

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

I Timothy 4:15

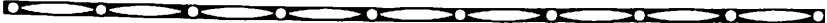
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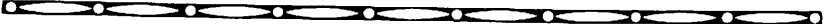
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The Historic Thrust of Christ's Resurrection



The Christian Church of the New Testament has always recognized the unique significance of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"Intrinsically Christianity is an Easter religion."¹ This observation is merely a more casual restatement of the conclusions voiced by the Apostle Paul in more earthy and blunt language: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1Cor. 15: 17. 19). This automatically disqualifies as fraudulent the claims to the Christian title made for their religious systems by those who expend time and effort in an attempt to cast doubt upon the historic fact of the Easter miracle.

Dr. C. J. Cadoux may say, with psychological plausibility: "Once the disciples were convinced by the visions they had had that Jesus was alive and active despite His death on the cross, their belief that his tomb must therefore be empty would follow inevitably as the

1) Lon Woodrum in Christianity Today, Vol. 7, p. 666

night the day, whether there was any actual evidence for it or not." ² W.R.Inge, in that classic patois which is the double-talk of the denier, can write: "The inner light can only testify to spiritual truths. It always speaks in the present tense; it cannot guarantee any historical event, past or future. It cannot guarantee either the gospel history or a future judgment. It can tell us that Christ is risen, and that He is alive forevermore, but not that He rose again the third day." ³ A. Loisy may voice the opinion that Christ's body was cast into the criminals' pit in the valley of Hinnom and was thus no longer in evidence, while D.F.Strauss entertains the probability that Jesus never actually died at all. But these, and many others, will never succeed in making of the Christian faith a "miserable" religion; they can only reveal themselves as of all men the most pitiable (ἐλαεινότεροι).

The arch of Christian truth stands secure; and its key-stone is the fact of the Resurrection. Do you hope to be saved? Paul anchors this hope upon the Resurrection against all storms. In Phillip's translation we hear him say: "If you openly admit by your own mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and if you believe in your own heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9-10). Is there a new life to those who have been awakened from the death of sin and delivered from the bondage of the Law? Hear from Paul the story of the woman who after her husband's death is free to marry another and observe how he applies it as a simile: "Thus, my brethren, you too have died unto the law by means of the body of Christ, so that ye can belong to another, namely to the one risen from the dead, so that we might bear fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4). Do you who died with Him desire to walk in a new life? How natural; "for if we have

2) The Historic Mission of Jesus; quoted by Bruce in "The Spreading Flame."

3) Christian Mysticism, p. 326

been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:5)

Everywhere, in doctrine and in life, the impact of the Resurrection is constant and determinative, like the beat of a riveting hammer that welds the Christian to God's power. In a periodical which habitually marks the conclusion of each of its articles in a formal manner, the typesetter quite inadvertently contradicted the spirit of an article by printing its final words thus: "Every day is Easter with (the Christian). He is a witness to death's Vanquisher. His life is a part of the Resurrection story. END." But that story has NO end. It permeates every Gospel truth and every cranny of the Christian's faith, and its power endures through the terminal gates of earthly life, as it is written: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1Thess. 4:14). And indeed, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11)

While the dominant character of Christ's Resurrection as a central feature of the Gospel is recognized by Christians everywhere, its most definitive quality is often not sufficiently noted. To be sure, we take pleasure in saying with Paul that Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4). We also affirm the singular nature of this Resurrection when we confess with Scripture that by it Jesus Christ is "become the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20). And we recognize with Peter the primacy of that event in the divine plan and promise, saying: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in

thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:24-26). Yet this Resurrection was unique in that it was the first, and until this day the only, resurrection.

Habits of thought and association have caused it to be loosely said that our Lord, after having in His earthly ministry restored the dead to life, did Himself return to life. Our Bible Story books speak of the resurrection (raising) of the widow's son at Nain and of Lazarus of Bethany. Thus it becomes easy to take for granted that the Easter sun revealed only the wonder of yet another resurrection; greater, indeed, as the subject was greater and the results of profounder significance, but in nature identical. Jesus was restored to life as Lazarus had been. As soon as that is said, of course, we recognize it as quite untrue. What certain human beings experienced by the power of God both in Old and in New Testament times was revivification, not resurrection. For of whom save Jesus Christ could it have been said that "death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9)? Elisha restored a widow's son to life, and Lazarus returned to his home in Bethany from a four-day sojourn in the grave. But the life to which these were awakened was a mortal life, and the bodies so marvellously resuscitated were doomed to turn to dust eventually. "Christ," on the other hand, "being raised from the dead dieth no more." This not merely makes His experience different; it sets it apart as an event that is utterly without parallel in history and that, more than any other, was determinative in moulding the history of the New Testament Church.

At the time that the Christian Church burst into Pentecostal bloom and began its phenomenal growth, it was able to flourish in the midst of a Judaism which had long since become adjusted to diversity in its own ranks. Within the shadow of its major theological premises of mono-

theism and the Mosaic law code, numerous sects and schools of thought were tolerated. We hear of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Zealots and the Essenes; and there were others of lesser prominence. Among them existed tensions, ideological and theological conflicts; yet within the framework of nationalistic Judaism all were accorded the right of existence. In this patchwork of schools and parties and the new sect of "the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) initially seemed to have secured for itself a proper place. When it leaped into prominence with a rushing sound, the event occurred in the holy city at a season holy to all Jews; and very soon, if not at the outset, its public worship was held in the sacred precincts of the temple. As a new and different movement it did, of course, become subjected to a certain amount of heckling that bordered on derision (Acts 2:13). But by and large the party of the Nazarenes found an astoundingly large acclaim: "fear came upon every soul" and they were "having favor with all the people." (Acts 2:43, 47). And the great Gamaliel could wax philosophical about the whole thing. Months after Pentecost he arose in the true spirit of Judaism and issued a policy statement that prevailed for some time thereafter: ". . . . if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it : (Acts 5).

This cautious concession to the new movement in Judaism was remarkable in view of the nature of its message. From the first, without hostility yet with uncompromising bluntness and reiteration, the men who called themselves Apostles had been issuing an indictment of manslaughter against the Jewish council. The church officers and theologians, they insisted, had unjustly killed Jesus of Nazareth. They had thus slain the Messiah, the Holy One of God. They had, indeed, committed theocide! (Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 4:10). Naturally such charges were not well received by the Jewish dignitaries. Yet since the apostolic proclamation found so many adherents, it seemed inopportune to proceed against the sect; and such

was the latitude in Judaism that even a party so unsympathetic toward the ruling class could be tolerated with a wait-and-see attitude. Thus the situation might well have remained static even under those tensions if another factor had not been involved.

The first decisive and overt opposition to the Christian congregation arose after it was already firmly established; and significantly, it originated with "... the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 4:1-2. Note in context Acts 3:26). The Sadducees constituted the liberal party, the "modernists" with whom the Savior had crossed swords over this very issue of fundamental importance in a debate that excluded the Pharisees except as interested observers. (Matt. 22: 23 ff; cf. v. 34). The priestly hierarchy in Israel at this time, including the families of the high priest and chief priests, were members of the sect of the Sadducees, although not all levitical temple priests were so aligned and a number of them had become obedient to the Faith (Acts 4:36; 6:7). The initial attack upon the Church, nevertheless, was mounted exclusively by the priestly clan of Sadduceean persuasion which obviously controlled the majority vote in the Sanhedrin. Except for their intolerance, who can say what course the history of the Church might have pursued?

Certainly the thrust of the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection was decisive here. Prominent men could withhold their hands from violence and revenge even in the face of the most grievous accusations hurled against them and under a barrage of doctrines with which they were utterly at odds. The hated Nazarene was being proclaimed as the stone which the builders had rejected but which became the Head of the Church's corner as the Judge of heaven and earth, as the One Who could save men from this, the untoward generation (Acts 2:40). All that they could

endure. But from the date of Peter's first sermon in which he dwelt upon the evidence, scriptural and historical, of the Resurrection of the Lord, the Sadducees found this truth unbearable. And when the arrests began, they were initiated by the foes of the Resurrection (see also Acts 5: 17). The great violence which culminated in the death of Stephen reached its climax at the moment that the martyr announced: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This vision necessarily and by definition of its context with Stephen's sermon had the Resurrection as its premise; and at that point the enemies stopped their ears.

Then there was Herod. With him the persecutions through secular authorities had their inception. His aggression, as he knew it would, "pleased the Jews" (Acts 12:1-3). But it pleased particularly that certain sect of the Jews with which Herod identified himself. In Matt. 16: 6 a warning of the Savior to His disciples is recorded: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." It is meaningful that when Mark reports the same incident he offers a further version of the Savior's remark: "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of Herod." (Mark 8:15). (The Freerianus and Tiflis codices, as well as the Chester Beatty papyrus and a few others have τῶν Ἡρωδιδῶν at this point). In his liberalistic views Herod was closely allied with the party of the Sadducees; and we are aware of his superstitious fears in connection with the thought of resurrection in general (Mark 6: 14). Thus it was through the hostility aroused by the persistent preaching of Christ's Resurrection that James was lost to the Church on earth at a critical time.

As has been stated, the Pharisees in general took a more phlegmatic attitude toward the rise of the Christian sect in their midst. Yet in the number of disciples of that school there arose a young man who, as his own reports and those of others would indicate, was destined for a brilliant career after concluding his studies at the feet of

Gamaliel, but who chose at this time to break with his illustrious teacher on the matter of the Nazarenes. If Gamaliel believed that time would decide the fate of this group, Saul did not share that comfortable theory. As a Pharisee he had no personal reason for rejecting the doctrine of a resurrection. But he was shrewd enough to see that, if men in large number continued to become persuaded of the truth that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the grave, the result could only be the ultimate destruction of the religious system to which he was committed. When therefore he stood among the multitude and heard Stephen once again proclaiming the living Messiah at the seat of power in heaven, he was filled with a resolution and held out his own arms as hangers for the clothes of the man whom the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection had doomed to execution by stoning. Had it been said that Jesus died unjustly and remained dead, doubtless there would never have been a persecuting Saul, as indeed there would have been no Church. Again it was the Resurrection that activated a man, and with him the whole of subsequent church history. It was most appropriate that this breather of hatred against the Church should have been stricken to the ground at Damascus a bit later by the vision of that very Risen One into whose service he then entered "as one born out of due time." And we can appreciate the delectable historical irony of the fact that at the moment of crisis in his apostolic career he was able to assure a court of inquiry that "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question," and thus find a stay of sentence in the resulting development of "a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees" on this issue. (Acts 23: 6-9).

The singular power of thrust with which Christ's Resurrection penetrated and moulded the shape of history in the Church has not lost its impetus. The struggle between Church and world has become infinitely more complex today than it was in apostolic times. Yet in its basic outline the discerning Christian may still recognize the ancient

... of Same - act. 5:30 →
Ruins of Mammoth Nov. 10:23

disposition of forces on that battlefield of Truth where the Church militant is so deeply engaged. Judaism in the historic sense is, of course, no longer a major contender; but the spirit of its schools and sects lives on in the schools and sects that have proliferated in Christendom. The cult of the Pharisees is perpetuated in the alliance of movements "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). These assume a tolerant, ~~Galatians-like~~ stance toward apostolic teaching, professing only that they would seek further confirmation of its accuracy. Yet all the while they are resolutely going forward in their course of synergistic ^{together with} devotion to self-salvation, ^{corrupting} the faith of Christians foolish enough to make common cause with them. They lay claim to a Bible-centered theology even while they are divesting the Scriptures of their authenticity, authority and objectivity. Unlike the Pharisees of old, the devotees of this cult are ^(many colors) a motley crew. No longer do they appear in uniform dress. Confessionally they are clothed in all colors of the rainbow and in several pastel shades as well.

Sometimes they are difficult to distinguish from the Sadducean family with which their party fights and lives in alliance even while an uneasy truce prevails between them. The modern Sadducees also appear on the battlefield in variegated costume; but they can usually be identified by their greater boldness and by their tactics. They always head the attack; their guns are trained upon the vitals. They do not rest until the Bible has been reduced to an archaic, anthropological exhibit and until Jesus Christ has been completely deprived of His true identity.

Weird and anomalous as it seems and has always seemed, Pharisee and Sadducee have made common cause of the fight to obliterate Christian apostolic orthodoxy. They may war between themselves; but at the apex of their forces they mount a joint attack. Meanwhile, in this struggle, Herod and Pilate again become friends.

Secular government, especially in our own country, when it intrudes itself upon the religious conflict, consistently contributes its forces to the ranks of Sadduceeism. The recent Supreme Court decisions in the public school prayer and devotions issue, for example, were met by howls of wrath among the Pharisees while the court actions themselves were initiated by the people espousing Sadduceean principles and were decided in their favor. It is a fact, moreover, that the nature of the decisions, while eminently constitutional and thus satisfying to those who truly cherish and understand our freedom, tends ultimately to promote the secularism which accords with the aims of a Sadduceean culture.

The same is true of the governmental policy which maintains the chaplaincy. The Pharisees, of course, applaud this institution; but only because by their denial of the Truth they have been blinded to the fact that the chaplaincy and any religious promotion of government so oriented must in the final analysis destroy the distinctiveness of the Christian faith, level out all differences and settle the Nation down to an amorphous, essentially hedonistic religion which retains nothing more than the merest semblance of Christian character.

Confronted with the welter of religious ideologies working in concert against the Truth, where shall the Christian Church center its counter-attack? Our defense has from time to time been concentrated at several vital points on the battlements of Truth. We have rushed forces to the wall where a breach has been attempted in the doctrine of inspiration. We have fought weary skirmishes in behalf of the vicarious nature of Christ's life and death. We have struggled to shore up the defenses of Genesis 1. And certainly none among us would say that such efforts were unnecessary or without the victories which the Lord has promised. Yet while the issues involved were thus clearly drawn, the ultimate, decisive question, the line at which the battle becomes white-hot

and the forces of faith and unbelief then quickly disengage in manifest impasse, lies directly athwart the open, empty tomb of our Lord.

The truth of this observation may not always appear on the surface; but a brief analysis will confirm it. The weapons of our warfare are the words of life. They are not carnal, but spiritual, and the power of truth is inherent in them. Yet in this world there are other words also: false words, counterfeit words, deceitful words, vain words; and in the battles that rage, these fill the air like confetti. At any given point on the field they are hurled in broadsides until the issues become confused amid the haze. Debate Genesis 1, and immediately hearers or readers are enveloped in a storm of scientific jargon, exercises in Hebrew, logical smokescreens and evolutionary premises that bewilder and obscure. Discuss the significance of the birth of Christ, or His death, or His ascension, and there will be a general, pious nodding of heads followed by a barrage of pseudo-theological explanations which have the form of sound words but in their total effect undermine and nullify every truth which these events proclaim, leaving the very historicity of Christ in doubt; yet in such a manner that many may be deceived into mistaking opponents for brethren and a state of war for a state of peace.

But on the doctrine of the Resurrection the fog of battle rolls away and the line is seen clearly drawn. There is no evasion or subterfuge possible at this point. To be sure, the enemies of the Gospel seek to mask their hostility at this juncture also. The Pharisees may display a tolerant attitude and let the matter pass in order to proceed to areas more fruitful to their efforts, as did the Judaizers of old. But the Sadducees become violent; and they draw their colleagues into the fray. Here they must show their colors, and teeth begin to appear between the velvet lips. Any effort at talking this truth to death and burying it under a heap of philosophical speculation must

fail. Such rhetoric becomes as unbelievable as was the lame explanation of their predecessors (Matt. 28:13). It is simply not responsive to the issue when men glibly explain that the living Christ was a figment of the tortured disappointment of His disciples, or a deliberate deception by unscrupulous leaders of a new sect. In view of all the circumstances and the evidence of history itself, the lie is more incredible than the facts even to the natural human mind. The facts and the words allow no logical distortion. Either Christ rose from the dead bodily and literally or the dominance of Christianity in every year of our Lord since that time becomes a monumental absurdity.

The Resurrection is not merely a link in the chain of events since Creation; it is the pivot upon which the past revolved and the future has mobility. St. Paul wrote, and we repeat, that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching (τὸ κήρυγμα) vain, and your faith is also vain." But must we not then also recognize the corollary proposition, namely, that it is the Resurrection which validates the kerygma and all of the objective truths thereof on which our faith rests? Our hope of salvation is utterly dependent upon the fact that "Christ was delivered for our offenses"; yet even the cardinal truth of redemption is secure only if we may also affirm that "he was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25). And then we may begin from the beginning. Then, with inexorable consistency, Adam was the fallen creature of a loving God and not an evolutionary late-comer. Moses and the Law, the Prophets and their anticipations, were harbingers of a new and better covenant. Then the birth of Jesus was "on this wise" and no other. Then the life of a Paul becomes intelligible and his doctrine a divine judgment and savour of death unto Pharisee and Sadducee alike. All of this must stand in its inspired fulness because the Resurrection supplies its incontrovertible support.

Small wonder, then, that the Apostles persisted in

raising the point of this massive weapon against all gain-sayers of their message, and with such success. There is not a New Testament book which does not, expressly or by implication, rest the cause of its preaching upon this event.

"...raised again for our justification.... Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4:25-5:1). "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:15). "Paul, an Apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1). "...that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead...." (Eph. 1:18-20). "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above..." (Col. 3:1). "...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead" 1 Thess. 1:10). "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel." (2 Tim. 2:8).

These are but samplings from the rich store of direct and indirect allusions to the Resurrection with which the apostolic writings are replete. Our own preaching ought to follow their example. Too often, perhaps, we accord to the Resurrection a large place only at Easter time and at funeral services. A pastor might well ask himself in retrospect: How often did I not merely refer to, but extol the Resurrection of Christ in my sermons during the present Trinity season? How often did I seek to elicit a response to God's call unto sanctification from my hearers by painting for them, not merely the love of God which

spared not His own Son, but especially the glory of the resurrected Savior, as Paul so frequently did?

Let us remember that in the mighty resurgence of the Church at Pentecost and in the days thereafter, with its vigor as well as its purifying trials, the message of the Resurrection was dominantly causative; for believers and unbelievers alike recognized in it the verification of the entire Gospel. And it will continue to hold this place to the end of time. If we must uphold and confess the inspired character of the Word against its detractors, the Resurrection is the ultimate confirmation of its integrity. If we needs must carefully distinguish the vicarious nature of the atonement from the vapid ethical theories which rob us of reconciliation with God, the Resurrection serves as conclusive proof of God's design in the death of His Son. And if we are to comfort and inspire penitent sinners in their crosses and trials, we shall, on the one hand, indeed not conceal or diminish the content or force of the amazing truth that "him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" but we shall unfailingly and in detail rehearse also the sweetly triumphant assurance of Peter that this was He "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

E. Schaller

PAIDEIA

Existentialism and Theology

An existential person may be described as one who has learned to say no, to assert himself as an individual over against the pressures of conformity as exerted by the many, who hold "accepted" views. This saying of no may be partly a behavioral reaction, even as we often see that negativism in a child represents the only way that the child knows of asserting himself. The case is similar with crushed and depressed adults who have given up and found it necessary to be cared for in institutions. If they can be brought to assert themselves at least so much as to become angry when provoked they are anyway acting like living persons and not just breathing beings. Men have this need to be persons with satisfying self-concepts. The saying of no in the case of existential persons is more than the psychological no. It is philosophically a rejection of rational explanations of life that leave people uninvolved as persons.

Accordingly, existentialism is more a verb than a noun. It is more a style of life actually lived than it is an ideal or accepted pattern of life held mentally for approbation by oneself or by others. It is not a philosophy defined as a unified view of life. It is not a system. It is rather a way of behaving, of acting, and of reacting. It has been called a posture. It can be called a mood. It is not ready with pat answers, and so is as unpredictable as life itself.

Before we conclude that such an attitude must be nihilistic and anarchistic we must give it a hearing and inquire carefully as to what it is that it objects to. We will discover that intellectualization is the enemy. The mightiest of existentialists, the gloomy Dane, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), asserted this as his mission: "It was intelligence and nothing else that had to be opposed." He felt that the great benefactors of mankind, the thinkers and philosophers and theologians, in reducing the world to neat systems had made things too easy, too neat, too pat and final. He felt that they had not considered all the evidence. Life was not that simple. He felt that it was his duty to make some things harder, at least as hard as they really are. He had to reintroduce the involvement of the individual. Why do the righteous suffer, and why do the wicked prosper? Does the ruggedly honest man come out ahead?

The thinkers of the past had aimed at objectivity, at discovery of ultimate truth, at essence and being, real Being. As they looked around they saw change and decay, coming and going, the passing of the temporary. They decided that the only "really real" objects in the universe are the universals or Ideas. Note well, these Ideas are the objects of the rationalizing mind. These Eternal Essences are the findings of the intellectualizing mind. Treeness is found to be real; a given oak may be made into a table or it may lie there and rot directly, but in all events it is an accidens. Dobbin may die, but horseness, a thing grasped only by the mind, is really real. Dobbin may be held by his halter, but what constitutes being a horse is mastered by one who knows.

What harm, we ask, is this intellectualization? In itself, none. But in what has been done with it, much. It has been used as an excuse for non-participation in the world of trees and horses. It has been used to justify the superiority of contemplation over the activity of participation in

the world of things. It has led to sterility when ideas have been left, in Whitehead's wording, inert. It led to the staticism of the Middle Ages; to a discussion among doctors lasting many hours trying to reason how many teeth there are in the mouth of a horse; to the conclusion that since God is perfection, and since the only perfect orbit of a planet would be a circle, the planets must move in perfect circles; to the conclusion that oppression of labor is not wrong because it lies within the idea of the master-servant relationship that masters give all the orders. would be a circle, the planets must move in perfect circles; to the conclusion that oppression of labor is not wrong because it lies within the idea of the master-servant relationship that masters give all the orders.

A false use of the categories of ideas has allowed men to excuse their behavior in the concrete world of living because they compensate for it by correctness in their abstract world of thinking. A man jailed for drunkenness one night protested against the arrest because he belonged to a certain church, the one known for its doctrinal correctness. We find church bodies referring to their doctrinal position as correct when they are admonished for the error of their practice. We can almost hear them say, "Can't you hear what we have said? That should satisfy. " "The king can do no wrong" was a one-time example of the same perversion, "he's the king. "

The belief has persisted that correct Thought would lead to a solution of the problems of men. The Greek originators of rationalism, that is, of intellectualism, conceived their utopia, as in Plato's Republic. It was to be a reasonable society, so reasonable that a philosopher should be king. The system failed to deliver, some say because of the "failure of nerve;" anyway, the excellence of their thought did not take them out of the jungle of their problems. The brilliant systematization of Aristotle, held for centuries by the medievals as the ultimate in hu-

man thought, failed to change the condition of men. Even worse, others contend, it set the brakes upon inquiry into actual existing conditions, conditions that were to the leaders, not important because they were accidental, transitory, not real.

Those involved in the scientific revolution that began in the 17th century were sure that the knowledge they offered the world would enhance the happiness of man. It must be remembered that beneath the surface this new knowledge was of the same class (how Greek we are!) as the knowledge of the early philosophers: it was rationalism, the findings of reason, generalization, intellectualization, the formulation of laws, of dogmas, of doctrines, of concepts to be grasped by the mind. And it must be remembered that all who have contributed to Thought have, whether consciously or not, fondly hoped to contradict the proverb of Ecclesiastes that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." It has generally been believed that the man who knows will be a good man. The 19th century with its implementation of the rights of man and with its temporal fruits of the industrial revolution looked forward to the 20th century as the inevitable age of happiness and peace and progress. Its conviction was based upon the foundation of knowledge. With knowledge it was felt that progress would be automatic.

In preparing for our discussion of the explosion of existentialism in the climax of this movement we must keep that fact central in our minds. The accumulated knowledge of mankind, the fruit of its intellectualism, the findings of its keenest minds -- all added up to the idealism, the ideation, the head-work, let us say, that was esteemed at the top of the hierarchy of values. No one verbalized this better than did the German philosopher Hegel (1770-1831). He went all the way and said, "The Real is rational, and the rational is Real." He brought to its logical conclusion the thought of western philosophy expressed in the famous

verse of Parmenides, "It is the same thing that can be thought as can be." Existence (the daily struggle) can only be lived, so it must be left out of the picture of reality. Hegel tried to smuggle existence back into his comprehensive scheme of idealism by a route that we will not take the space to report here. It is outlined in any of the standard references. But it was in that smuggling activity that Kierkegaard caught him and raised the hue and cry. Kierkegaard shouted as loudly as Dr. Samuel Johnson might have screamed had he kicked that famous stone hard enough to break his toe. Both men said the same thing. Existence is real, and it will not do to ignore the pains of pathological conditions with some fine generalizations about the principles of health. It will not do to theorize beautifully as to what is the Church, and then in Roman fashion to treat its members as "children of the Church" whose main value and function lie in their paying the bills for the cathedrals and other glamor. It will not do to see someone cold and hungry and then feel that one has adequately reacted when he said, "Fare you well, be you warmed and filled." The Corban incident in the Gospels is another instance of how a certain philosophy can neatly remove one from, and explain away, the realities of existence. Another case is the mistaken talk about divine right of kings and the boast of Louis XIV, "I am the state."

We must always remember that the fact of abuse and perversion is not in itself a sufficient reason for rejecting a proposition which is wrong only in its abuse and perversion. The Greek activity of abstraction, of objective thinking, is concerned with producing results which can become public property. This activity is in itself an excellent thing. The exaltation of this activity to the point of making it the only really real activity of man is the perversion that brings out a revolt. Contrariwise, the reaction which makes the daily living of man the only real reality is equally a perversion. It leads to a rejection of quality, to a renunciation of the very idea of values, at least as traditionally held, and leads man to find his sat-

isfactions in the quantity of his concrete activities and enjoyments.

It needs to be repeated that existentialism is not a philosophy in the academic sense. It is not a system of thought aiming to explain life from a unified point of view. To existentialism the idea of system is anomalous. To be existential is to be free of determinism. Nothing in life is sufficiently predictable to an existential person for anyone to forecast certain consequences.

We can better understand the existential mode of behavior if we try to grasp the characteristics of the posture. It does, for instance, not place much confidence in direct communication, defined as the making of one's own truth the property of another. One does not know a truth until he has experienced it, as Kant has said. The philosophy of idealism finally calls for necessity: right thinking will necessarily produce right consequences, thinking here defined as the rational process. Its followers have the philosophical optimism that whatever is is right. This removes the vagaries of existence from the realm of the real and leaves them in the category of change and accident, consequently unimportant.

To the existentialist communication must be replaced by experience. His position is nicely put in Brubacher's A History of the Problems of Education, p.213: "Ever since the social culture had been reduced to written symbols and ever since education had taken the social shortcut of vicarious learning through the written or printed word rather than through direct experience, one of the most persistent aberrations of education had been that the oncoming generation had often memorized the literary form of their social culture without always comprehending its actual meaning. Of this difficulty reformers of nearly every century had been aware. Yet, though many had urged that comprehension and memorization

go hand in hand, little or nothing had been done to mark out the steps in facilitating understanding. Few teachers realized, as Pestalozzi so clearly did, that 'When a third person, to whom the matter is clear, puts words into my mouth with which he makes it clear to people in his own condition, it is not on that account clear to me, but it is and will remain his clear thing, not mine, inasmuch as the words of another cannot be for me what they are to him-- the exact expression of his own idea, which is to him perfectly clear. '"

A devotee of a certain "far out" mode of modern art answered an uninitiated inquirer this way: "If you gotta ask what is it, you'll never get to know." An enlightening analogy to illustrate the problem is found in the impossibility of communicating to someone pagan just what is Christianity. It simply cannot be communicated; it cannot be told any more than the appearance of a mountain can be described to a person who never left the plains. Suppose one wants to become a Christian. What Christianity is can be hinted at only by indirection, together with the objective facts and doings of God that form not only its foundation but its content. Seeing Jesus in the Gospels will reveal what God is; watching Nicodemus, Paul, Peter, and Apollos makes it still more understandable; experiencing it for oneself makes it plainer than memorizing the Apostolic Creed.

It is existential, then, to be personally involved. This concept reveals much of professional Christianity as artificial. Jesus told the Pharisees that the very fact that they said they saw was the very reason for their blindness. They couldn't get involved in becoming children of God because they insisted that they were the children of Abraham.

The aim of him who knows is to enjoy contemplation, meditation, and rest; characteristic of the existential person is continual striving and living and ever coming to

new heights of insight and involvement. The latter considers the knower's rational concepts an inferior way to knowledge, inferior to sense experience and inner experience. The Christian existentialist goes beyond Aristotle's rational goal of contemplation and makes contemplation and meditation a valid means of attaining insights into the world that is. It is better, he feels, to experience life in the world that is than to abstract from it a world of thought in the mind and then treat that world of the intellectualizing mind as superior to that in which he stubs his toe.

An illustration can be drawn from mathematics, which is purely a matter of the mind, a generalization that is abstracted from the real world of stubbed toes. Plato believed that the only really real mathematics was that which he could call Idea. There never was a perfect circle, but the ideal circle is perfect. Fiveness cannot be bought even in the modern drugstore, nor can one find a pound of dollar signs in their perfect state removed from the decaying substance of wood or metal or paper. Imperfect circles and uncertain dollar signs are not really important; they are very low in the category of value even if made of iron or molded of gold-- but the Idea of circle is imperishable, even eternal, it has Essence and Being. The existential-minded person is quite unimpressed except as he becomes involved with triangles in bracing his roof or holding up the bridge; he does not prefer to run in circles, but to make them serve him, say as wheels in the machinery. He needs the lever and fulcrum to pry stones out of his field, not for the amusement of addicts who with pride abstract them from his world, but belittle him for his temporal tools that wear out in the hard work of making a living.

Some students of Luther emphasize the fact that he took a dim view of the rational foundations for a belief in God that were spun by the Aristotelian Thomists. One

points out that there was an immediacy about Luther's knowledge of God which is lacking in that of St. Thomas. Even if Aquinas' natural knowledge of God is supplemented by the revealed, it does not add up to Luther's "theology of the Cross" which is contrasted with the "mind-kind" of the scholastics, which Luther called their "theology of Glory." Christian existentialists hail Luther as one of their champions. They quote his words in his commentary on Psalm 5: "By living, by dying, by being damned one becomes a theologian, not by understanding, reading, and speculating."

Luther wants us to experience God, fear, love, and trust Him, not to argue and reason about Him. We would like to suggest that this is perhaps the heart of what Luther means when he hurls his condemnation of "that dame reason." It is not just reason as another word for human unbelief or difficulty of belief that he is talking about. It is the methodology that scholastic thinking has inherited in western philosophy and combined with its Christianity. We would do well to think seriously about what entered the church when St. Thomas Aquinas performed the nuptials for Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. Anyone who has read a volume of Luther can recall the different approach that he has. For Luther, God is not to be discovered by inference, but He is to be apprehended in nature as well as He is revealed in the Word. Luther also guards carefully against the idea of unmediated relationship between God and man. He glorifies the Word and makes it the treasure compared with which the world is too small in value to be exchanged for it. But Luther finds God "unveiling" Himself to us in everything that goes on in our lives. Even when he was persuaded to go hunting with his friends he found the hunted hare that he had wrapped for protection in his coat a symbol of the hunted soul pursued by the dog Satan. God was so real to Luther that he was experiencing Him in every vicissitude of life.

Here is the nexus between theology and the existential stance. Our opportunity to find God, to be confronted by Him, to be ground down into the dust by His Law and to be exalted into the heavenlies by His Gospel is something dear to him who has gone through the hell of contrition and repentance but found peace in the experience of grace which makes him veritably a son of God. The reasoning process has its place. Luther placed it at the top of those characteristics which make us men. Using it to arrive at generalizations of things (call them real objective objects, justified thingification) to be confessed and believed is a valid occupation, indeed a high activity. One Luther student has coined an expression to combine both aspects of this truly Lutheran theological activity: mediated immediacy. "We do not reach God by inferring His existence, nature, and attributes from His masks and veils, but God Himself comes to meet us in them-- none other than the God who meets us in Christ."

The existential mode, then, must accompany the thinking and inferring mind. Do not ask us to take sides for or against the existential manner, and do not ask us to vote for or against the inferential procedure of formulating truth. They are two sides of the same coin. Do not ask us to pronounce a value judgment upon white and black placed in juxtaposition. No one goes through life as a devotee of big things in contrast to little things. The well-proportioned person who wants daintiness in her earrings wants majesty in the mountains. "There is no sense in casting a vote for or against existentialism. That would be like voting for or against the wind. Winds save crops and cleanse cities; they also rip apart barns and factories. Existentialism likewise brings blessings and fury." (Shinn:

The Reformation has been called an existential Protest, and the "pro" must be taken in its original meaning of "for." Those who protested were not satisfied with the accepted forms of scholastically derived hierarchies. They wanted to reassert the right of individual participation and judgment. The Reformer's theses put down some things to be believed, but the much quoted first one was existential in its statements of what the life of a believer should be, a process of anxiety plus the leap of faith.

Christianity had become conventional. Its activities had been deposited with those who knew. People believed what the church believed—don't disturb them by asking what that truth might be. Thomas Carlyle made the famous reference to the saying that "Socrates is terribly at ease in Zion." All was rationally accounted for: Peter was Christ's vicar; the church was in charge of tradition and its interpretation; all would be finally saved so surely as they remained obedient to the church, despite a longer or shorter stint in purgatory. No one was too disturbed about the human condition: poverty might be bad, but it would pass; sickness might be serious, but the sufferer would finally be relieved; ignorance might exist in mountainous proportions, but whatever was was right. The accepted view of life was neat, pat, orderly, and explained. So surely as there were still some believers around, there had to be an explosion. A John Baptist must disturb Zion. An Elijah must arise to be the enemy.

When we observe as Greeks and try to generalize and communicate this picture, we experience the weakness of language as a symbol. That objective communication is very often impossible is one of the characteristic understandings of the existentialists. We have had this experience in connection with preparing sermons: in reading the

text, studying the original, making the sermon-study, and meditating upon the material we have thrilled with thoughts and ideas and insights that should make a valuable message for our hearers. When we turned to the task of putting these fermenting thoughts into the form required by good Greek rational unities, theme and parts and all that, the impact got away. "We murder to dissect." We cut and slice and force and finish until somehow the point gets lost. Many of our readers of this essay will remember with the writer what communication we had at the first discussion for a whole forenoon of the topic, existentialism. Minds interacted, and there was dialogue.

God was not able to make Himself known to us by words; He had to appear before us in Jesus of Nazareth and "exist" among us in the form of One we could see with our eyes, look upon, and handle with our hands. Note it well: only those who entered into a personal relationship with Jesus saw God in Him — those who were wounded and hurt in this experience called life, those who suffered anxiety and pain, those who responded with faith and found in Him their completion, their fulfillment as persons.

Those who did not stop with the "I-It" relationship (where classical thought is inclined to stop) but became involved in the "I-Thou" relationship (to borrow the terms made famous by the Jewish existentialist, Martin Buber) became children of God. This is what those mean who have told us that Jesus as a person is more important to us than are His sayings as a teacher. As briefly as we can put it, this seems to be the chief characteristic of Christian existentialism.

In this connection we should recall the many passages in Scripture which describe the agony and the striving, the stumbling and the falling, the reaching and the grasping, the begging and the demanding, the crying out and the insisting — of many a saint whose pilgrimage to the New

Jerusalem is reported in those pages.

The existentialist reminds us that only in that struggle and victory do we become real persons, real individuals. It seems that the only people God can use are those who will exert themselves, engage in the conflict, take up their cross and follow after to attain that very thing for which God took hold of them. The violent take the kingdom of heaven by force. Persons who have come into a living "I-Thou" relationship with God rise to the high stature that God would inspire in them when they call God Himself to account! Luther was at his grandest when he put his cause up to God who had promised. No prayer is more perfect than the promise tossed back at God. Job would not just submit to slaughter: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." That famous passage closes: "But I will maintain mine own ways before him." He would submit to all that God had for him to endure, but he would retain his person and integrity as an individual. The Lord wrestled with Jacob on the banks of the Jabbok until there was physical injury; so strongly did Jacob exert himself in the struggle that the anthropomorphic Lord couldn't handle him without resorting to his attributes as deity. God was a real person to Jacob, not an "It" about whom he had been told, not a Being about whom it was sufficient to make a confession.

Jesus could not hold off the woman of Canaan with the objective, plain, and stated truth: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." That was plainly true, but to her He was more complicated. She could take Him by a side which she may have heard earlier that He had, or which somehow her faith at that moment discerned, and she whipped him in the argument because He did not have a way out! The only way to prevail with God is to enter into the personal encounter with Him; the battle that endureth unto the end is not fought with academic arguments.

The existential man protests against trivial and easy religion, against religion that remains chiefly a rational knowing, and that finds easy refuge in authority. The extremist existentialist will not grant that objective generalization is really knowledge; he will assert that it is not knowledge until it is experienced, until the personal relationship and involvement have taken place. He will contend that putting ideas in order with precision not only can, but must destroy their validity. Truth thus ordered suffers from what the French call professional deformation. We see what is meant when we look at the caricature of Christianity that results when theology and the ministry become influenced by what has been called the spectre of professionalism. The Greeks were aware of this although they did not speak of it in the same terms; but they did warn against the consequence of anyone's doing something too well. Professionalism in education can become so precise, so rational and theoretical, that the requirements of pupils and students as living, active, and reacting persons is forgotten. At that point professionalism has deformed the process and itself become a caricature.

Generalizing in philosophy, theologizing in religion, professionalizing in education, rigorizing in law, legalizing in the managing of a home or of a business-- all of these can become so intellectualized and so rarefied and so far removed from the realities of life that reaction among living people sooner or later builds up to the point of explosion. This is what we referred to in the beginning as both a psychological and a philosophical necessity. Then, as the Angel Gabriel says in Green Pastures, a play by Marc Connelly, "Everything nailed down is coming loose."

The existentialist analyzes the coming loose as the inevitable consequence of an unwarranted nailing down. He has learned from life that it was never intended that things are neatly settled. Room should always have been left for contingency, and for the necessary freedom of man to

live and move and grow and develop and constantly change in the process of becoming. This is what Luther insisted on in his remark that anyone who says that he is a Christian is no Christian (defining is, of course, in its philosophical sense of ultimate existence, being). He said further, "This life is a journey on which we constantly progress from faith to faith, from love to love, from patience to patience, and from cross to cross. It is not righteousness but justification; not cleanness but cleansing. We have not reached the goal, but we are all journeying toward it. Some have progressed much farther on their way than others. God is satisfied to find that we work with determination."

A few paragraphs from Irrational Man by William Barrett will cast further light on the two postures that we are discussing, as he writes of the Hebrews and the Greeks: "Hebraism contains no eternal realm of essences, which Greek philosophy was to fabricate, through Plato, as affording the intellectual deliverance from the evil of time. Such a realm of eternal essences is possible only for a detached intellect, one who, in Plato's phrase, becomes a spectator of all time and all existence. This ideal of the philosopher as the highest human type-- the theoretical intellect who from the vantage point of eternity can survey all time and existence-- is altogether foreign to the Hebraic concept of the man of faith who is passionately committed to his own mortal being. Detachment was for the Hebrew an impermissible state of mind, a vice rather than a virtue; or rather it was something that Biblical man was not yet even able to conceive, since he had not reached the level of rational abstraction of the Greek. His existence was too earth-bound, too laden with the oppressive images of mortality, to permit him to experience the philosopher's detachment. The notion of the immortality of the soul as an intellectual substance (and that that immortality might even be demonstrated rationally) had not

dawned upon the mind of Biblical man. If he hoped at all to escape mortality it was on the basis of personal trust that his Creator might raise him once again from the dust...

"The ideal man of Hebraism is the man of faith; for Hellenism, at least as it came to ultimate philosophic expression in its two greatest philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, the ideal man is the man of reason, the philosopher who as a spectator of all time and existence must rise above these.

"The man of faith is the concrete man in his wholeness. Hebraism does not raise its eyes to the universal and abstract; its vision is always of the concrete, particular, individual man. The Greeks, on the other hand, were the first thinkers in history; they discovered the universal, the abstract and timeless essences, forms, and Ideas. The intoxication of this discovery (which marked nothing less than the earliest emergence and differentiation of the rational function) led Plato to hold that man lives only insofar as he lives in the eternal.

"The eternal is a rather shadowy concept for the Hebrew except as it is embodied in the person of the unknowable and terrible God. For the Greek eternity is something to which man has ready and continuous access through his intellect.

"For the Hebrew the status of the intellect is rather typified by the silly and proud babbling of Job's friends, whose arguments never touch the core of the matter. Intellect and logic are the pride of fools and do not touch the ultimate issues of life, which transpire at a depth that language can never reach, the ultimate depth of faith. Says Job at the end of the Book: 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.'...

"The reader probably has already divined that the fea-

tures of Hebraic man are those which existential philosophy has attempted to exhume and bring to the reflective consciousness of our time, a time in which as a matter of historical happening the Hebraic religion (which means Western religion) no longer retains its unconditional validity for the mass of mankind."

The atheistic existentialist appears to indulge in unwarranted license and blasphemous reaction against the stern intellectualization of "truth" that he cannot submit to. It follows the old pattern of unbelief. What has happened is well worded by one of the writers for today's "Theatre of the Absurd": "Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless."

The mood of the atheistic existential man was well put by Ernest Hemingway in that famous and oft-quoted paragraph in A Farewell to Arms: "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."

Another recent writer has a youthful character speak

for his generation: "We have pimples, but no suffering, money but no wealth... delinquency but no evil... television but no insight... I.Q. 's but no intellects. We have everything but the onething without which human beings cannot live ... something for which to die slightly." As in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, they would take the cash and let the credit go.

Much popular literature in the last ten years has been devoted especially to the work of portraying the sad situation in a world where everything has come loose. A reviewer of one of these recent books says: "There are no heroes.... Lawyers and engineers, war-rich contractors and businessmen, country club drifters and adulterers, newspapermen on the way down, saloon-keepers on the way up, deadbeats, pimps, and whores, they possess in common their uncommon reality and the fact that with few exceptions they have made a mess of their lives, or are on the verge of doing so.... The breakdown of human relationships is the favorite theme; failure, loneliness, or boredom appear and reappear in his stories. He depicts unsparingly a continuing war of attrition between the individual and his society, between the middle-aged and the young; between husband and wife and lover, if the joyless participants can be called lovers; between parent and child. The world described is neither a moral place nor a merry one, but crowded, noisy, full of eating and drinking, making love, laughing and the contrary, cheating, fighting, dancing, and conniving."

Other art is busy with the same portrayal. The word absurd is used, and it is correct if it is realized that the word means more than just ridiculous. To the modern pagan existentialist, not the one we have been concerned with in most of this essay, the world is exactly that: absurd. There are no established morals, conventionally understood. The word square is a word of opprobrium. The old virtue of thrift defined as not spending for luxuries is economic

stupidity. A huge public debt is not serious because "we owe it to ourselves."

Modern art of all kinds describes this disorganized man. If modern music sounds like boys pulling apart a bedspring, it is good art because it is giving a correct picture of the disorder and conflict within our rootless, undedicated, uncommitted cynics who under the threat of death from above have decided to have one last fling. The unsavory plays of some of the writers for the theater of the absurd are so salacious that the reviewer of one of them this year resorted to Latin for some of the things he felt obliged to report. The typical existential pagan who is meant when the ordinary man uses the term today is one who has found an excuse for not being bound by principles and morals. He has traded the ideal of excellence for the goal of indulgence. And within the framework of the existential attitude he has found himself a reason for rejecting quality in favor of quantity of stimulation, titillation, satisfaction of the crude desires. It is a sorry picture.

The thinking goes like this: man has been reduced to a partaker in the animal kingdom, so why shouldn't he act like one; labor has been robbed of creativity and satisfaction by the cold performances of the machine, so what is the pleasure in that; we have power and wealth in abundance, but over sixty percent of our national budget is devoted to armaments for killing and a race for the dust of the moon; we earn good salaries, but it has become well-nigh punitive to own one's own home; we eat a rich and tasty diet, but Thanksgiving is spoiled with chicken; the race up the pyramid of the corporation leaves a trail of broken homes and unhappy children-- who in suburbia can't even have a place to dig holes. Wealth and power have faded as the condition of a good life. Such is the loss of man. His suffering is called alienation. All pains him: when he goes to the supermarket, that symbol of his preoccupation with good things, he is afflicted with the misery of choice.

The popular David Riesman, who has discussed what has happened to the lonely crowd, put his reaction this way: "A revival of the tradition of utopian thinking seems to me one of the most important intellectual tasks of to-day." Reenter the Greek! Ideas do have consequences. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Wheels do come full circle.

We indicated earlier the useful aspects of existentialism. An overdose of it is poisonous, whether it be of the good kind or bad.

Something more should be said about the modern existential theologians. Karl Barth sought an existential declaration of God's holiness, man's sin, redemption in Christ and justification by faith. This he did in his important commentary on Romans. But one criticism of him is that he forgot that we do not get our faith only from subjective experience and hermeneutics. Our faith is grounded on the all-embracing objective order of creation, preservation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification. Those are facts, and they can be known. To be sure, submerged to the low level of "dogma and nothing but" they are mishandled by men. The existential reminder of Luther is definitely in order. There are implications here for the Christian ministry and classroom and home---specific criticisms of how we are doing that could seem almost revolutionary. They should be spelled out in further writing on the subject. Suffice it to say now that we can neither tolerate the religion of the characteristically intellectual, nor can we play fast and loose with the subjectivity of Luther's "sow with a bag of oats." Barthianism and the theology of all the other one-time "Lutherans" out of modern Germany have eroded that sure foundation of our heritage, the clear pure fountains of Israel, the revealed, inspired, and written Word.

In discussing the two prime tensions so often men-

tioned in the above we have surely noticed that man is fundamentally ambiguous. He was that way in Eden. He could do good, or he could do evil. He remains capable of enlightenment and salvation, and he is subject to darkness and damnation. He is filled with tensions and contradictions, even when converted, which cannot be resolved by means of exact or consistent thinking. For he is at war with himself. He is split down the middle. He is both battleground and prey. His condition cannot be healed by more abundant knowledge of his own gaining or as a thing apart imparted to him. The existential response must be made, as we see from the pages of Scripture. This is because man is man. If man could quickly become either animal or God, someone has said, all would be solved. But that, man cannot.

The solution is in that consummation which all Revelation points to in Colossians 2:9: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him." This truth (but more than a "truth" intellectually defined) must be presented to man, and in the confrontation man must respond. Man is an existential person in the presence of God; never has God treated him as a pre-set machine.

Martin Galstad

PREACHING THE WORD

Sola Scriptura!

Sola Gratia!

Sola Fide!

(A series of brief addresses delivered on the occasion of a joint Reformation observance by churches of the CLC at New Ulm, Minn. 1962)

Grace be unto you, and Peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I.

About three thousand years ago there was time when people heard very little from God. Concerning that age, it is written in I Samuel 3:1:

"AND THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS PRECIOUS IN THOSE DAYS; THERE WAS NO OPEN VISION."

The statement that the Word of the Lord was "precious" does not refer to the value men placed upon it, but means rather that it was very scarce. There was no open vision, no revelation. And while God was silent, the painful consequences of the sins of the people, and of their estrangement from God, became ever more grave.

About 2000 years ago there was another period in the history of the world when God was virtually silent; but this time in another way. The Word of the Lord was there; but it was little preached or heeded, and the glorious voice of grace which had spoken through the prophets was

muffled. This was the period which is sometimes called "the age of divine silence," the years of transition from the Old to the New Testament days. Of its sudden ending it is written: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." The golden voice of John the Baptist rang forth at last, and the silence was broken.

Some 450 years ago it happened again. There was less reason or excuse for it than ever before. The full and complete divine revelation lay in the hands of men. To the last jot and tittle the knowledge of salvation was available, not as of recent publication but in volumes so old that many were musty and yellowed. But few men looked for truth, and fewer found it under the immense heap of spiritual corruption and error that called itself "the church." Here men went to church, they paid their dues, they performed the outward function of religion and did not know the Word . . . in fact, did not regard it necessary to know it so long as they belonged to what was called "the church." Once again the voice of God was virtually silent.

Is it to become so again in our times? How could we allow such a tragedy to overtake us—we who know our desperate need? Before the Reformation few men knew how to sing or say:

"All our knowledge, sense and sight
Lie in deepest darkness shrouded,
Till Thy Spirit breaks our night
With the beams of truth unclouded."

We have learned this again; but if God's Word sinks into silence among us, our hearts will never in this life see the light again. Such a threat hangs over us in our new age of corruption and unbelief. That the disaster may not overtake us, we have assembled here tonight to praise and thank God and to reflect upon the blessings which dawned upon the earth in the year of our Lord 1517. May the Holy Ghost move our hearts to a true appreciation of our heritage.

II.

When His Zion cries, God hears in His heaven; and in His own good time He shatters the silence that spells death to men.

There came the iron clang of a hammer upon a church portal. It was a Saturday, not a Sunday; yet the ring of the iron might have resounded as though all the church bells in the world had suddenly begun to chime. For with the nailing of the 95 Theses upon the church door at Wittenberg the Holy Word suddenly became alive and vibrant again, and men began to remember and relearn the blessed assurance of the Apostle Peter:

"WE HAVE ALSO A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY; WHEREUNTO YE DO WELL THAT YE TAKE HEED, AS UNTO A LIGHT THAT SHINETH IN A DARK PLACE, UNTIL THE DAY DAWN, AND THE DAY STAR ARISE IN YOUR HEARTS."

Appealing to that sure Word, Luther on that day began to scatter the darkness of the Papacy. Here is the formal principle upon which the Reformation rested; and we had better take a most careful look at it.

We celebrate tonight, not the birth of a new church body nor the work of a religious genius, but the re-discovery of an ancient truth, namely that the Bible is the light in human darkness, that it is the only source of the knowledge of our salvation, that it is for this purpose utterly sufficient, that it is the voice of God in our life and that without it we must die eternally.

The only pure spiritual light that men may ever know on earth—the only wisdom that is eternally true—comes to us from the written Word. Ignorance and sin are untouched by the highest scientific skill and the most complicated mathematical formulae known to man.

SOLA SCRIPTURA! Scripture alone.

"Here may the blind and hungry come
And light and food receive.

Here shall the lowliest guest have room,
And taste and see and live."

SOLA SCRIPTURA!

"It shineth like a beacon
Above the darkling world."

It is the Church's hope of the present; its torch alone wards off soul-destroying error; its radiance gives un-failing certainty in doctrine. It is the Church's hope of the future; it alone will preserve us in the true faith, and by its means the Holy Ghost can unite Christ's people in one confession.

So was the authority of Holy Scripture reaffirmed during the Reformation; and where it was accepted, the silence of God was broken. He spoke, and His servants heard, and they responded.

"Now shall thanks and praise ascending
For Thy mercies without ending,
Rise to Thee, our Saviour blest.
With Thy gracious aid defend us;
Let Thy guiding light attend us,
Bring us to Thy place of rest."

III.

During the Reformation God spoke. And what was it He said through the Reformation? Many things indeed, you may well reply; for "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Once God speaks, He never stops until He has covered with His vast wisdom all the manifold needs of human life and being that is so dependent upon Him in Whom we live and move and have our being.

But in all this there is a central message, a theme to which all other divine speech is only an accompaniment. It is the key in which the music of heaven is written; it is the truth that undergirds all other truths. God's voice came through loud and clear by means of the Reformation, saying:

"BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED, THROUGH FAITH; AND

THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD;
NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST."

Look at this message, and let its simple outline strike at your hearts. YE ARE SAVED, it says; and this is the supreme truth which contradicts every human theology and all human experience. Not: Ye shall be saved. Nor: If ye believe, God will save you. YE ARE SAVED; and all the pain and agony, the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of God's Son give power to that message, because He saved us - and that means all of us, the faithless and the believing alike. When we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly; and God was in Him, reconciling the world unto Himself. This was an act of grace, of pure and utter mercy; and it is finished, it stands accomplished. This truth is not conditioned, even by our believing. SOLA GRATIA — Grace alone—by this force the world stands redeemed AND justified. And if God adds: "By faith." it is to let us know how this salvation is to be appropriated, to be enjoyed by each of us. Believe it, He says. Do not try to be worthy of it, to earn it, to gamble for it. Accept the message and you have what is says and declares, namely the forgiveness of sins.

This is the Gospel for every age; and it is older, more profound, than any human despair. They whose lives were "like a writing in transparent ink, on pages without edges, in words without meaning, in sentences that never ended, whose sin was an ocean without a shore, whose guilt a mountain without a top" — they hear it said in the voice that spoke through the Reformation in tones of hi fidelity: "Ye are saved by grace, through faith." And all of it, both grace and faith, are a gift of God.

Nowhere in the counsels of men has such news been made. That which God hath prepared for them that love Him, He has revealed through His Spirit.

"May we in faith its tidings learn,
Nor thanklessly its blessings spurn.

May we in faith its truth confess
And praise the Lord our Righteousness."

IV.

The Reformation brought forth no new doctrines. The record of God's message was closed when John the Apostle inscribed its final words: "And if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." What St. Paul and his colleagues had preached was the whole counsel of God.

Yet some of it seems to have been written especially for the heirs of the Apostles upon whom the ends of the world are come. We find it in the form of a warning already uttered by the great missionary apostle in a farewell sermon delivered near Ephesus:

"FOR I KNOW THIS, THAT AFTER MY DEPARTING SHALL GRIEVOUS WOLVES ENTER IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK. ALSO OF YOUR OWN SELVES SHALL MEN ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY DISCIPLES AFTER THEM."

Anyone who has the pure Gospel committed to him — and that includes us — will find this warning in place; for many things have happened since the Reformation, and continue to occur, which give to this warning a sharp urgency. It makes us pause to ponder where we stand in relation to it.

Today — 3000 years after Samuel, 2000 years after Christ, and less than 500 years after Luther — we are once more living in a time when the Word of the Lord is exceedingly scarce. Here, in a land settled after the Reformation by such who had benefited by the great blessings of that Reformation, men who have now drifted so far from the true God that millions hardly know what it is like to hear His voice and obey His will. Even some who claim to be searching complain that they are unable to find Him; and certain students of history have dared to call our "post-christian" era.

Surely this is not because the Word of God is inaccessible to men. The Bible is the most widely distributed book in the world. But they do not know what is in it. They

quote from it, but do not understand it. In truth, they do not believe it; and so, in a sense, they do not actually have it.

Is not the explanation this, that wolves have multiplied and have invaded the churches and have spoken perverse things? It is no secret that many religious leaders of to-day do not accept the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God? That they say that doctrines of the Bible belong to an unscientific past? Is it not true that many ministers do not preach the Gospel at all? Is it not true that the Lutheran name has been besmirched by modernist and liberal theologians who pay lip-service to Luther and undermine his greatest contribution at every opportunity?

And what has that to do with us? Need we explain it to members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession? We have stepped out from others over what many call minor differences. How few there are that understand that we have severed former fellowship relations, not because of minor differences but because the doctrine of the Word of God is at stake. When He speaks, we listen; and if we will not listen to His whispers, we shall soon not be able to hear His shouting.

Sola Scriptura is the very source of life to us; for where it is lost, Grace and Faith are next to go. That we be a little flock is not important. What is important is that there be a flock in which the sheep that hear the Shepherd's voice can find company and comfort and shelter. Are there not enough who have forsaken Luther's Savior? In these days of crisis and confusion, does His voice not come back to us, saying: "Will ye also go away?" Let us turn our faces about to the four winds of heaven, look carefully, and then reply: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

V.

God spoke 3000 years ago through a boy who was doing chores for the High Priest in the temple at Jerusalem. He

spoke at the last, 2000 years ago, by His Son. And now He has carried His message to the mountain-tops of the world through the mouth of a struggling monk at Wittenberg in Germany. In that Reformation, once again, He confirmed the unshakeable promise that came from His heart and that His Son Jesus Christ put into words of authority:

"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT."

You may well believe that, dear friends. Have no doubt that it will be done. In the first Paradise God saw to it that a river went out from Eden to water the garden. And in the Jerusalem of God's elect in heaven, as John saw it in his revelation, there flows a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God to water the City. But between that first paradise and the second one, as the Children of Korah were wont to sing in the 46. Psalm, there is also a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High, the Church on earth. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.

And if corrupters roil the waters and clog the stream of the life-giving Word and the Sacraments, God finds someone to clear it, so that His beloved may drink. Even when steeples are falling and spires crumble in every land, the Church endures, and the waters of life will flow for her.

Thus they flow for us today! This is our grateful Reformation theme. Though we stand in conflict, strive in weakness and sometimes bend in tears, we feel the Rock beneath our feet, namely the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. In confidence we see the Reformation as a witness that this privilege will endure so long as men survive on earth; and we say:

"Sure as Thy Truth shall last,
To Zion shall be given
The brightest glories earth can yield
And brighter bliss of heaven.

"And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song;
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

"O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

E. Schaller

N O T E

If the reader is interested in the unique construction of the service in which this sermon material was used, he may secure a copy of the service folder by sending 10¢ in stamps to the CLC Book House, Box 145, New Ulm, Minnesota. Supply limited.

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