



"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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# THE RIGHTEOUSNESS

## OF THE LORD



We have in previous issues published our translation of excerpts from Prof. August Pieper's Commentary on the second part of Isaiah, for the sake of making his treatment of certain key words of this portion of Isaiah's prophecies available to our readers. Herewith we offer another, one that in our estimation is one of the most important.

*Fear thou not; for I am with thee;  
Be not dismayed; for I am thy God;  
I will strengthen thee; I will uphold thee;  
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of  
my righteousness.*

In the original Hebrew the emphasized part of the above line consists of the two words *BIMIN TSIDQI*. Of these Professor Pieper says the following.

That JAMIN, the right hand, is a figure of speech for power is well known. In the construct state of J'MIN TSIDQI — the right hand of my righteousness — the genitive is epexegetical and adjectival, and like the frequent HAR QODSHI (my holy hill) is to be rendered attributively as "by my righteous

right hand, " as though it read BIMINI TSADDIQ. The problem is what is really meant here by TSEDEQ.

This opens up one of the most important questions in Isaiah, yes, in all of Scripture. TSEDEQ, TS'DAQAH, this is one of the greatest, indeed, the one great concept of salvation in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah did not invent the term; it is as old as revelation. It was daily bread for the faithful of the Old Testament. The Psalms are full of it. Jeremiah and the other prophets use it more sparingly. Isaiah treats it as the One Pearl of Great Price. Paul built on it the entire New Testament theology. Without a true grasp of the meaning of this term no one can understand the Scriptures or — least of all — Isaiah. Therefore here, where we meet this term now for the second time (the first was 41:2. ER), we must take it up at some length, without thereby even approximately exhausting this subject about which entire books have been written.

To this day modern comparative philology has not succeeded in finding a concrete physical root-meaning of TSADAQ. It seems to be one of the few word forms of the Hebrew that are abstract *a priori*. According to its most frequent use the term, like our "right," "true" ("recht," "richtig" — it is impossible to reproduce this pair of German synonyms with an English equivalent that would approximate the close relation of the German terms. My choice of "true" for the second of the pair is in the sense of "straight" or "correct." ER). This is an entirely formal concept which by itself as yet expresses nothing more than that things are as they should be — right — between one person or thing or action or quality and another. Its immediate meaning is no greater than our "right," "true," "correct," "fitting," "appropriate," or "adequate": so constituted as the circumstances require. Since it is applicable to all kinds of relations of persons and things, of actions and circumstances, it is not surprising that it has come to have the widest possible variety of meanings. It would carry us too far to discuss any of the areas of relevance that

are not in the direct line of our study. With this nation, the people of the revealed word, where religion was the one thing that mattered, that controlled every phase of living — here we are interested principally in the religious significance of the word.

Now, to pass up all the details and get directly to the matter as a whole: — There are in every religion three essential factors: the god who is to be served, the service that is to be rendered and the servants who serve the god with these services. If men really take their religion seriously, then everything in it is TSADIQ: appropriate to the subject and its purpose, namely the glorification of the god and the well-being of those who serve him. That god then is a "true" god, and all his being and doing is "right," "correct." If the service rendered to him has been prescribed by him it is also "right," "correct"; and if the servants are earnest and faithful in the rendering of their service, then they also are "right," "correct." And the purpose and the result of this entire relationship, both for the god and the servants, are again "right," "correct." — One need only apply this pattern to the religion of Israel to know what is meant when the things are said to be "right."

Israel knows its God to be "right," the true God. This God is JEHOVAH (cf ch 41:4). What He does is *eo ipso* "right." This JEHOVAH has revealed Himself to Israel, rather than to any of the Gentile nations. (Psalm 147:19-20) And it is self-evident that this revelation is "right," "true." And what has He revealed? Israel is — by revelation — conscious of the great and all-surpassing fact that it has been chosen to be God's Own People, the very thing of which the previous verses (ch 41:8-9) so earnestly sought to impress anew upon their hearts: their election in Abraham. When for a second time the world had failed its Lord, He took an idolatrous Abraham, no better than anyone else in that corrupt generation, and in pure and particular grace took him up out of the *massa perdit*a, not imputing his trespasses unto him,

and made of him an OHEB, φίλος, bosom friend and servant as well, for time and for eternity, establishing with him and with his seed (Genesis 15) the well known special covenant with the promise of this life and the life to come.

We know that the very heart (Kern und Stern) of this covenant is Christ and His salvation, "to every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek." To prepare this salvation, to perfect, proclaim and bring it to its final consummation, this constitutes the content of the Scriptures, Old Testament and New — as well as of all history. Everything, therefore, that now refers to this covenant, this covenant of pure grace, and which at the same time corresponds to its source, content, character and purpose, may indeed in keeping with the existing circumstances still be called by some other name, yet it simply is (ist zunaechst einmal) TSADIQ, TSEDEQ, TS'DAQAH, whether this is said of the Lord or of men, of things or of existing conditions.

This is, of course, a special use of the concept, one that does not exclude its application to matters lying outside of this particular relationship. God is TSADIQ inasmuch as it is He who establishes, implements and maintains this covenant of grace, in His inner attitude, in His Word and in His works. Whatever this covenant is as to its content, what it promises, grants, gives — that is, to state it objectively, "righteousness" for Abraham and his seed. Everything that is contrary to this covenant is LO-TSEDEQ in any and every sense. According to its purpose and effect this covenant then is rescue from ruin, is salvation, joy, blessedness.

It is from this basic foundation that one must examine all the TSEDEQ concepts in their various forms as well as all their synonyms, from the first MISHPAT of our prophet in ch 1:17 to the final KH'BODI in 66:19, — in order in each case to determine their specific meaning from the attending circumstances. There one may indeed in some particular case still fail to hit the bull's-eye of the target, but no long-

er miss the surrounding disk. By way of example: we have in v. 2 of the preceding strophe the term TSEDEQ. This TSEDEQ calls Koresh into its service. After the preceding presentation one may still be uncertain whether this term is to personify the gracious attitude of God toward Israel in the manner of a subjective attribute descriptive of His covenant faithfulness, or whether it is the actual, objective, gracious help (Gnadenheil) that God has granted Israel which as TSEDEQ is the source of this call. But now no one can any longer be uncertain as to whether the gracious relationship of God to Israel is actually meant here at all. For no longer can one entertain the thought that this might refer to the retributive righteousness of a God who among the Gentiles weighs right and wrong against each other with impartial justice.

If one then notes further, e.g. from Psalm 132:9 and 16, or from Psalm 71:15 that TSEDEQ and JESHA, salvation and righteousness, are the same thing, then one will no longer take passages like Psalm 31:1 (Heb v. 2: "deliver me in thy righteousness") or Psalm 119:40 ("quicken me in thy righteousness") or Psalm 17:15, Psalm 5:9 (AV v. 8) and many others of a like nature to refer to a righteousness that judges according to the Law, but will recognize them as referring to the righteousness of covenant-grace, one that forgives sin and works salvation. Now it is also clear what is meant in ch 40:27 by the "judgment" (MISHPAT) of Israel.

This likewise supplies the meaning of the BIMIN TSIDQI of our particular passage. "The right hand of my righteousness" or "my righteous right hand" can only mean that hand, that effective power, that brings about the preservation of Israel, either by virtue of the covenant faithfulness (Bundesgesinnung, lit. covenant-mindedness) of the Lord, or by virtue of the content of the covenant, namely that grace itself, or by virtue of the purpose of the covenant, viz. of bringing saving help, salvation. One will have to translate it either as my faithful, my gracious right hand, or my right hand that saves, that brings help. To us it seems that the

term here points into the direction of the Lord's inner attitude of covenant faithfulness since all that goes before has the one purpose of quieting Israel's fears and anxieties by those many assurances of love, and because its fear is caused by the thought that the Lord had forgotten, forsaken His people (ch 40:27; 49:14). But whoever is not minded to pursue this thought to quite such length may simply translate: "by my gracious right hand, " or "by the right hand of my covenant. "

Luther's experience with the term TSEDEQ or TSIDQATH J'HOVAH — the righteousness of God — is well known. In his translation of the New Testament he eventually rendered it in plain German as "die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt, " — the righteousness that avails before God (a free rendering of Luther's expression in Romans 1:17. ER) That is close enough for all practical purposes, but entirely accurate it is not. For this phrase actually expresses the thought in its objective connotation. In this sense it is already found in the Psalms and then with great frequency in our part of Isaiah as a synonym of JESHA', J'SHU'AH, T'SHU'AH, etc., and actually means the help, the salvation that comes forth out of His covenant grace, the righteousness prepared for believers in Christ. Thus the J'HOVAH TSIDQENU of Jeremiah 22 and 23 is not to be taken as righteousness before the Lord, but rather from Him. By having wrought our salvation our Lord has Himself become our salvation.

(Aug. Pieper, translated by E.R.)

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# DR. RAMM

## AND THE SCRIPTURES



In an essay notable for its forthrightness and blunt candor Dr. Bernard Ramm has outlined the front along which the evangelicals must meet the iconoclasm of the radical wing of contemporary theology in battle for the preservation of the integrity and authority of Holy Scripture. <sup>1)</sup>

With much of what Dr. Ramm so eloquently says we find ourselves in harmony because it announces facts, and does so with a frankness that is long overdue in the scrupulously polite literature of modern conservative Calvinism. Thus he writes: "With the destruction of the historic doctrine of Scripture as the authentic Word of God and therefore of the principle of control in the construction of all theology, there no longer exists a single principle of control in modern Protestant theology. The demolition of the unique principle for the construction of Christian theology mean(s) that orthodoxy — i. e., *orthos* ("correct") theological statements justified from the canon of Holy Scripture — no longer exists as a vital option in current theology." . . . "The only thing possible is a cafeteria of options. And John Cobb can write on Living Options in Protestant Theology and ignore orthodoxy as an option. The spirit of modern theology is to en-

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1) "The Labyrinth of Contemporary Theology," published in Christianity Today, Vol. 9, No. 21.



courage the production of all sorts of options. Even religious theists who see nothing special in the Bible or in Jesus Christ are honored among our Christian theologians and given important chairs of theology in our seminaries and graduate schools. The situation has degenerated to the point that some young Turk calling for a total and radical reconstruction of Christian theology causes little apprehension within the Church. One can almost hear the sigh: 'Well, thank God (*sic*), his ideas at least show that we are not in a rut.' We may not be in a rut, but we are certainly in a labyrinth!"

After reading the above with hearty approval, one finds the fly in the ointment of such spade-calling all the more irritating and deplorable. Though with discerning eye Dr. Ramm sees and paints the heretical nature of modern Protestant theology, the "option" he promotes in his article is impotent. For although he correctly says: "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible authority of God and therefore the principle of the construction of Christian theology functioning as both the source and norm of theology," . . . he goes on to say: "Thus an orthodox theology is possible, although many of its details remain open questions."

Here, nakedly exposed, we have the Achilles' heel of Calvin's present-day apologists. They bear the mark of a rationalism no different in essence than that which, veering more sharply and consistently to the left, has "destroyed the possibility of theology." For Dr. Ramm, too, despairs of having here on earth "a perfect and inerrant theology," which he chooses to denote as "a theology of glory," and says: "We agree with Luther that, in our brokenness of sin and in the partial character of revelation, we must be content with a theology of the Cross. We therefore admit that within the orthodox and conservative camp differences will always exist. But such differences are not the same as the differences created by those who scrap the orthodox calculus — the modernists, the liberals, the Bultmannians, the followers of Bishop Robinson, and the adherents of the

new hermeneutic."

Here is presented a picture as confusing as Dr. Ramm's image of modernism is sharp, clear and correct. If what he says about the limitations of orthodoxy is true, the battle against the modernistic heresy has already been lost, simply because what Dr. Ramm has called "the one possible principle of scientific theology" has in effect been surrendered.

If indeed Holy Scripture is the infallible authority of God and functions as the source and norm of true theology, how can there be open questions in an orthodox theology? We are of course aware of questions that arise in human minds and to which no final, divine answer can be given this side of eternity; but that is so only because Scripture does not speak definitively about the matters involved. Open questions are never doctrine, and doctrines are not open questions. There are and will continue to be variant readings and Scripture passages that are exegetically difficult. There are shades of meaning in certain Scripture words which will be variously emphasized. But the clear passages of Holy Writ underlie and determine the body of divine doctrine in all its parts, and constitute "a perfect and inerrant theology." In heaven all questions unanswered by Scripture will be answered for us and we "shall know even as also we are known." "Theology of glory" is the proper term for that ultimate revelation. But what our present theological certainty lacks through the "partial character of revelation" does not make it imperfect and errant; and to speak of it as "a theology of the Cross" in that sense reveals a gross misunderstanding of Luther and a setting aside of the divine promise. (John 14:26.)

The Church of Jesus Christ will be a Church of the Cross as long as the world stands. As such, it is also the *ecclesia militans*; and this means, among other things, that perfect external unity among all the elect on earth is not

to be expected. But to lay this, even in part, to the inadequacy of revelation and to accept it fatalistically as an inevitable and non-critical circumstance is to ignore the satanic character of doctrinal differences and of the divisions also within conservative Christendom.

A genuine reunion of the churches in a fragmented Christian society is, of course, not to be anticipated. After all, false doctrine is not originated by men suffering from feeble-mindedness, whose inadequacies are well known and therefore discredit their testimony; but, as Luther says: "All idolatry, heresy and false doctrine which has invaded (the church) from the beginning was fashioned and beautifully adorned by respected, learned and wise people." (Church Postil, Gospel for the Third Sunday after Trinity.) These cannot be otherwise persuaded because they regard all who oppose them as stupid at best, or evil obscurantists. Wherefore Luther, in his comments on the opening verses of the 120th Psalm, views their restoration as hopeless and refers to Titus 3:10. Entrenched error remains the bane of the visible church.

But Dr. Ramm's view that the Church on earth can never attain to "a perfect and inerrant theology" would seem to allow for the possibility of a union and unity of conservative churches among which "differences will always exist." This is also precisely the principle sponsored by the A.L.C. when its Sandusky convention of 1938 sought union with the Missouri Synod on the basis of the Declaration, asserting that "we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines;" and when it underscored this sentiment in its Friendly Invitation of March 4, 1947, by referring to "an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God." To make its meaning abundantly clear, the Invitation added: "We further hold that to make the production of a unified statement of the sort

contemplated in the Doctrinal Affirmation 2) an absolute *sine qua non* of Christian fellowship constitutes a threat to evangelical liberty of conscience by demanding a degree of uniformity in the statement of Christian truth that is incompatible with the Scriptures and with strict intellectual candor."

Even Dr. Ramm does not presume to go so far. The Lutherans have outdone him! They look upon doctrinal variance, not as the result of a "theology of the Cross," but as a wholesome and inalienable right of Christian liberty! And this brazen theological arrogance has now become characteristic of the official thinking of a huge percentage of American Lutheranism. It is for this reason that we have ventured to refer to some of its recent history here. For we need to remind ourselves that we do have "a perfect and inerrant theology" in the Word of God and that any proposal for church union without it constitutes a fundamental and practical denial of the Word of God as the decisive authority for all doctrine and life. This reminder is necessary lest we ultimately succumb to the growing offense created by the rapidly increasing readiness both in Lutheran and in Protestant circles to seek a union of churches by means of a more or less generous attitude of *tolerari potest* over against manifest sin and doctrinal error.

Despite our "brokenness of sin" and "the partial character of revelation" it must be possible, and it is possible, to establish among pious souls a genuine confessional oneness in the Spirit. That they should all "come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," and that we, speaking the truth in love, all grow up into Him in all things (Eph. 4:13-15) — this

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2) A confessional statement submitted to the A.L.C. and the Missouri Synod by a representative committee in 1944.

goal in its perfection is doubtless as unattainable in this life as is our total deliverance from "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24) while we are on earth. But such limitation dare not be ascribed to any inadequacy of the Holy Scriptures. For we know and confess that the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith is able of Himself to restore any unity that has been disrupted through human frailty and rebellion. Since the Reformation the Church on earth has again been fully aware of the means placed in her hand for the abatement of all controversy and for the prevention of schism among those who are of the truth. It is nothing other than the right use of Holy Scripture. "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice," Jesus said; and again: "He that is of God heareth God's words." (John 18:37; 8:47.) "Hearing" is, in the Gospel context, a pregnant expression. It embraces assent and obedience. Individuals who are "of the truth" may and do on occasion find themselves wrestling with this or that divine oracle, disturbed or confounded by the truth it proclaims; but in the end, by the Holy Spirit's power, the truth will prevail in the heart.

By this means and process confessional unity must be achieved and maintained between individuals and groups in the visible church. But that in turn would be quite impossible if we were to begin with the assumption that there is an orthodox theology which in many details remains filled with open questions. Here is a glaring contradiction in terms. For where man must say: *Deus dixit*, there can be no open question; where God has not spoken, there is no orthodox theology. Unless, of course, we proceed from the premise that, while Scripture indeed is verbally inspired and inerrant, God has in some points babbled and not made Himself sufficiently intelligible to provide doctrinal certainty.

However moderately and circumspectly such a premise is expressed or implied, it is, as Luther wrote, "a great and horrible insult and libelous allegation against Holy Scrip-

ture and all Christendom to say that Holy Scripture is dark and not so clear that everyone may understand it and thus instruct and verify his faith." (W., V., 334.) Luther was never more vociferous than when asserting and defending the clarity of Scripture. One of the most extensive and intensive reflections of his views in this matter is found in his De Servo Arbitrio. Here he quotes Erasmus as follows: "Who gives us assurance? How shall we detect the Spirit? If you regard learning, you find Rabbis in both camps; if you regard life, you find sinners in both camps; if you turn your eyes to Scripture, both sides claim it as their own. Furthermore, our controversy is not merely over Scripture (which is somewhat deficient in clarity at present), but over the precise meaning of Scripture; and here not the numbers, learning and distinction on the one side, much less the paucity, ignorance and lack of distinction on the other, can advance either cause." To this Luther replied in part: ". . . What you say is part of the truth, but not all of it. It is true that we shall not detect the spirits by appeals to learning, life, abilities, majorities, distinction, or to ignorance and lack of education, or numbers, or standing. However, I do not applaud those who take refuge in bragging about the Spirit. I fought last year, and am still fighting, a pretty fierce campaign against those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own spirit. On the same account I have thus far hounded the Pope, in whose kingdom nothing is more commonly said or more widely accepted than this dictum: 'the Scriptures are obscure and equivocal; we must seek the interpreting Spirit from the apostolic see of Rome!' No more disastrous words could be spoken; for by this means ungodly men have exalted themselves above the Scriptures and done what they liked, till the Scriptures were completely trodden down and we could believe and teach nothing but maniacs' dreams. In a word, that dictum is no mere human invention; it is poison sent into the world by the inconceivably malevolent prince of all the devils himself!" ". . . Those who deny the perfect clarity and plainness of the

Scriptures leave us nothing but darkness." 3)

A reading of this entire section of Luther's famous document suggests that not only every Lutheran pastor, but all who presume to speak of the Reformation as a source of true Biblical theology, ought to be thoroughly conversant with it.

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture, together with that of plenary inspiration, is the chief bulwark and bastion of the Church in its struggle against dissension and division. Moreover, without the assurance of Scripture's perspicuity the inspired character of God's Word would reduce the Bible to the status of a fetish and leave us exposed to any fantasy of interpretation that might be advanced. Luther is eminently correct when he affirms that the whole Gospel would be nullified if Scripture were unclear in a single doctrine. Yet we find ourselves in conflict on all sides with Lutherans and Evangelicals who, while learnedly defending verbal inspiration on the one hand, cannot forbear calling into question the clarity of the Word simply because they often fail to understand its message on a given subject of revelation.

The fact that Scripture is not clear to me in this or that passage does not make the passage objectively unclear. With reference to Scripture, all unclarity is subjective. It is never a Scriptural characteristic, but lies in the relative immaturity or the particular bias of the reader. This, of course, is a matter of faith; but it is an article of faith and a part of what Dr. Ramm in his article calls Christianity's "fundamental principle of knowledge" without which it "would cease to exist."

E. Schaller

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3) From the translation by J. Packer and O. Johnson. Revell Co.

# CONFESSIONS

and

# CONFESSIONALISM



(Written for the 1965 convention of our Church of the Lutheran Confession at the request of President Paul Albrecht who had noted the fact that this year our CLC is five years old.)

By comparison with other church bodies that have observed their centennials, some of them several times over, this fifth anniversary is not much to speak of, nor does it call for a lengthy review of a lot of historical detail. If we need the assurance of belonging to a body the history of which reaches far back into the past we have it in the knowledge that by the grace of God and the working of the Spirit we belong to that body of which Christ is the Head, to the flock of which He is the Good Shepherd, in whose hands we are safely kept. That provides prestige aplenty.

Nor need we feel inferior because our history as an organization is so brief. We can not, indeed, look back proudly over a long way that we have come. But we can take a good hard look at the start we've made and the direction in which we are heading. Thus we will be streng-



thened by the grace of God in whatever may be good in our planning and endeavors. And wherever unsound and dangerous tendencies are discovered, they can with the help of God be opposed and overcome. With this twofold aim in mind let us address ourselves to what certainly is the most important fact in our brief history — not that we have achieved the status of a functioning organization, not that we have after much toil formulated a constitution, but that by the grace of God we have defined our position on a vital doctrine, the importance of which is becoming clearer with each year that passes: the doctrine of church fellowship. So we have also spoken on the closely related subject of the Church and its Ministry. This has been done with clearcut statements which, while indeed confessional in their nature, are nevertheless not designed to replace or supersede either the Ecumenical Creeds or the particular Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century. We mean what we say when we call ourselves "Church of the Lutheran Confession." But lest on this occasion we become lost in onesided admiration of either the historic and classic Lutheran confessions or our own little sequel thereto, let us round out our topic by adding the very practical and timely question of confessionalism, true confessionalism, if you please. Let us on this occasion therefore concentrate on these two related concepts,

### CONFESSIONS and CONFSSIONALISM.

The very mention of confessions brings up a controversial issue. For there are those who hold that formal confessions should have no place in the Church, that nothing should come between the Christian and his Bible, no Creed, no confession. The thought is not new. That was the position of most Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation; it is continued to a degree by Baptists of today. Early Congregationalists thought along the same lines, but when the movement grew, creedal statements

were soon adopted. Quakers, at least in their majority group, took a firm stand against any confessional commitment. In fact, it is characteristic of any period where men separate from their earlier affiliations because of their strongly held religious convictions that some refuse to enter into any regrouping that might once more involve them in what they consider the confessional "trap." They fear what they call the "intolerable tyranny" of confessions.

What shall we say, since the charge is levelled also at us and our confession, and that by some who should really be our brethren. Was it a mistake that we reaffirmed our acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions of the Book of Concord? Was it a mistake that we spoke out on church fellowship, or on the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry? Is it ever a mistake when Christians speak out in confession of their faith, and do so jointly where simple honesty permits and where true agreement underlies such a joint confession?

The answer is, of course, that it is no mistake, no trap, no tyranny, since no confession has any authority of its own. One voice only speaks with authority in the Church of Christ, that is the voice of God as we have it in His Word. Luther said it in one of his precious hymns:

From every error keep us free;  
 Let none but Christ our Master be  
 That we in living faith abide,  
 In Him, our Lord, with all our might confide.  
 (L. H. 224:2.)

If any confession proves to be contrary to this One Authority, it must be rejected, simply because then it does come between the Christian and his Bible. But if the teachings are truly the teachings of the Bible, if this

is manifested by the way Scripture is used as the sole source of all doctrine, then such confessions do not "come between" the Christian and his Bible.

Rather, by their very emphasis on Scripture they lead him into his Bible in order that, like the Bereans, he may see whether these things be so.

There are, of course, confessions for which an authority apart from Scripture is claimed, confessions which dare to set Scripture aside, even to the extent of setting themselves above Scripture. Rome furnishes the classic example with its Decrees of the Council of Trent. There one has a real tyranny in matters of confession. But does that impair or even destroy the value of a true, a Scriptural confession? Our classic Lutheran confessions have not only stood the test of time, of centuries during which the Berean inquiry was repeated again and again. They have stood the test of their conformity with Scripture as well. Our C L C statements referred to above ask no more than that this same testing be applied also to them. We await the outcome with confidence, confidence not in our skill as authors of some new doctrinal statements, but confidence in the Scriptures that speak in and through them.

But surely, it is not enough to have sound confessions, confessions which then, so to speak, are placed on a mantelpiece or into some glass case as trophies of past victories, where they may serve as occasional conversation pieces or perhaps even provide the opportunity for a little boasting. The question is not whether we have a confession, but rather how we use it.

Going beyond this first and most obvious misuse of a confessional statement, namely that of the tyranny of a false confession, we must grant that even a pure and soundly Scriptural confession may be misused, abused. What else it it when churchmen who make newspaper

headlines by their open disavowal of the eternal Deity as well as the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus nevertheless use the Apostolic Creed in their services, blandly declaring that they "believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary . . ." Surely, words lose all their meaning if they can be twisted in this way. One is baffled by the workings of minds that can think up "reasons" that might seem to justify such flagrant inconsistencies.

But such manifest untruthfulness is not the only way of doing violence to a sound Scriptural confession. Those who are indeed defending the truth are faced with the constant temptation to take what seems to be the easy way, namely to fortify their own position by erecting a formidable barricade of bristling quotations from the confessions, the Fathers, even from the works of Professor so-and-so — while at the same time using these confessions and other writings as heavy artillery with which to destroy the position of an opponent. The figure of speech seems to have been strained a bit because of the double application. But the over-all picture is nevertheless true to life. Haven't we all tried to do it this way some time or the other? Yet how unreasonable is such a procedure! If there is power in a confessional statement — and of that we have examples on every hand — then the power is there because of its faithful use of the Word of God. Do we find it necessary to expose and destroy a false position? Then let Scripture speak, the Word that is like a fire, like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. That Word will not fail us. Is there an opportunity to win an opponent? Then let the Gospel be heard, the Word that is a power unto salvation to every one that believeth. And the confessions, the Fathers? Let them fall naturally into the place that properly belongs to them. Then they will add their voices to our own when we witness, when we plead, showing clearly that we do not stand alone. And they will do this effectively because they too are sim-

ply using the Word of God.

You will note that the closer we come to home with our observations, the larger our own failings appear. Yet this is no reason for changing the subject, for steering the discussion into safer channels. On the contrary, if we are capable of seeing error most readily in others, if it takes such to sharpen our skills of detection, that has value only if we apply the final scrutiny to the nearest target, if we really learn to be unsparing in criticizing ourselves. At the same time, however, the task of the critic — whoever he may be — becomes increasingly difficult as the points touched on become more and more sensitive and the danger of consequent personal hurt correspondingly greater. And if it should seem to you as though your speaker (writer) shares the faults against which he speaks, let him enter an immediate plea of guilty. But let him enter the further plea that we do not let this very human factor divert us from our real purpose, that of a thorough self-examination. For in calling ourselves "Church of the Lutheran Confession" we have taken on a large area of responsibility, not merely to be "confessional," but to strive earnestly for true confessionalism. For we have already observed that even a sound confession can be sorely abused. Let us therefore strive earnestly for a true confessionalism, that we may recognize and avoid the pitfalls which will otherwise defeat this vital purpose.

It will be in keeping with this assignment to recall something about our beginnings. We did not emerge from our former affiliations as an organized group. While there were some who acted jointly, those groups were very small. In by far the most cases, however, these painful decisions were made one by one. Our numbers grew slowly. Yet we grew. Kindred spirits came together, and the founding of our C L C was the result. While it is always dangerous to generalize, parti-

cularly in speaking of our own motives, yet it is surely safe to say that in most cases the decisions were made on the basis of strong convictions and feelings. Some may ask whether those convictions were right, whether the feelings always remained pure. But that has no bearing on our immediate question. Here the point is merely that they were strongly held. And yet, as we began to work together we found that no two of us were alike, that each had his own way of looking at things, of saying things, had his own method of approaching the problems we all knew had to be faced. We need no one to tell us that this can cause inner strain and stress. That we know by our own experience. But to what degrees of intensity this can rise and what dire consequences it may have, that has been demonstrated with tragic clarity by the history of the ill-fated Orthodox Lutheran Conference, a warning example to which I have repeatedly referred.

There is an interesting passage on the topic of "social change" in a recent book (SELF-RENEWAL, p. 40-41) by John W. Gardner, the man whom President Johnson only a few weeks ago appointed Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. This passage analyzes and describes the difficulties of such "change" in a way which may well serve also us as a warning. Speaking about the men who bring about such changes, he says that as they

"move into the conflict that is often required . . . they tend to rigidify as individuals and to form themselves into highly dogmatic organizations, intolerant of diversity in their own ranks. It is because of this fierce intolerance of internal diversity that reformist movements commonly splinter. They splinter because there is no reasonable way to disagree except by breaking up. . . .

"It is for this reason that the revolutionary will forever be at odds with the 'normal' people in the

world. The normal American Christian churchgoer, no matter how devout, would be acutely uncomfortable, not to say alarmed, if he were to have some of the early Christians as house guests. The American Protestant today would experience intense uneasiness if he were thrown into close association with some of the leaders of the Reformation. . . . Why did they have to be so terribly fierce about it?

"The answer is that the people who break the iron frame of custom are necessarily people of ardor and aggressiveness. They are capable of pursuing their objectives with fervor and singleness of purpose. If they were not, they would not succeed. And it is sad but true that in shaping themselves into bludgeons with which to assault the social structure (even the organizational structure of a church is "social structure" for the author. — Ed.) they often develop a diamond-hard rigidity of their own. Thus arises the familiar problem of what to do with the revolutionaries when the revolution is over."

While this is strong language and may seem to present a picture that is overdrawn, it does explain many things that have happened in recent years and under the same conditions that were troubling also us. It points to some very real dangers. As we think back to some of the doctrinal discussions we have had in our own close little group we realize how frequently they have precipitated sharp debate and how on occasion the cry of heresy and false doctrine was so quickly raised, making it ever more difficult for us to understand either the issue or each other.

What shall be done about this? Shall we simply avoid doctrinal discussions as being potentially too disruptive? As we view the ecclesiastical scene of our day we find that there are many who would advocate just

that kind of a policy for the sake of "playing it safe." Or shall we develop the art of hearing statements that actually do call for vigorous dissent, and then dismiss them with the mere lift of an occasional eyebrow, speaking perhaps of how refreshing it is to hear such evidence of independent thinking? Or, to go still a step farther, shall we learn to give polite though drowsy attention to someone who repeats the established formulas in the proper traditional way — and then in our subsequent sessions proceed to follow and even contribute to a course of action which leads into the very opposite direction from what has been so "beautifully stated" by the essayist who has been heard but not heeded? — These things have all been done. Yet they are surely not the answer.

It is surprising how infrequently the Greek word DIDASKALIA, the word that emphasizes the activity of teaching rather than the things that are taught,\* is actually found in the greater part of the New Testament. Jesus uses it only once (the parallel passages Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7), Paul in his letters to the churches only four times (Romans 12:7; 15:4; Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:22) — and even here, excepting in the passage from Colossians, the active sense seems to prevail. But then come the Pastorals, the letters in which Paul instructs his young assistants as to the proper way of guiding the young churches entrusted to their care. Here, where he is showing what is good for them he uses this word διδασκαλία no less than fifteen times. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," I Timothy 4:13. "All Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine," II Timothy 3:16. Again no firm rule can be established as to this stressing of the activity in the definition of our term. Yet a careful reading of all the

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\* While this can certainly not be stated as a firm rule, yet Romans 12:7 will illustrate the point, also 2 Tim. 3:16.



instances in the Pastoral Letters will show that this is in most cases the indicated sense. And that was precisely what would be best for their needs, for both pastors and people. Thus spiritual strength and growth would be assured. So let there be no thought on our part of discouraging the discussion of doctrinal subjects among us. Let us rather cultivate the practice with all earnestness and zeal — but also with greatest care.

Yes, with care!

On a certain Monday of each month, at eleven in the morning, all the air raid sirens in our city (and for that matter, probably throughout the land) sound off. Yet nobody walks any faster. People just have to speak a bit louder if they want to make themselves heard. For everyone knows that it's only the equipment which is being tested. Someone has said that if an enemy should ever try to attack, this would be the time to do it. Even if the sirens would not stop after the usual three minutes, it would take quite a bit longer before the fearful significance of that fact would begin to sink in. By that time the bombs might already be falling.

If this picture seems too violent to serve as a good illustration, let us take one where the colors are more subdued. When illness strikes and the family physician is baffled, a consultation is called for. Usually the results prove the wisdom of such a course. But if the doctors disagree, violently perhaps, and possibly even in the presence of the patient and his family, then confusion reigns, confidence is shattered and the welfare of the patient severely jeopardized. Let this illustration stand as the one that brings out the full responsibility borne by us who serve as pastors and teachers. For we do have a responsibility, a great one, namely to set forth from the infallible source of Scripture the great things God has taught for the salvation of men — or as Paul put it to the

elders of Ephesus, "to declare unto you all the counsel of God." That is our positive function. With it goes the negative, of defense against error. This means that we need to be constantly on the alert, that we expose it wherever it is recognized, that we cope with it either by convincing the gainsayer or by denying him the opportunity to work further harm among the particular flock entrusted to our care or in the larger area of our fellowship of faith.

Let this thought be stressed. For while this is what guarantees to every one of us the right to expose error wherever it may appear, where it even makes that a duty, yet it is this very same thing which will make us extremely careful in exercising it, in carrying out that duty. Writing as a "prisoner of the Lord" Paul expressed his intense concern for the welfare of that distant flock at Ephesus, beseeching them to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," something that he then sums up as "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3.) This unity, which is not of men but of the Spirit, which He has wrought and given, this they should keep, not lose it, not destroy it — for it is the most precious gift, the one that men by means of their own can never replace.

This is the reason for care, for the greatest possible care on our part. We have found something very precious in our C.L.C. We did not plan it that way. God led each of us to a decision by His Word. Having done so, He did not leave us to perish in loneliness. He brought us together as only He can. Why He has chosen us, we do not know. Nor can we tell for what future use He may be preparing us. But that we can well leave in His hands. But surely, we must seek to keep what He has given us, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace. If this unity is threatened by the presence of real error among us, we know what must be done. But what a tragedy if we should be mistaken in our diagnosis!

So let us take the time to ask ourselves just what it is that we are determined to defend. Is it perhaps an opinion, one long held by us and therefore probably deeply entrenched? Let us take a long, hard look — an honest one. Sometimes opinions have a way of growing on us, more than we are apt to realize. If doctrine is really at stake, Scripture will tell us so in clear and unmistakable words. But if it does not do this, then we certainly have a caution signal, one we do well to heed. We may still like those opinions. We may perhaps have good reasons for them. But we will not, in fact dare not claim for them the status of Scriptural doctrine.

Let us be equally critical of our conclusions. Conclusions are indeed one way of arriving at a truth. When Scripture says that God loved the world, and I certainly know myself to be part of this world, then I do not only know that God loved me, but may and should conclude that this is precisely what Scripture is teaching me at this point: that believing in Him, I, yes I, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is a conclusion that stands, though all the world should fall. — But there are many other types of conclusions, not all of which are by any means equally reliable. Many have weak links in the chain of reasoning. Others are arrived at by a process graphically described as "jumping to conclusions." So let us test all conclusions rigorously. God's Word is so rich and varied in its content and approaches its topics in so many different ways that if we are seriously concerned about finding whether a given thought is really Scriptural doctrine and not merely a fallible human opinion, we shall find it somewhere, clearly taught. Of this we may be sure. For the Holy Spirit has not failed to tell us, in clear and simple

words, just what He wants us to know.

For a last item — and perhaps the most sensitive one — let us consider the matter of doctrinal formula. As they explained the truths of Scripture the great teachers of the Church, Luther for example, gradually developed certain specific ways of expressing themselves to their students as well as to their readers. These forms were determined partly by the thinking habits of the teacher, partly by the level of understanding they found in their students. In Luther's case these terms and forms were vigorous, original, expressive. They served their purpose well. Yet Luther would have been the last to say that they should always be used, and used in the same way. For that is the way forms become formulas, which have a way of setting, like concrete after it is poured. But for Luther it was enough if men said what Scripture said, even though they might still be his students, and yet were saying it with terms of their own choosing.

But as one generation of teachers succeeded another a pattern began to develop — and it was not even that of Luther! Certain expressions of some outstanding teacher of an earlier day found favor, and were used again and again. They were used by the founding fathers of Synodical Conference Lutheranism in America. When we trace these forms of teaching back to their source, the result is usually reassuring. For with few exceptions they who coined them wanted to say what Scripture said, and as a rule they said it quite well. Yet there were exceptions. The classic example is Melancthon, Luther's colleague. For years he had correctly taught that in the conversion of man there are two causes only, the Holy Spirit and the Word, through and by which He works this miracle of a new birth in men. Then, however, came the time when his philosophy began to assert itself, when he began to consult his reason. The outcome was a new

formulation of the doctrine, namely that there must in conversion be three causes, not only a) the Holy Spirit, and b) the Word through which He works, but c) a certain third thing in man, the ability to apply himself to grace. Thus reason was satisfied, but at the sacrifice of the *sola gratia* of Ephesians 2:8-9, and the door was opened for the grave error of Synergism. Yet there were many for whom this thought was to become an accepted formula, and finally almost a sacred tradition. But was it Scripture? Or was it not rather nothing more than a formula of human construction? It was therefore all to the good when the founding fathers of the Synodical Conference, Walther for Missouri, Hoenecke for Wisconsin and others who stood with them — after due examination emphatically rejected this formula as the Synergism it certainly was.

There is much that is valuable about these traditional formulas, provided they have not become vehicles of error. But they are surely not sacred. If they are submitted to constant critical and intensive study they can serve us well. But if they are accepted unthinkingly and almost automatically, merely on the personal authority of some highly and justly respected teacher of an earlier day, then they not only can but will do great harm. For then they have become something that indeed does come between us and the Scriptures, which after all are the one and only inspired source of infallible truth. See II Timothy 3:16. Let us therefore be careful lest in our zeal for truth we be found contending for the man-made formulas of tradition, rather than for the soundly Lutheran and Scriptural principle of *sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone.

This gives us true doctrine.

This is true confessionalism.

To this then let us, at this Fifth Anniversary, dedicate ourselves for our future course.

To this end may God help us, in His infinite grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

E. Reim

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# == PREACHING THE WORD ==

FROM ICHABOD TO EBENEZER

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*11 May 64*

( A Series of Sermon Studies in the First Book of Samuel )

## I.

THE TEXT: I SAMUEL 1:1-11.

A sad story is related in the fourth chapter of this Old Testament book:

*And Eli's daughter in law, Phineas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.*

*And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.*

*And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.*

*I Sam. 4:19-22.*

ICHABOD: unglorious! A word coined by a woman stunned with sorrow, dying in childbed. What a name for a

child to carry through life! But it was to be more than a burden of <sup>title</sup> notoriety upon one citizen of the <sup>kingdom</sup> realm. The wife of Phineas wrote this title over the door of the land. She pronounced a judgment upon Israel: The glory is departed! Nothing more terrible can happen to a church body, a congregation or a synod than this.

In a disastrous battle against the Philistines the army of Israel had been defeated and the Ark of God, which the priests had once carried <sup>on</sup> dry-<sup>land</sup>shod over the Jordan into Canaan, had been taken by the enemy. That sacred chest which marked the presence of the Lord in Israel, which contained the Tables of the Law and bore on its lid the mercy seat, was lost. This was what the dying woman meant. But how had it come to this sad circumstance, and where would it lead? <sup>We want to take some time</sup> This series of studies is designed to seek and ponder the answers. We shall see that, before the Ark of God was lost, something else had been lost; and this "something else" was the real glory of Israel, just as it is the real glory of any and every true church. The text before us reveals that, in part,

## THE GLORY OF ISRAEL CONSISTED OF THE SINCERE RELATION OF THE HOME TO ITS GOD.

### 1.

The text affords us an intimate glimpse into one of the many homes belonging to the great congregation of Israel. 1,2 This was later to become the birthplace of Samuel, the famed High Priest and Prophet of the ancient Church. But it is not for this reason that we give it our attention <sup>now</sup> in the context of our major theme. Our view of this home comes at a time before Samuel was born, and he has nothing to do with our story at present. We are seeking the true glory of Israel; and this is one of the homes in which we find its signs.



One will not fail to note that there was much to criticize and fault in this home. It was marked with sin and strife as well as by love. As a result there was sorrow. Elkanah had taken two wives. Since God permitted, or at least tolerated this arrangement in the Old Covenant and we therefore cannot label it as sin, it was nevertheless a <sup>modification</sup> imitation, so to speak, of the divine institution of marriage. And since God because of sin has laid crosses also upon the estate of marriage, a double marriage usually brought double trouble. In no home can two women be equally in charge without friction and heartache. In Elkanah's home there was also a particular visitation: Peninnah had children and Hannah had none. This source of sorrow was enlarged by sinful hearts and human weaknesses. Elkanah loved his wives and sought their happiness. In his clumsy way, not knowing any other means, he sought to ease Hannah's loneliness with special gifts. On festivals, as was the custom, he gave presents to his wives, and to Hannah he gave twice as much as to Peninnah, not realizing that this would only emphasize Hannah's lack and make her unhappier than ever while Peninnah in turn would be weak enough to be provoked to jealousy. The result was an unpleasant situation all around. Harsh words and bitter tears would flow. Among the four things that "are never satisfied," Solomon lists "the barren womb;" while he also warns that "it is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." (Prov. 30:16; 21:19.) How difficult to have both under one roof. Ah yes, what a monster is sin, with its loveless thoughts, cruel words and burdens they bring.

But something else is also to be seen in this home. Perhaps not every member of the household can be counted in with what is to be mentioned. Perhaps Peninnah was at heart a wicked woman and a hypocrite. Any God-fearing home can harbor such a person. But one thing is <sup>clear</sup> manifest: This family lived with the Lord its God. No one knew better than Elkanah and Hannah their sins, weaknesses, imperfections and the ugly stains upon their lives. No one knew bet-

ter the real cause of their sorrows. But they trusted their Savior-God and His mercy. Not permitting their sins and their trials to take over, they fought them in the only way they can be fought. Nothing ever kept them from going up to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle of God stood with its altar and its mercy seat. Expressing it in our terms: They attended church. They went there with their sins. And even if Peninah persisted in her nasty bickerings, Elkanah and Hannah doubtless saw to it that her children learned to worship in God's house. They came with blood-offerings and burnt-offerings, as the Lord required, and were strengthened with the promise of forgiveness.

Moreover, they accepted the Lord as the only Helper in their trials of life. What did Hannah do with her grief? Did she become bitter and rebellious, or reward evil with evil? She went to her God and cast her burdens on Him. Indeed, she showed a remarkable understanding of her God. Instead of seeking the prayers of the High Priest Eli, as was customary in those days, she approached the Throne in prayer personally, conscious of her spiritual priesthood as a redeemed soul. So sure was she that, though a sinner, she was a child of God, that she applied confidently in person for <sup>his</sup> ~~super~~ in her great need, and accepted responsibility for a voluntary pledge.

## 2.

So we have been shown, beautifully defined, a quality that made Israel great and gave to this church its glory. As we shall later have <sup>an opportunity</sup> ~~occasion~~ to show, Israel's glory did not consist in the wonderful purity and uprightness of its priests and leaders. Nor did it consist in the glorious appointments of a temple; for Israel still had only the Tabernacle which had weathered the many years of wandering through the desert and all the battles in the conquest of the land of Canaan. But Israel had God, the true God. He, who redeemed the people, who saved them by His Grace, who chose them and

protected them — He was glorious; and Israel was glorious when this God was in their homes, when they had Him in their hearts, when they lived in hope of Him.

We see that such homes were far from being ideal homes. Even the best of them suffered from the ugliness of sin, of strife, were known to experience disagreement and acts of lovelessness. But when husband and wife saw where their real problem lay, namely in their hearts; when they lived in sincere repentance; and when they knew that their only hope and help lay in the Lord and in His promises: there the Church of the living God was present. For this one thing made such homes different from the dwellings of the ungodly, namely faith in the Lord and the exercise of such faith.

We ~~and all of our~~ people need to drink deeply of this truth because it is unchanging and vitally important. The glory of our Lutheran Church does not consist in outward things, not even of the very precious tangible possessions that it has. It does not consist in the fact that the Book of books lies upon its pulpits, or that the Catechism is a textbook in its <sup>classrooms</sup> ~~schools~~. ~~Least of all does it lie in the fact that its pastors are learned men.~~ When husbands and wives have said: As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord, and are governed by this resolution, then the Savior-God is in that home and a church consisting of such homes is glorious.

### 3.

Now <sup>we</sup> ~~let us~~ come to the point of our investigation. We seek this glory among us. Do we find it — or is the verdict Ichabod?

Many signs are encouraging. Do we have husbands and wives, fathers and mothers who walk together in this one faith that marks them as God's children? Yes, God be praised, we have many of them. Their homes may sometimes be

darkened by the shadow of sin, of evil. Their Old Adam loiters far too much in the rooms. Bitterness may be no stranger there. But families appear together in the Lord's house, bringing their burdened hearts with them to the altar of forgiveness, finding for them new life and strength in the message of the Word. They make their vows unto the Lord.

Let us rejoice in this glory. But let us also frankly take note of the fact that, as the days pass, there seems to be a growing tendency to forget how important it is that "man and wife together lead a godly life, by deeds their faith confessing." Young men and women are observed entering into matrimony without regard to whether or not they are one in the faith and will be able to set up a home in which the true glory of Israel dwells. Parents are often indifferent to the kind of company their sons and daughters keep and to the attachments that are thus formed. If Elkanah and Hannah, at least, had not been of one heart and mind toward the Lord, what hope would there have been for their home? Shall we lose the glory by thoughtless, reckless marriages?

Then, too, we must have homes where man and wife depend upon the Lord for their needs. There are many of those among us, we are confident, who still understand that the Lord alone is their Helper and that all good gifts come from Him and must be sought of Him. But more and more we find a spirit of unthankfulness for blessings received, more and more of unseemly self-reliance, more of the attitude that the world owes us a living and that if you are lucky, you will prosper. Less and less, one has reason to fear, do Christian parents seek the blessing of God in daily family prayer and devotion. They run to many helpers, but not always readily to the Source of all good.

And finally, how is it with the sense of obligation to the Lord that ought to be strong in a Christian home? Do families and their members remember what they owe to God? Do they bring to Him their sacrifices as they ought? Alas, often

~~But~~ Sadly,

THE TEXT: I SAMUEL 1:20-28.

How different is the story of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, and her gift to the true God. When we began with the study of this Old Testament episode, we heard from a dying woman's lips the word Ichabod as she tried to tell of the disaster that had befallen Israel. The glory is departed from Israel; that was the <sup>import of</sup> her parting words. We asked: What was Israel's glory? And we began to find our answer as we looked into one of the homes in Israel and saw there a wonderful relationship between a husband, a wife and their Lord. We observed Hannah and her husband worshipping; we

heard Hannah speaking to God in intimate prayer asking of Him the blessing of a child. Where thus the God of Israel ~~so manifestly~~ lives in hearts and homes with His Word and promises, a church is glorious.

In the text now before us this glory is apparent in yet another way. We see

# ISRAEL'S GLORY AS REVEALED IN PARENTS WHO LENT THEIR CHILDREN TO THE LORD.

## 1.

When Hannah, the childless woman, brought her loneliness and heartache to the Lord in prayer, asking Him for the gift of a son, she made a vow, a sacred pledge:

*O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life . . .*  
Ch 1:11.

In our text we find her keeping that vow; and her husband joins his heart with hers. It was a divine law in Israel that the first-born son must be given to the Lord; thus also Mary brought the infant Jesus to the Temple for His presentation. But the law of God also provided that the parents could buy the child back, as it were, with an offering. Most parents took advantage of this opportunity, but not Hannah. When she brought her child to Shiloh she indeed took along offerings. But they were gifts of thanksgiving. She did not redeem her son. She literally placed him into the Lord's hands to keep, to live in God's house and to serve Him only, all the days of his life.

Most carefully she prepared her little Samuel for this. She gave up her precious privilege of making the annual

journey to Shiloh with her husband in order not to expose the infant to the dangers and hardships of such a journey. She lived entirely for the child because he was the Lord's. And when she <sup>and entrusted him</sup> took him from her breast — perhaps at the age of three or four, she was ready. For the second and the last time she took him to the courts of the Lord and in moving words entrusted him to the High Priest Eli. Then she went home without her child. But she did not give up her responsibility toward him. He was still her son; she only lent him unto the Lord. We are told that each year she sewed his clothes and brought them to him regularly. She paid for his keep, while the Temple was his home and the service of God his life.

Surely it required a genuine, living faith in Israel's God to do what these parents did with their highest earthly treasure. Who would deny that they must have been convinced that serving the Lord in His church was the highest calling on earth. For it they owed a son to the Lord; not only because God had answered Hannah's prayer, but because He had shown them mercy greater than they could measure. He had not cast them off in their sins. As Hannah said in her hymn of thanksgiving: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation." (2:1.) Truly these parents believed in their salvation through the promised Savior, and their faith and joy had prompted them to bring this sacrifice.

It must have required <sup>a great measure of</sup> no little confidence to leave the tiny child behind in Shiloh. Who can name the thousand fears for his welfare that might have oppressed a mother's heart? Yet Hannah's psalm exulted: "He will keep the feet of His saints!" (2:9.) The <sup>deep</sup> <sup>reflects</sup> dignity and theological wealth of this <sup>and</sup> psalm throughout betokens the profound spiritual insight and <sup>gifted</sup> confessional eloquence with which this home was endowed.

Some may wish to make the point that this was an excep-

tional case; for surely few parents in Israel did what these parents did, and in few homes was there so profound a religious life. Our assumptions ought to go neither to one extreme nor to the other. Indeed we must agree that not every child was in such manner lent to the Lord. There was no need for that, neither would there have been room for it in God's house. Hannah herself was later blest with three other sons and two daughters; and she did not make temple servants of these. But from the action of Samuel's parents we gain an insight into the general attitude of parents in Israel toward their children. Samuel was lent to the Lord in the highest form of dedication possible. But many, many other parents remembered in other ways that their children belonged to the Lord. Though they were trained in other skills and worked at other crafts, Israel's children were in faithful homes brought up with the understanding that they were glorious saints, born to serve their Savior-God and His people in their calling. They were taught to shun the heathen world, and their life was centered about their religion, as was their schooling.

It was when this careful rearing of the coming generation broke down that one could see the glory departing from Israel. The first signs of the approaching calamity appeared in the homes, even as it does today.

## 2.

We may now turn to a consideration of what we have seen and heard, and come to realize how dull the glory has grown in our church today.

We do still have Hannahs and Elkanahs who lend their little children to the Lord, even in the highest and best way. After a Christian primary training by which the child is most adequately protected against the spiritual <sup>distraction</sup> ~~attention~~ which leads to worldly-mindedness, it is sent away to a Christian school for its secondary education in the hope that the child



will enter the service of the Lord as pastor or teacher. Often this is done at much expense and with tears. The child must perhaps live away from home, often a large part of the time. But the Lord needs pastors and teachers, and the parents dedicate their offspring. They owe this to the Savior who gave them all things.

If we did not have such parents in our midst, Ichabod would soon be written upon the lintel of our church structure. Yet parents of that quality seem to be becoming increasingly rare among us, if the present attendance in the pre-theological and teacher-training courses at Immanuel Lutheran College offer a reliable <sup>and</sup> criterion. How few seem to be saying: This gifted child we have received of the Lord, and we want him or her to serve the Lord fully in the public ministry! There are, of course, numerous excuses offered. We do not want to send the child away from home when it is so young, they say; or: We need him on the farm; or: It costs too much. One must feel moved to wonder in how many instances such excuses may merely be <sup>hiding</sup> concealing a lack of faith and love toward the Lord.

But it is not alone the lack of prospective servants of the Church which is disturbing. Not every child can or should become a pastor or a Christian day-school teacher. Yet parents may be neglecting a far easier way of lending their children to God. It is to be feared that some may not even pray for children as Hannah did, because they do not want them, because they are selfish and lazy and despise that gift of God. And in more than a few Christian homes where children are born they are from the start trained — or mis-trained — as though they had been dedicated, not to the Lord's service but to the world. The Triune God is allowed to sprinkle them quickly with the water of Baptism, but He is thereafter not given freedom to possess and use their newly sanctified hearts, minds and talents. Parents who bring their children to Baptism are making a holy vow that they will treat them as God's children, with all that this

implies. Hannah honored her vow; many parents do not.

How often does it not appear that fathers and mothers are completely self-centered in rearing their children? They do, and allow the children to do, those things which the children want, whether they are thereby helped to fight the good fight of faith or not. The most important consideration often seems to be a good life, perhaps a place of importance here on earth.

It is urgent that pastors call such deterioration of Christian parenthood among us to the attention of their flocks; not in a tone of legalistic fault-finding and whining complaint, but as a sobering reminder of the vital role which the home must play in the preservation of what Christian hearts hold most dear. A trend such as that pictured <sup>above</sup> ~~above~~ marks the road to Ichabod. It means that the glory of faith and love of the Lord and His Word is fading, as it did in exactly the same manner in Israel. ~~At a later point in this series of meditations we shall observe this.~~ We are pledged to the Lord. We are born unto Him, all of us, and we owe Him our life. When the time comes, shall we or our children eat the dates and lay the pits on His altar?

(To be continued)

E. Schaller

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## ===== PANORAMA =====

**WISCONSIN**      The first official word concerning  
**REPLIES**          the action of Wisconsin's August Convention as to future meetings between their committee and our CLC Board of Doctrine came in the September 19th issue of the Northwestern Lutheran, page 295. The report is comprehensive and should therefore be before our readers. It is offered in its entirety below. Since the various points that are covered are, however, all from the official report of the Wisconsin Commission on Doctrinal Matters as it was presented to and accepted by the convention, we reserve our comment for a separate article to follow this Report.

"The Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) is made up largely of pastors, teachers, and congregations who withdrew from our Synod after our 1959 convention because the Synod was not yet ready to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod. Since the close of our 1961 convention at which we *did* suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod, representatives of our Doctrinal Commission have frequently corresponded and twice met with the CLC Board of Doctrine.

"The discussions at the last meeting, held early in January 1964, were based on the article written by Prof. E. Reim of the CLC, which attempted to define our Synod's position on church fellowship. Our representatives declared that they rejected the position ascribed to our Synod in the CLC article. Moreover, all participants at the meeting agreed that a joint review of this article did not succeed in

pinpointing any existing difference in principle. Thereupon the CLC men requested a joint review of our Synod's actions between 1955 and 1961 in an effort to demonstrate what they consider to be our Synod's position on church fellowship.

"After careful consideration our Doctrinal Commission reported in May of 1964 to the nine Districts of Synod: 'The Commission is of the conviction that a joint review of all that happened between 1955-1961 would not serve a wholesome purpose. It is, however, our hope that *another approach* may still be found that would prove to be fruitful.'

"In a letter addressed to the CLC this past April, President Naumann expanded upon this idea as follows: 'As such a possible approach we had, for example, thought a discussion in which the *current* position and practice of both bodies might be evaluated in order to determine whether the principles of church fellowship which our two bodies *presently* hold are in agreement.' The letter further suggested a set of four conditions which would provide for an *objective* discussion of the basic principles in question without the issues being beclouded by an emotional discussion of past grievances. The Convention encouraged our Doctrinal Commission to pursue this new approach to the problem in basic accordance with the four conditions suggested in President Naumann's letter to the CLC."

<p>WISCONSIN and CLC —  <u>DO WE AGREE?</u></p>	<p>In discussing this important and sensitive question your editor can, of course, not speak for Wisconsin. But as a member of our CLC Board of Doctrine he can from first hand knowledge state the conclusions at which this Board has arrived after a</p>
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careful study of the Northwestern Lutheran report quoted above, as well as the underlying report of the Wisconsin Commission on Doctrinal Matters, plus a recent letter from President Naumann (October 19) which deals with this same subject. So let the reader be assured that what we are about to say is not based on snap judgment.

If the heading for this article seems to be a rather pointed question, the reason is simply that the impression has been gained by some, the claim made by others, and even action taken by some — on the assumption that agreement has been reached between Wisconsin and ourselves, and that restoration of fellowship, while not yet declared, must be just around the corner. While nothing could please us more, yet this can be a dangerous assumption for all concerned. Time and again such feeding on false hopes has created an appetite strong enough eventually to break down sound judgment, convictions and principles. Our leading question not only needs to be asked. It must. And it can be answered with assurance, on the basis of official documents at hand.

We are indeed agreed with the Wisconsin Committee-of-Three on certain things. We are agreed as to the desirability of "removing the things that lie between us." So it has repeatedly been expressed by both sides. We are furthermore agreed that this must be on the basis of full doctrinal agreement. But we who must speak for our brethren of the CLC do not, in fact cannot agree that either of these goals, desirable though they may be, has been attained. Yet the claim has been made. The rumor has been acted on as though it were a fact. How is this to be explained?

It all goes back to the St. Paul meeting of our Board with Wisconsin's Committee, January 2-3, 1964, at the end of which each group submitted to the other a draft of its report to its respective body. The purpose of this ex-

change was to make sure that neither of us would misquote the other, that we would be reporting each other's position with faithfulness and accuracy. We present both versions, first Wisconsin's, which stated: "With respect to Prof. Reim's article 'Admonition and Romans 16' (Journal of Theology, December 1962) we are aware of nothing in its exposition of fellowship principles to which we would have to take exception. . . . We cannot, however, accept the references on Pages 5 and 6 as presenting a position which is held by the Wisconsin Synod. . ." Our Board of Doctrine said, "In the matter of deviation from the scriptural doctrine of fellowship they (viz. the Wisconsin committee) had declared that they shared the position of principle set forth in the Reim article but disavowed the position ascribed to them in that article." In the concluding paragraph we continued: "While we respect the expression of agreement of the Wisconsin representatives as noted above, we find it difficult to reconcile this acceptance of principle with the practice that has been followed during these recent years, and therefore consider a review of this history vital for a settlement of the issues that lie before us."

A careful reading of these sober and factual reports should make it clear that neither committee said that full agreement had been reached, but both speak of this approval given to our exposition of fellowship principles as an important step toward the eventual attainment of our common objective — without either implying that it had in any way been attained. This is certainly made plain by the second part of the Wisconsin statement. This was also the purpose of our request for a "review" of the history of recent years, or as it has subsequently been more fully and accurately defined, "a careful review of the official documents and actions of the Wisconsin Synod over the period of 1955 to 1961." It is in this form that the request was quoted and reported in the Reports and Memorials for the 1965 Convention, Wisconsin Synod.

How anyone either in our C L C or Wisconsin could take this as meaning that our two synods are now in agreement as to their former differences is hard to understand — unless it was by an inaccurate reading of these reports, or by inaccuracies in subsequent restatements, or perhaps as the result of wishful thinking. But whatever the explanation may be, the fact remains that some, both in Wisconsin and our C L C, have gained the impression that there is no good reason why we should not get together now. No reason, that is, except the unreasonableness of those of us who ask for a review of this (1955 - 1961) history. What do we say to all this?

Many will hold that we are to blame, that when adversaries agree as to principle they should forget past history and meet each other halfway. That is good advice in many cases where material things are at stake. But is there not a difference when the principles at issue are principles of Scripture? Is it not important for churchmen to discover whether their past performance matches their present assertions? If they do so find, in the light of careful scrutiny, such men have certainly strengthened their case. If they do not, if the past should speak against them, should they not — as churchmen — welcome the opportunity to clear the record?

But would this not be a waste of time when there are so many more important things to be done? And what is to be gained by raking over all the old cases, airing a lot of personal grievances? — The questions reflect the impression of many, impressions which, we are sorry to say, are strengthened by the wording of certain official reports and communications. So President Nau-  
mann's letter of April 6 to the "Members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession" quotes the resolution of the Wisconsin Commission concerning our request for a review: "The Commission is of the conviction that a joint review of all that happened between 1955-61

would not serve a wholesome purpose" (Report to the Nine Districts, May, 1964. Our emphasis). The same letter speaks of assurances to be given by our Board prior to a possible meeting, and says in Point 2: "that your Board understands that the need for an objective discussion of the basic principles in question renders premature any discussion of grievances, inasmuch as that might becloud the issues" (our emphasis). Does this not create the impression that this was the reason why the previous meetings failed? And the Northwestern Lutheran report demonstrates how stories grow in the re-telling by reporting that the letter "further suggested a set of four conditions which would provide for an objective (original emphasis) discussion of the basic principles in question without the issues being beclouded by an emotional discussion of past grievances" (our emphasis). A careful reader can hardly fail to note the progression in these successive statements ("escalation" is the modern word). Yet the fact remains that the careful definition of our request with its specific limitations of the scope of this "review" was well known to Wisconsin's leaders. The opening paragraph of the letter of April 6 credits our Board of Doctrine with calling for a careful review of Wisconsin's "official documents and actions between 1955-1961" (emphasis by Ed.) as being "necessary to demonstrate where a difference with respect to the principles of church fellowship between our two bodies lies." This, and nothing more, is what we have asked. Nor was any time lost at our two meetings over any discussion of grievances. The one exception which might possibly be raised is our reference to a decision by the Supreme Court of South Dakota upholding the verdict of a lower court which had found for the Wisconsin litigants, basing its decision on the principle (formulated by the Court) that a call is a contract between a congregation and its pastor, subject to abrogation at will by either party. The question was raised by this writer, not as a matter



of grievance but for the sake of the principle which this decision has raised. Does Wisconsin, which has profited by this decision, stand by the principle on which it was based (that the call is a contract, etc.)? The Wisconsin representatives pleaded ignorance of the fact, but seemed to consider it a matter of the District involved.

By now the reader will probably ask about the outlook for further meetings. What are the prospects?

Here everyone will have to form his own judgment. But consider the factors involved. Our CLC answer to the letter of April 6 constituted the acceptance of an invitation. It was given in spite of some disturbing undertones in the "invitation." It put the best construction on a peculiar presentation. What was said with specific reference to a statement of the previous year ("that a joint review . . . would not serve a wholesome purpose") was now modified by the Wisconsin President with the following explanation: "This, of course, was not intended to mean that the official pronouncements of a church body and its history can be ignored when evaluating its confessional position." That sounded encouraging. It seemed to suggest that our request for a review of the official documents and actions would at least be met with a willingness to discuss the request as to its merits, rather than to have it excluded from the very outset. But then there followed another modification: "However, our Commission had in mind that your evaluation of this period (1955-1961) became the basis for the very issues which led to the separation between many of the present members of the CLC and our Synod — and that a restudy or reexamination of these years would seem to hold little promise of a more fruitful discussion at this time." — Then comes the reference to "another approach."

We suggest that the reader take a good hard look at

the reasoning in this second modification, beginning with the "However." While it again evades the point of our request, is not the reference to "the very issues that led to the separation . . ." a good reason for having rather than declining the requested review? Or is this another case of *Roma locuta, res finita* (Rome has spoken, the matter is settled)?

But does Wisconsin not suggest "another approach"? Yes, it does, on its own terms! Since these are well summarized in the Northwestern Lutheran report which we have presented a few pages back, we shall not repeat. But the conclusion we have drawn from what has there been written is that Wisconsin does not want and will not agree to the Review we have requested. This is confirmed by the October 19 letter from President Nau-  
mann, on which President Albrecht will supply separate information.

And now a final question, which perhaps many will ask. Why not forget about this Review? Why insist on going over what is past and gone? Why be so stubborn?

The role of dissenters is indeed not an easy one. The questions point to what would be the easy way. But an agreement so reached would simply not be an honest one. If the discussion is to be confined to what is so strongly emphasized in the Northwestern Lutheran report (which, we are sure, merely reflects the tone of the floor discussions at the convention), namely the current position — the principles presently held, we shall simply be talking past each other. Wisconsin has already said that they saw nothing in our St. Paul exposition of fellowship principles to which they would have to object. In the discussion as Wisconsin wants it they may be expected to say the same. But these are the very principles which are at the bottom of our differences, since we hold — whether rightly or wrongly

is not now the question — not only that the course followed by the Wisconsin Synod during those critical years was contrary to the principles which are now professed, but that the arguments used in defense of this course and for the sake of justifying it are in outright conflict with those very principles and the Scriptures on which they are based. If these questions are to be excluded from the area of discussion, we can hope for no resolution of the issues. We shall be no closer to a true and honest agreement than we are now.

This is why we cannot follow the course of expediency and drop our request. Our request must stand. As someone has said long ago, so also we can not do otherwise. If the price be isolation, so be it. But then let the responsibility lie where it belongs — on Wisconsin.

E. Reim

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Our Seminary Library is trying to complete its files of our Journal of Theology. We still lack February, April and October of 1962, and April 1963. Anyone who can help with regard to any of these issues will be rendering us a great service.

E. Reim





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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, Route 22, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The Editorial Committee: E. Reim, Chairman; C. M. Gullerud; E. Schaller; M. Galstad.