basis for church fellowship, whether that be prayer or pulpit fellowship or joint work in spiritual matters. This minority position in Christendom was confessed and defended over against Protestantism in general and also heterodox Lutheranism, both of which have always championed a greater or lesser degree of compromise in doctrine as practical and necessary for getting along together. But by the end of the 1930's pressures from within and without began to cause cracks in the confessional position of no-compromise in matters of doctrine.

#### The Widening Crack in "Missouri's" Position on Compromise

In 1938 the first faint evidences of a crack in the confessional position of Missouri appeared. At its convention in that year Missouri adopted a position that full agreement in

all doctrines of Scripture is not necessary for fellowship. Disagreement could be tolerated in some non-fundamental doctrines. That meant that the position of full-agreement-in-all-doctrines-before-fellowship was compromised in a limited area in regard to some non-fundamental doctrines. Over the years that initial crack has widened. Today we find Missouri steadfastly maintaining that The Synodical Conference should not be dissolved in an orderly manner, as both the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod requested at its last meeting, because the differences in doctrine and practice that have arisen over the past twenty-five years are either denied or declared to be too minor for such a drastic step as separation. The spirit of compromise that allows for divergent and contradictory positions in matters that have already been settled by the Word of God is now essential to the continued existence of The Synodical Conference. At the same time Missouri is presently entering into discussion with most other Lutheran bodies — bodies whose false position in important areas of Christian doctrine has in many cases been hardened by generations of defense and promulgation of error — doing so on the grounds that sufficient agreement in doctrine now exists at this very present time to form some national association of all Lutherans in America. Now a limited agreement is deemed a sufficient basis for joint church work. The scriptural call for complete agreement is considered unworkable, impractical and impossible. Thus Missouri is pursuing a course in which it now denies what it once confessed with unswerving loyalty, and propagandizes for a position that it once unhesitatingly challenged and attacked with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

The Crack that Developed in the "Wisconsin" Position on Compromise.

As the crack in the confessional position of Missouri was widening over the past twenty-five years, the Wisconsin Synod kept on trying to heal the rift. Many and varied avenues of admonition were utilized in order to show Missouri

*Note see early 2d Book 17*

the error of its ways and to help restore her to her former position. But continued contact with the leaven of error in Missouri — which in time made Missouri a "causer of divisions and offenses" in the church — polluted the Wisconsin position also. Wisconsin found itself compelled by criticism from within its own body to justify its continued fellowship with Missouri on the grounds that recognition of a church body as being a "causer of divisions and offenses" is not yet sufficient scriptural reason for separation. The debt of love in the area of admonition had to be paid to its fullest extent. Thus the love which admonishes was pitted against the love which separates, and Scripture was set against Scripture, God against God. But who could tell when that debt of love would be paid to its last farthing? Continual observation of the impact of its successive and varied efforts at admonitions was made. The reactions to those admonitions and the very atmosphere in the conventions of Missouri were scrutinized, weighed and their implications debated until finally in 1961, in convention assembled, a majority arrived at the conviction that admonition was of no further avail and the debt of love had been paid to its fullest. Then came the Suspension Resolutions.

Subsequently came also, as surely as night follows day, the reaping of the seeds of compromise sown over the matter of termination of fellowship. Not only had Wisconsin compromised that doctrine in its efforts to justify its own course of action, but now it was finding itself unable to agree on the interpretation of its own Suspension Resolutions. This disagreement within Wisconsin has become obvious, even to the casual and untrained observer, by repeated contrary and conflicting actions of Wisconsin in the area of fellowship. For example, in August of 1961 Wisconsin suspended fellowship with Missouri, but a short time thereafter the Apache Mission Choir accepted an invitation to sing at the convention of the Women's Missionary League that was held in Phoenix, Arizona. Making due allowance for the pressure of time, and granting that the arrangements had undoubtedly been made before the August convention adopted its Declaration

of Suspension, this action was nevertheless bound to cause confusion and offense. For several members of the higher echelons of Wisconsin were involved, as well as a Mission which is an official agency of the entire synod. Nor would it have been impossible to cancel the entire appearance. Not to have done this simple thing certainly created the appearance of strong dissent, at least on the part of some, from the action the synod had taken. — Then, in November of 1962 Wisconsin, together with the ELS, brought its memorial to the Synodical Conference urging the Conference to dissolve itself in an orderly manner because the scriptural basis for its continued existence had been destroyed. That memorial, as any minor prophet could have foretold, was defeated by a large vote along party lines. What Wisconsin wanted to accomplish — the dissolution of the Synodical Conference because its continued existence is but a caricature of its former glorious confession of doctrinal unity — was good, but the same Wisconsin, and also ELS, could not muster the courage to do the obvious and necessary — simply to withdraw from the Conference.

Thus compromise breeds confusion and confusion gives birth to a disavowal of confession in practice. All of a sudden the scriptural doctrine of the termination of fellowship has become obscure and mysterious. The situation in Wisconsin appears to be disagreement both over the doctrine involved and the meaning of the resolution which called for the suspension action — but agreement to remain faithful and loyal to the synod, right or wrong. Thus has compromise taken over and Wisconsin fallen victim to the very evil against which it has been contending all these years. \*

### The Position of the CLC on Compromise

We teach and confess that any and all compromise in matters of doctrine is blasphemy, a sin against the majesty of God, a violation of the first commandment, and a denial of the clarity of Scripture. In so teaching we trace our position back to the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. More recently we trace our position back to the original

confessional position of The Synodical Conference. We, therefore, declare ourselves to be the spiritual heirs of the Synodical Conference. What both Missouri and Wisconsin, also the ELS and the Slovak Synod, still claim to teach and practice, but are not, we are in fact teaching and practicing. May the Lord strengthen and preserve us in this confession and keep us from ever compromising the doctrine which belongs to Him, not to us!

## II. WHERE COMPROMISE IS IN PLACE

### In Non-Doctrinal Matters

These matters cover a wide variety of everyday decisions in the life of the church. Matters concerning public worship of the congregation as liturgical forms, ceremonies, customs, time of services, number of services etc. belong in the area of Christian liberty. In this area there is legitimate room for disagreement and place for compromise in the life of the church. (Circumstances, of course, can make matters of Christian liberty also matters of conscience.) To this same category belong also matters concerning property, finances, the implementation of Christian education, the carrying on of mission work, the administration of Christian charity, and so on — provided these things lie within the confines of fellowship. Opinions may and do differ widely among brethren as to how, when, where and in what manner all these activities of the church are to be carried out. The only means of securing democratic group action is by the acceptance of majority decisions which so frequently involve compromise. Here is an area where readiness to compromise is not only necessary, but demanded — demanded by Christian love. That love has many facets. Among them is —

Yieldingness — Motivation for Compromise

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." So St. Paul admonishes and exhorts the Philippians (4:5). Liter-



ally the word translated "moderation" means graciousness, forbearance, yieldingness. The opposite would be firmness, stubbornness. As firm as a Christian is to be in matters of doctrine, so yielding he is to be in regard to his own opinions and getting his own way in non-doctrinal matters. That does not mean that one dare not have firm convictions on the many practical matters that come up in the life of the church. Paul's exhortation is no call for a "mir nichts, dir nichts" attitude, a sort of wishy-washyness that has no definite opinion and takes no definite stand on anything. Firm convictions on practical matters a Christian may and should have. But after those opinions have been voiced and countered, and after a decision in the matter has been reached, then must follow a yielding to the decision of the majority regardless of whether such yielding conflicts with one's personal opinion or not. In these matters in the life of a congregation and a synod we follow the democratic way of doing things as in the social and political life about us. Yieldingness does, of course, demand humility in the presentation of one's firm convictions, avoidance of all judgment of motives, fairness to others, due consideration for the views of others, and then finally yielding to the will of the majority.

In this same epistle to the Philippians St. Paul exhorts (2:3): "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." The opposite of this recommended lowliness is pride — pride in one's own position, pride in one's own viewpoints and opinions as to the solution of a problem, pride in one's imagined or real superiority of knowledge, pride in being right, pride in forcing through one's own way. These are the things that are barriers to compromise and working together smoothly and harmoniously. These are the things that breed strife and ill will. Humility or lowliness of mind concedes that the other person may have as good or a better idea, that his solution to the problem may be better than mine, that his viewpoint and knowledge of the matter at hand is superior. Such an attitude begets compro-

mise and its fruit, working together in joy. May the Lord grant us grace to compromise in all things demanded by love.

And finally, brethren, let us never compromise where the love of the Word forbids, but ever compromise where the love of the brother demands! To this end help us, dear Father in heaven. Amen.

(From the Year Book of Grace Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota — with revisions by the author.)

Paul F. Nolting

# PAIDEIA

## Teaching that Takes

I bid you to a one-man revolution  
—The only revolution that is coming.

--Robert Frost

The wise man who could say precisely what is the nature of teaching that really takes hold would be thanked and blessed by the profession. Those who have a conscience for doing their school-work well have sought diligently and long for the secret of getting results. At times throughout the year there are lone reports from some private school, from some off-beat teacher, or from a venturesome leader who breaks the rules of custom and gets results doing things in a bold way.

Max Rafferty of California and Admiral Rickover of the Armed Services call for excellence in education, and we don't know of a soul who would say them nay. "The schools exist to teach organized and disciplined subjects. There are too many undisciplined brains running around the world today." Paul Goodman would throw away all present organization and start anew with the traditional community of scholars, an association of like-minded men who learn because they want to. These suggestions call for some serious thought.

An astounding thing about all this is that we know so little about education after all these years of working at it. After doing one's best, having to see how few catch fire with enthusiasm does not make for optimism. Luther had his doubts about the success of school reform as outlined by his famous "Preceptor of Germany," Philip Melanchthon, but he said, "In God's name an attempt must be made." We know that the great Reformer despaired of his good Germans'

taking the freedom that he would give them and using it right. St. Paul found that the Jew would not have what he taught them so he turned to the Gentiles. The Master Teacher of them all cried with tears in His eyes, "...and ye would not."

The analogy we have made is not incorrect. The fact of it has been the burden of every faculty we have been a part of. For it is not true that any teacher or school has the teaching that automatically "takes." Ah, yes, we have that which should. And because we have that which should succeed, we can at least talk about it. When the number that responds is sometimes high, we get downright excited. There is joy in the teacher's heart for every one student that gleams with response. A university professor was delighted that there was "someone" out there that understood. So we can go on; we can talk more about the teaching that takes.

Teaching that is "tough" takes with those who are ready for strong meat, who also have the appetite. But it is the scattered few who will sit some four hours listening to a lecture on epistemology. There were two students in a certain class studying music theory, out of a student body numbering over five thousand. Students stay away in droves from Latin, mathematics, and medicine; Greek is taken by those who have use for it; and it is a rare university that has a course in Hebrew. Most of this is too hard.

A mathematics teacher we know has a ninth grade pupil who reads everything available on space physics; his teacher with her master's in mathematics is busy solving the formulas for him. Soon the boy will be doing the calculations himself because he has need of them. We have students ourselves whom their parents have put to bed at two in the morning because they were reading books that are not "required." And didn't Michelangelo go by stealth to the morgue at night so he could study the musculature of the body for his art? When a man comes running in, trembling, begging to know what must he do to be saved — need teaching be "tough" and rugged to tell him?

After thinking for some years about these problems we have come to the thought that the teaching that takes is better defined as rather the conducting of learning that is for keeps. There, as we say, is a switch! What one does for keeps is something to which one devotes himself wholeheartedly, with all his energy, giving it all his time and attention. A person going at something for keeps will hardly be diverted from his course or retarded in his devotion.

This view of learning (and it is highly realistic) takes the burden from the teacher and leaves it with the learner (while it requires better teachers than ever). This view makes the learner essential to the process, the teacher accidental. Teachers cannot subsist without students, but students will not be stopped for lack of teachers. Universities originated when students who wanted to learn crowded around teachers who could help them find what they wanted to know. Accordingly, the university at Paris was such a free-wheeling collection of learners that for a hundred years there was not even a list of the students because there was no administrator around to care; the learners were there and the teachers were there, and that was that. X

Learning and progress and reform have in the vast majority of cases come from individuals working alone, and without any formal discipline other than that which came from themselves. It would be more correct to say that Luther made a university than to say that a university made Luther. It has been said of Thomas Henry Huxley that "had Huxley gone to Oxford or Cambridge, his career might have been quite different. But the meager income of his parents forbade higher education, and he was placed on the naval vessel Rattlesnake to learn medicine from the ship's surgeon. Four years later he left the navy to become a Fellow of the Royal Society. Thereafter his life was spent as an essayist, lecturer, and experimenter in such varied fields as physiology, biology, paleontology, and comparative anatomy." Speaking on our subject, John Henry Newman wrote: "A university is not a birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, of founders of schools, leaders of colonies, or conquerors of nations. It does not promise a generation of

Aristotles or Newtons, of Napoleons or Washingtons, of Raphaels or Shakespeares, though such miracles of nature it has before now contained within its precincts."

God set up the ideal methods and means of education when He directed Israel to bring up its children in the midst of adult activity, centered in the family, and made it a matter of direct adult communication with the children in the ongoing affairs of daily work and worship and conversation. The Greeks had a similar outdoor arrangement, and look what they did! The old Romans, in all their heathen ignorance of God, nevertheless had a carbon-copy of Israel's procedures. All three nations had success in their own way as long as these normal procedures prevailed. Every one of them failed when they set up schools to make it their business to teach, to inculcate, to transmit with determination the content of their cultures.

In all history, those individuals have learned and have achieved who were drawn into it for keeps. That child who immersed himself in his motive became the Bach and the Brahms. That boy who went no farther than the middle grades built the great Kaiser corporation. Some fishermen we know turned the world upside-down for the Christian faith. A few had the advantage of universities, such as St. Paul, Martin Luther, and Moses of old, skilled in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians; but in each case they took a direction other than that of their earlier training. Accordingly, there must be a more subtle factor to be searched out than the training of the mind at the hands of another, or the disciplining of the senses and abilities by some master sharpener.

"The teaching that takes" must either be modified, or it must be interpreted in terms of "the learning that is for keeps." In that shift lies the magic, if magic it be. We like to think that teachers and teaching can be an inspiration, but we can't be sure when it is so. We think of the process as one of pointing; but there is no way of telling in advance who will take the guidance. We like to think of schoolwork as a putting of heart into the learners; but we are astounded to see who will take heart, and who will not. We hold before

them an habitual vision of greatness; yet only those who have eyes will see. Nothing about it all is automatic — a disconcerting situation at times. But that is what we live with; that we must strive to better; there is our task.

We will not be satisfied to have just a few learners who work for keeps, so we try to increase the number with teaching that should take. When the number does not increase greatly, we teachers wonder where we have failed. And a parent wonders what he did wrong. The Savior sees His results, and He weeps over Jerusalem. But He still sends us into all the world to teach the Gospel of the Kingdom. We don't give up being parents. We do not resign our teaching. We try to do better tomorrow, seeking, searching, trying this, trying that; some of it succeeds, some fails. Somewhere in the struggle lies some winning. Those who are not willing to work at it on these terms had better not apply.

M. Galstad



# PREACHING THE WORD

## Behold My Sorrow

Lamentations is a book of songs of sorrow. Jeremiah the Prophet composed them as a memorial requiem dedicated to the sufferings of the people of Judah. Jerusalem, lying in its ruin and ashes after the passage of the Chaldean host in the year 586 before Christ, lifts up its voice to the world and to its God and weeps. Its fortresses and towers are scattered to dust; its beauty has vanished. Its people are marching in chains to the waters of Babylon, the home of their captivity. And behind them the broken stones of the City of God cry out their appeal to the world that passes heartlessly by, intent upon its business and pleasure, unmoved by the cruelty which godless men have inflicted upon Jerusalem. Zion's appeal challenges all hearts within reach of her voice: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

But surely we cannot overlook the deeper meaning of the Book of Lamentations. While it sounded forth the anguish of the Jewish nation and its capital city, so deeply wounded by the wrath of God, it was at the same time a book of prophecy and sang of a greater agony of heart and soul than that of Jerusalem. It is no longer meaningful to us that she should sit in her ashes and mourn. Her sufferings are long ended, and they were well deserved. They belong to the affairs of remote history which can no longer make demands upon our sympathy. But in the Lenten Season our thoughts go out to One who will, until the end of time, hurl this challenge and this plea at the world and at us. "Behold my sorrow! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

Upon the ruins of the old city a new Jerusalem was later built. And outside its walls there stood one day a Cross. Its wood is long since rotted and gone; yet it is still there, and it will always be there. It stands, like a ghastly throne, in the sight of all men. Human beings file by it on the road that leads from the cradle to the grave; and they hear the thunder of that voice, the sob of love, the appeal of the Crucified: "Behold my sorrow! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

Based upon this refrain, and drawing upon the significant words in which the Prophet develops its message, we offer herewith a series of devotional studies addressed particularly to the hearts of our pastors who are deeply engaged in the preaching of the Cross during this sacred season. The studies are designed to contribute to their personal edification and the stimulation of their faith; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. Each portion is developed from its own text and is accompanied by a reference to a correlated lection from the Passion history.

## I

Lamentations 1:12

Matthew 26:36-46

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

### 1.

There is a challenge in these words which, coming from the lips of the people of Jerusalem, could be disregarded. But let the Lord Jesus Christ confront us with the inquiry whether there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow, and we have a profound cause for reflection. If we regard the entire final Passion of our Lord, it is true that we find relatively little outward manifestation of sorrow. We see how He bears Himself as a King in the presence of His accusers;

we hear no wail of anguish as they press the crown of thorns upon His head. He endures in silence the stripes of the scourge, and we would need to look very closely into His weary eyes to catch a gleam of the suffering of His soul. Thus men have often underestimated the sorrow of Jesus Christ. They have likened it to their own griefs and their own heavy hearts. They say of Him that He was one of the world's greatest sufferers, but they deny Him the superlative of His title and declare, in effect: Yes, there has been sorrow like unto your sorrow, Jesus of Nazareth!

How pitifully shallow and worthless is such a view of Christ's Passion. Come with me to the very threshold of the Passion history and let us see whether there indeed be any sorrow like unto His. He is alone. The moonlight plays upon His haggard face. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup be taken from me. Yet not my will, but Thine, be done." Muted by distance, we begin to hear the tramp of marching feet, the muffled clank of scabbards; but to Him the sounds are lost in the midst of a vision of the morrow, of a cross, of unspeakable agony, of thirst and nakedness. Like the pall of the night there lies upon Him the wretchedness of one who will endure the most painful death after an innocent life, the loneliness of a man who is understood by but a few and soon to be deserted even by that handful of wavering friends. The garden of Gethsemane has but one gate for Him, and through its gap He will be led as a lamb to the slaughter. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"

Ah, but you will never understand unless you look deeper into this Man's soul. You will say, surely other men before and after Him have wrestled with fear and with death. Others have died unjustly and others have pleaded with their God for mercy. Why is there no sorrow like unto His sorrow? Look, then, and listen once more to His words: "... my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Do you not know upon whom you look? Is it not He who received a more excellent name than the angels? Who said: "I and the Father are one?" That He walks the way of the cross and must die the shameful death is a burden laid upon Him by His very

Father in heaven. Say not: But that is the case with the sorrow of every child of God; it is by His will that we all must have Gethsemanes in our lives. True enough; but tell me: Do your sorrows come upon you from the hands of an angry God? Are they intended to smother you under their weight, to destroy you? One of the first joys of a Christian comes in knowing that he is free from the wrath of God, that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; and the sorrows that God sends upon us, crushing as they may seem and often must be, are corrective measures of a Father who loves His child and lays the lash upon him to preserve him from sin and folly that lead to destruction.

Here, then, you have the point of difference between the sorrows of redeemed children of God and those of the Son of God. In the garden we tremble at our first glimpse of a soul cringing under the immense dread of God's irreconcilable anger. If you could look into hell, you would see sorrow which is similar, but not as great, as His. Never has this earth again witnessed such a spectacle in which God closes the fountain of His love and pours out His holy wrath upon One whom He loved. God laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all; and this was the day of His fierce anger, in which the righteous God was slowly turning His back upon the Burden-bearer, leaving Him alone to bear the punishment of the world.

## 2.

Before this pitiful, this overwhelming sight the world passes by during this Lenten season. The ringing church bells invite men to enter and contemplate for an hour the picture of this suffering Savior. At home, in their Bibles, the Passion story seems to cry to the people for their attention. Every civilized person in a Christian nation knows that this is Lent; and unless he be hopelessly ignorant, he knows something of the story of Lent. He has seen the Cross.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? If only this pleading cry might be written with unfading red letters into the blue sky so that no one might dare set foot outside his house without having it stare him in the face. Yet were such

a thing possible, the writing in the sky would soon become as common-place as the sun itself. It would be a nine-day wonder, and thereafter as unheeded as the clouds. The appeal of the Lord Jesus fills men's eyes whenever they glance at a crucifix enthroned on a church altar; or when men, passing by a figured church window, see the Christ kneeling in the agony of the Garden. But they pass by, the butcher, the baker, the men and women of all walks of life, all of them creatures doomed by nature to eternal death; and if they pause, they may do so only to sympathize, while the Savior of the world hungers for understanding.

How shall we answer Him? Shall we tell Christ what His Gethsemane is to us? Then our response will be that His suffering is so much to us that we would not and could not trade it for anything which the world can offer. For in the truth that in our stead He stood there under the waves of sorrow lies our entire joyful possession of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. We know that He bore our sins of His own free will; that He did it out of love of which we are not worthy; and that He cannot ask of us anything which would be too great a thankoffering to give.

Why, then, do WE still pass by? Having acknowledged our debt, why do we not pay it? Do we confess that we owe Him all, and then declare a moratorium? There is no cause. We are rich in those things which we may give to Him and which we owe Him. We can still acknowledge Him, in word and deed, as our beloved Lord and God. We can devote our lives to His cause. Great as was His sorrow, we may have the honor of restoring joy to Him by committing ourselves wholly and sincerely to serve Him in love and obedience.

All for Jesus — Thou hast loved us;  
All for Jesus — Thou hast died;  
All for Jesus — Thou art with us;  
All for Jesus Crucified!



"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? . . . From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day."

Man had turned against the God who made him, had deliberately left His care and forsaken His commands, had given himself over to the things which God hates, had steeped his body in sin and dedicated his heart to evil, had dug a pit between himself and his Creator which no human love could bridge. That God could, after it all and despite it all, still consider mankind dear enough to be bought at the price of the life of His Son is the supreme marvel of the Passion.

But while accepting the truth that God so loved the world, how was it possible for His Son, God of God and Light of Light, to go through the process of surrendering to the viciousness of those who crucified Him? The Scripture says: "He humbled himself and became obedient." Those are great words. They tell us of the change that came upon Christ our God and made His work of love possible. It is of this change, too, that the words of the prophecy from Lamentations speak.

## 1.

In preparation for an understanding of them, let us study the figure of our Lord as in a fleeting moment He showed Himself as the Mighty God. After the agony in the Garden, surrounded by His disciples, the Savior calmly awaited the arrival of the Temple guard whose torches could be seen gleaming among the trees. The Man they sought was not hiding in a clump of bushes; His figure, clothed in white garments, could be distinguished at a distance, and Judas the leader made straight for the waiting group. Soon there came that dramatic moment after the betrayal, the moment

filled with an embarrassed silence which was broken by the Lord's words: "Whom seek ye?" Like school children they answer: "Jesus of Nazareth." Very simply Christ sought to bring matters to a head by replying: "I am he." And then occurred that strange phenomenon. At His quiet word a bolt seemed to strike into the midst of the posse. As one man they fell backward to the ground.

Even as we read the account, the occurrence seems ridiculous. The Evangelist offers no explanation, and the world of wise men has ever been ready to strike this part of the story as a fanciful invention. But we shall see, not only that it did indeed happen, but that it constitutes one of the more significant portions of the Passion story. It is puzzling only to those who deny that Jesus was our God in the form of man. Why should not the soldiers have appeared silly and helpless in the presence of Him who had fashioned them in the womb?

There are creatures which live always in the blackest depths of the ocean and in the bowels of the earth. Bring them to the surface and lay them into the glare of the sun, and they die instantly, horribly. Just so, in much greater degree, is it impossible for sinners to exist in the light of the glory of God. If then these men, seeking to lay hands on Jesus, felt the tremendous force of His hidden Godhead; if they lost their footing before His quiet words; if they felt themselves suddenly stripped naked in body and soul with the eyes of their God piercing them through, knowing their every thought, the inmost life of the souls, carrying in Himself enough power to reduce them to powdery earth by a mere command — shall we not rather wonder that they were allowed to keep their life and breath? Here for a split second we see Jesus in display as the mighty God, giving forth a tiny quantity of that power by which He fashioned the sun and the stars and hung them like lanterns into the vault of the sky. Had He finished what He had begun, had He allowed His full majesty to shine forth, not only would His enemies have been stricken as grain before the hail, but the earth must have faded before the presence of its Creator. That would have been the end of salvation, of the Passion story, of human history and of time itself.



But God willed it otherwise. It was not a powerful Christ, but a weak Christ who would redeem and save mankind. The soldiers arose from the ground puzzled, shaken, and beheld a sad, frayed, powerless Man. Could this One from Galilee have upset a company of stalwart police?

There had been a day in which He stood in the midst of His enemies, at the edge of a cliff down which they wanted to hurl Him; and then, like a warrior whom no one dared to touch, He walked through the midst of them and left. But now He stands as though His muscles refuse to carry Him. There is a fire in His bones, sent from on high, a fire which is melting them like wax. The sins of men have settled in His joints, and the heat of God's anger is upon Him. The Almighty God, who might run, cannot because His legs will not carry Him. He does not fear; but He is weak to the point of surrender. So does He describe Himself in our text.

They have set a net for Him, to catch Him. Really, God had prepared the net, men had but to put it into place. At the midnight hour they sought Him out in His garden retreat and surrounded Him with sword and spear. And He who could have shorn the net becomes hopelessly entangled. He cannot move because there is no way out for a weak Christ. They have schemed against Him and He fell into the trap as though He were taken unawares.

They have brought ropes with which to tie Him; to tie those arms by which He upholds the world. What a foolish thing for such arms — rope! But see this Samson stretch forth His hands. He is bound and led away as one leads a beast.

He has become weak. Not that He lost His might — never, not for a moment. He did not lose, but He put it aside. It was not for use in this hour. The hopes and dreams of trembling men and women demanded that He become weak. The angels must not be summoned to His defense; the glory within Him dare not char the ropes that bind Him. How, otherwise, should that be accomplished which was written of Him? And so He bowed His head, He closeted within His great heart His divine power and went along the way that led to the cross.

And now, the same refrain. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? In part the answer has already been given; but we shall review it briefly, knowing how necessary it is to impress the truth upon our wayward hearts by repetition.

God could not choose a dishonest way of saving us from our sin and guilt. He is not a crafty judge who seeks to pervert justice with a show of right. Let us not regard His plan of salvation as a clever trick by which He outwitted Himself and avoided keeping His threats. He has affirmed the wages of sin to be death. Whoever thinks that God sought to evade the execution of that verdict has never known or understood God. He is not a man; hypocrisy is not a part of Him. When He vowed to punish sin, He did so because His perfect justice and purity demanded it. He changes not. And when He chose, out of His love for us, to provide for us a Substitute on whom the penalty for our sins was to be laid, that did not alter the degree or extent of the punishment.

But a Christ going through the hell of God's wrath in all His godly majesty and power, protected against suffering by the shield of His power — such a Christ would have been no Savior and His redemptive work must have been a worthless parody. Therefore He did renounce the use and right of His rightful power and glory and became a weak Christ. His weakness means this to us, that our salvation by Him is sure, in that He was a genuine substitute who could by the depth and extent of His suffering satisfy the justice of a righteous God. Let us rejoice over the weakness of Christ; it is our assurance that for our sins true atonement has been made.

But there is yet another note in the challenging cry of the Crucified, as we have previously discovered. He inquires whether we believe in the great and eternal benefits which His weakness has brought us and, if so, whether we have ever been really concerned to be of like mind with Him. Among men it is a shame to be weak. Weak in body, weak in mind — these things are shunned by the world, which moves to the chant of the survival of the fittest and treads

the weak under foot. For them there is no place among hard, battle-scarred, grasping, ruthless men. The Gospel is remodeled into a caricature because in its purity it calls for reverence and love toward a Man weak and despised and requires of men everywhere that they be weak also, confessing and glorying therein. The appeal of Jesus to us is that in accepting Him as our Savior we might confess ourselves too weak to save our own souls. He pleads that, since He, the majestic God, sacrificed His honor and assumed physical weakness in order to save us, we may not be too proud, too haughty to believe and confess that we are helplessly lost without Him. Every pretense of self-righteousness that we make, every false idea that we harbor of some natural, inherent goodness in ourselves is a denial of the value and need of His suffering and death. Refusing to acknowledge our utter impotence, we belong to those who go by, to whom it is nothing that Christ submitted to His enemies.

Let us, then, put our hearts to the test and see whether we have learned the ABC of the Christian faith: The readiness to lean and depend wholly upon Christ for the needs of body and soul. In the measure in which we cast ourselves upon the mercy and grace which is offered us, in that measure shall we understand and cherish the greatness of Him who for our sakes became weak.

### III

Lamentations 1:12a, 14a, b.

Mark 14:53-65

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? . . . The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck."

#### 1.

A great deal of interesting knowledge may be derived from a close study of the legal side of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrim. It is a sordid story, a tale of hates and passions and viciousness; and the proceedings have been almost uni-

versally condemned as illegal and unjust. Yet if we are asked to draw from this the conclusion that lawless procedure was the basic cause for the conviction of Jesus, we must dissent.

Even a trial devoid of due process of law can sometimes be deflected from its wicked objective. The Jews know that they dared not do away with Jesus by means of an ordinary trial. The people were for Him, and there would be so many witnesses to testify in His behalf that no charge could be made to stick. Knowing what lay before Him, moreover, the Lord might have prepared His defense in advance and by summoning public opinion in His behalf He might have put the Council to shame. But He dared not; He could not. A knitted yoke lay about His neck and strangled His defense.

There is something tragic about the vain efforts of the elders to find cause for judgment against Jesus. Surely they labored hard and strove mightily. Ordinarily it is not difficult for a kangaroo court, dedicated to lying and abuse, to find fault in its victim. Most people have several dark chapters in their lives which, properly misconstrued and distorted by a few bits of perjury, could make them seem like felons. In other words, if someone were looking for a binding case against any one of us, and had money and a disreputable judge at his disposal, it would be a rather simple matter to put us behind bars.

Now surely the Jewish Council had every one of these advantages against the Lord Jesus, and used them. But despite hired witnesses, bluff, hypocrisy and third degree methods, there was something like marble about the character of the Lord. Nothing looked or sounded as though it fitted Him or blended with His known personality. Men could not even find a charge that sounded reasonable; and in the end, Jesus was sentenced to death because He had, in the presence of them all and under oath, spoken the Truth!

This part of it has long been clear to us. What we probably do not always realize is that, if His enemies were helpless in their wish to find fault in Him, He was equally helpless in any effort to defend and clear Himself. Nothing impresses us more in the story of the trial than the silence of

Christ. One might be inclined to lay that to the fact that He knew how useless efforts at self-defense would have been. This indeed He did know. But there was a more profound reason for His silence.

The explanation is given us in the words of the text, the prophetic description of his trial. The Savior actually was somewhat in the position of a man who, at his trial, dares not speak in his own defense because he might reveal facts which would prove him guilty of crimes with which he is not even charged. Thus our Lord declares that there is a yoke about His neck, a yoke closely knit, choking off His defense. That yoke is sin, transgression. He knows, and so does everyone else, that He is not guilty of the silly accusations being lodged against Him at this bar of injustice. Yet He is actually guilty of death. The Sanhedrim does not know this, but Jesus does. He, and He alone, can feel and see the burden of guilt which marks Him as one who should and must be crucified. And this yoke seals His mouth. Whether the court convict Him wrongly or no, in the end He must die, for God has sentenced Him, and justly so. For upon Him is laid the sin of all. He is guilty of all the crimes on the calendar of any court. How can He speak for Himself, knowing this? Whatever mankind has ever done contrary to law, divine or human, has become His guilt and His burden. Strange to say and marvellous to contemplate, He was more guilty than the men who tried Him. What a marvellous circumstance. Let us dwell devoutly upon it. The Lord bore the guilt of us all and thus made us wholly free. He was the most guilty person on earth in that hour of His hearing before the court, even though there was no sin found in Him, no sin of His own.

## 2.

Need we be encouraged or urged to confront again the penetrating question: "Is it nothing to you?" Let us ponder upon the meaning which the yoke of sin upon the neck of Christ has for us.

It will not be unprofitable for us to reflect upon the power of that yoke and consider what must happen if man should

appear in judgment before his God with that knitted, strangling thing ringed about his throat. We saw how it made the Son of God helpless and defenseless in a court of wicked men. Let us learn, then, what it would do to us when standing in the Court of Almighty God. To this end we think now of the people who refuse to accept Christ as their all-sufficient Redeemer and who therefore are committed to the prospect of standing one Day before the throne of the Judge bearing their own sin-burden. Either a man casts his guilt upon Him who bore it for us all here, and pleads for mercy and forgiveness on the ground that Jesus paid the penalty for him, or he will have to stand trial with the yoke of sin upon his own neck. Many, many choose the latter course. They have heard of the Passion of Christ, but they do not accept its relief. They prefer to defend themselves in the highest Court, prefer to be their own advocates and undertake to prove to God that, though they have sinned, their sins are not too grievous and that they do not deserve the penalty of everlasting death. The spectacle of Christ in a court of man is symbolic of what must inevitably happen to the self-pleaders. All their pretty speeches will be forgotten when the yoke they bore so lightly on earth bears down on their windpipe and throttles them. There is no defense for the sinner who chooses to face the issue of God's justice. Scorning mercy and pardon, he will find no answer to any charge laid against him by the great Judge. He will be accused of unbelief and therefore of every transgression of the holy Law; and his conscience will choke him into silence. He will not even dare plead for leniency, but must go his silent way into darkness. (Matthew 22:11-13)

For our part, seeing our Savior stricken dumb before His accusers we cannot help but realize by what a miracle of love we have escaped the same fate. Through Him the knitted yoke of sin has been slipped from our wretched souls. In that great Day we shall hear our Advocate plead our case in His own dear Name; and we shall face our Father confidently and humbly with the assurance that they who trust in Christ shall not be condemned, for their sins shall not be remembered against them. Thus Christ, strangled by sin,

has given us an unassailable case before the supreme bar of justice. This is our confident hope and faith for which we thank His boundless mercy and shall use our free tongues and throats to speak and sing His praise.

The restrictions imposed by our limited space prevent further extensive development of the thoughts aroused by the rich prophetic content of other key verses in this chapter. But for those who may have been encouraged to pursue the course of these meditations privately, the following suggestions are appended.

#### IV

Lamentations 1:12a, 14b-15b:

John 19:1-16

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? . . . The Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men."

Our text is not just an historic song of woe. Originally it spoke of Jerusalem and its people; but it also serves as a word-picture of our Savior and permits us to behold

#### CHRIST, CRUSHED BY SHEER MAN-POWER,

who inquires of us: Is it nothing to you?

From a fading leaf of Jerusalem's bloody diary comes this mournful cry. They had swarmed like locusts, those Babylonians. They had surrounded the city, stormed the walls and won the contest. The young men of Israel fought bravely and well; but they were mowed down like tenpins, and the host of the heathen sprawled over the city like a huge spider, sucking its life-blood. When then it was all over and the tramp of the departing enemy, carrying with it the people of the defeated, had died away in the distance, stricken Jerusalem lifted its face to the calm night and uttered its lament: "The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me."

We turn from this vivid picture to the ultimate application of these words. Jesus our Lord takes them into His own mouth and thus describes how He, God's Son, was crushed and beaten by sheer manpower. Behold the Man, who went forth in strength to redeem His people and is called the Mighty God. Where is that strength, that force which was comparable to an army of brave young soldiers? It is crushed, ruined, put out of use. He can hardly bear Himself upright; He has been beaten and stricken at will by His enemies.

Is it nothing to you? The Jews alone could never have put Him to death. They had not enough manpower, or sinpower, to crush Him. He saw our faces staring at Him through the dawn of that bitter morning; He felt the weight of us all upon Him as He staggered from that judgment hall where we had pronounced His sentence and doomed Him with our guilt. Let us go to Him and pray that He may not remember that morning at Pilate's Praetorium against us; let us pray for His mercy and offer Him in thankfulness the use of our redeemed and liberated manpower, no longer for sin, but for His service.

# V

Lamentations 1:12a, 16

Matthew 27:33-50

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? . . . For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed."

We know that in great pain and sorrow men may cry brokenly without shedding tears. Thus whether we choose to picture a Christ whose cheeks are wet or a Christ who in His agony can no longer summon the relief of tears — in either case we may see in our text the image of the Crucified as

## THE WEEPING CHRIST.



Until a few moments before His death, the thoughts of a future glory forsook Him, and our Lord gave way to the deepest anguish of grief. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here are the tears of a soul dragged down into that terrible pit in which, as Scripture says, there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. "The comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me!"

Despite this anguish, for us so incomprehensible, the Redeemer finds room for other thoughts, and weeps for yet another reason. "My children," He says; "are desolate." *think of us* Through the red and black mists that swim before His eyes, our Savior is tormented by a kaleidoscopic vision of human misery: The world of men stretched out on the rack of sin; a little group of loved ones also, who have followed Him through it all. They are crushed now, their hopes dying with Him, and in His divine compassion He feels their pain with and in His own.

If He had tears for the pains of His children, when He Himself suffered so, will He not today, in eternal glory and happiness, feel for us yet more? Hebrews 4:14-16.

## VI

Lamentations 1:21

Matthew 27:57-66

"They have heard that I sigh: there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me."

The dead Savior is speaking. Not to us, surely; for that we shall have to wait until His Resurrection Day. But unto His Father He lives. He is keeping His engagement with the crucified malefactor, whom He promised to see this day in paradise; and at the same time, if we listen carefully, we are privileged to hear

THE DEAD CHRIST SPEAK TO HIS GOD.

Our ears may burn with shame. The Lord is reviewing what has happened to Him, and thinks of all those who caused it. As in the halls of Pilate He had seen, not only His immediate accusers, but the entire human race, so now. But this time His words are projected into the future. He speaks as though He stood in the year 1963, as though the message of His suffering and death had already been broadcast, as it is this day, to the far corners of the world. They have heard, and they are glad!

This sounds like a serious charge; and for some it is so indeed. But while it must blanch the faces of guilty sinners to hear Him say of them: "They shall be like unto me," the dead Savior's words bode well for us. He speaks to His Father, not to condemn, but to rejoice over a victory. For while it is true that those who reject Him shall, as He did, know terrible death and eternal agony, it is also true that many of His enemies have since become glad that God did what He did to His Son, and die with smiles on their lips and peace in their hearts. For they have by grace seized upon and taken hold of eternal life by virtue of what God did! And when He brings the Day He has called, they shall be like Him in glory. I John 3:2.

May God grant that we perpetually bear this prospect in our redeemed and sanctified hearts. Let us never tire of being glad that God hath done it!

E. Schaller

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THE JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY (Church of the Lutheran Confession) is published at New Ulm, Minnesota, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions are payable in advance at the CLC BOOK HOUSE, Box 145, New Ulm, Minnesota. The rate is \$3.00 per year for five issues: February, April, June, October, December. All correspondence other than subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to Prof. E. Reim, Editor, 436 James Ave., Mankato, Minnesota. The Editorial Committee: E. Reim, Chairman; C. M. Gullerud; E. Schaller, M. Galstad.