



"Meditate

upon these things;

give thyself

wholly to them;

that thy profiting

may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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" . . . NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO,
BUT TO MINISTER . . . "

The ability to evaluate oneself, to form a precise conception of what one is endeavoring to achieve or accomplish, is essential to the successful performance of a task. If the aim, goals, and objectives are vaguely defined, the means unspecified and undetermined, the project is doomed to failure before it is even begun. All this is a matter of common empirical knowledge -- applicable to teaching, preaching, military maneuvers, business ventures, or any other kind of human enterprise.

What is true of an individual undertaking in life is likewise true of one's entire life. Those who are successful in life are those who have a very definite game-plan, as it were. Their objectives are clear and definite. Their strategy has been carefully chosen. The means for achieving their ends are selected with a view towards maximum efficiency. And then the will is geared to move the individual, step by step, along the course until the desired goal is reached. We need but think of the career of an Alexander the Great to visualize such a planned, disciplined life unfold itself. Individuals who never seem to know just what they want of life, who lack concentration and that determination of will that is necessary to get a job done simply live out their lives without as much as leaving an impression on the sands of time. Our Lord Jesus was not such a one!

HIS
 SELF-EVALUATION It was towards the end of His public ministry, as He was directing His steps towards Jerusalem, that a situation arose in which He found it necessary to reduce to capsule form His own conception of His life's work, His mission from heaven to earth. The mother of Zebedee's children came with her sons, the beloved John and James destined to be one of the first to lay down his life for his Lord. She was proud of her sons and ambitious for them. The Lord Jesus used the fleshly zeal of this beloved family as an opportunity to give needed instruction concerning the way things are to be in His Kingdom. All of the disciples needed this instruction, not just James and John, for "when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren."

Their indignation did not flow from purely spiritual motives but rather from the fear that James and John might gain an unfair advantage over them. So Jesus ministered unto them yet again by instructing them in the nature of His Kingdom. He said:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Matthew 20:25-27.

Power is the name of the game here on earth -- whether that be in the field of politics, business, or industry. As people climb the ladder of success, they gain more and more power over more and more people. This means that they have more and more subordinates who must stand at attention, respond speedily to every command, be quick to satisfy every whim, and be sure that "yes, Sir! No, Sir!" is ever ready on their lips. These are the VIPs who travel firstclass all the way.

But the Lord's Kingdom is completely otherwise. The faster you are promoted, the higher you rise, the closer you come to the top of the ladder the greater becomes your obligation and responsibility to serve. "Achieve greatness by serving" is the motto of the Kingdom. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

This concept of greatness is so contrary to all human experience that the Lord found it wise to give His disciples a concrete example of what He was talking about. In so doing He gave them an evaluation of His own ministry, yea of His whole life.

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28.

With these few words our Lord reduced to capsule form His mission to earth, planned from eternity, and the means by which it was to be achieved. The aim of that mission was to give His life a ransom for many; the way by which this would be achieved was by ministering.

WIST YE NOT? Let no one imagine that this was a spur of the moment philosophic reflection upon His own life or life in general. What the Lord expressed, as His ministry was drawing to a close, He had been practicing His whole life. We have but one brief view of His youth,

but it was a momentous occasion for a Jewish lad -- his first trip to Jerusalem and to the Temple on the great liberation festival of the Jews, the Passover. He went with the group, but He stayed when the group left again, after they had fulfilled all obligations prescribed in the law. His father and mother returned seeking Him sorrowing. Jesus was not insensitive to their concerns. Had He been He would have violated the spirit of the law which required a son to honor his father and mother. It is rather with surprised and startled disbelief at their lack of perception and insight that He responded to their concern with a pair of rhetorical questions:

How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Luke 2:49.

The mental development of the omniscient God in the form of a twelve-year-old boy remains a mystery, but this incident reveals that the aim and purpose of His life was asserting itself in His own self-consciousness. As but a youth He dedicated Himself to it with intenseness and understanding.

MY MEAT ... There is an incident from His early ministry that sheds more light upon this intenseness of concentration upon the aim and purpose of His life. The band was traveling to Galilee through Samaria. In the heat of day they paused at Jacob's well to give Jesus an opportunity to rest while they went to the city to buy provisions. The story is familiar -- that of the woman who was so skillfully awakened to the glory of His gift and her most urgent need for it. He was still talking to her when His disciples returned with the food. Conditioned by rabbinic traditions that made it unbecoming for a rabbi to teach a woman, they indeed "marvelled that he talked with the woman." They were discreet; they said nothing. But when the woman left, they came to Him and urged Him to satisfy His physical needs with the food they had purchased in the city. But Jesus wasn't hungry any more. He said. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." This mystified the disciples. They wondered whether someone had happened by and relieved their Master's hunger. Once again the situation called for His ministering unto them so that they could begin to understand what His life was all about and what the nature of theirs was to be. He said:

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. John 4:34.

So consecrated to His life's work was He that His physical needs simply were forgotten. His disciples wanted to serve Him by supplying His creature needs, but He had become so involved in supplying the woman with Living Water that He became completely oblivious of His own needs. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

FOOT WASHING The lesson of the principle of His life, which was to become the principle of their lives, the disciples had ever before them as they lived with Him and observed Him day after day. But they all, as we, had eyes that see not. Towards the end of His ministry He had laid it out for them -- that He had come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" -- but that word failed to take root in their hearts. When they ate the Passover that day for the last time as a group, there had been unseemly pushing and shoving as they positioned themselves about the table. That old but very human question of who should be the greatest (Luke 22:24) again caused strife among them. Again they needed to be ministered unto. The Lord Jesus chose a dramatic way in which to do this. No servant had been on duty that night to wash the disciples' feet. Not one of them had volunteered to do this menial task. Jesus did it -- over the protest of Peter. He did it not to display feigned humility, as so many have done after Him. But He did it to give them a visual demonstration of the principle of His life that was to become the principle of their lives. They needed more teaching:

Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.
John 13:12-17.

He is the Lord; we are the servants. If He served us, we should serve one another. He sent us; we never go on our own initiative. If His life was one of ministering unto others, certainly ours should be also. This truth should be self-evident for all disciples, but especially for those who serve in the public ministry of the Word.

ST. PAUL St. Paul was possessed of a sense of concentration and intensity of purpose that would practically have guaranteed success in any endeavor that he set his mind to. He had been a Pharisee, and he had been a self-disciplined one. One need but read his autobiographical sketch in Philippians chapter three to feel the single-mindedness of his determination to serve his God according to the Torah. That he became the persecutor of the church was but a natural extension of his burning zeal for the Torah.

Anyone who doubts the power of the Holy Spirit need but pause to consider Paul's way of life, his aim and goals in life, his dedication to that way of life before his conversion and then what happened thereafter. The same intense-ness of purpose, self-dedication, unwavering zeal, and concentration of effort is apparent after his conversion. But the aim and goal of his life was changed. Under the power of the Holy Ghost it had become the ministering of the Gospel of the crucified Christ. Paul waited patiently until the Spirit called him through the congregation at Antioch. Then he began his life's work. There is a concentration of purpose, a steadfastness despite obstacles of all kinds, a willingness to adapt himself to all circumstances and conditions, and a complete indifference to personal danger, shame, or suffering that to this day causes one to stand back and marvel. How could one better sum up Paul's post-conversion life than with the words of his Lord: He also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

MINISTERS TODAY What is to be said of the mass of public ministers of the Word today? Can their lives and their careers be characterized as "ministering unto"? To ask the question is to indicate the sad answer. For the most part the public ministry today has shifted the emphasis from "ministering unto" to "being ministered unto." When pastors receive calls today, most feel completely free to make frank inquiries about housing, salary, fringe benefits, and other trivia that concern creature comforts. Then the bargaining begins. Through the church body the clergy is organized in union form. Demands are made upon the congregations. The shortage of manpower has given teeth to those demands. A congregation either "ministers unto" its ministers in a liberal fashion or it suffers long and painful vacancies. When ministers forget that they are to "minister unto" and become more concerned

about "being ministered unto," they become practitioners in that age-old art of fleecing the sheep of the Good Shepherd.

We of the CLC clergy are children of our times. We tend to compare ourselves materially with other clergymen. The flesh of each pastor, professor, and teacher in our church body is unswervingly dedicated to "being ministered unto" and unalterably opposed to "ministering unto." The intellect, under the influence of sin, can easily rationalize the biblical injunction that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" into a program of seeking ways and means to be more liberally and effectually "ministered unto." We would be blind leaders of the blind -- were we to be blind unto these dangers that so easily beset us. We do well to consider some basic facts of our ministry.

MINISTERING AS The concept of ministering unto others
AGENTS OF THE necessarily entails the expenditure of
HOLY SPIRIT energy and effort. We may think of a "ball
 of fire" personality, a "go out and get
them" ministry. Such a ministry would be characterized by
punching door bells, advertising through the available
media -- even using the gimmicks of the trade, flooding the
mails with mimeographed literature and tracts, glad-handing
visitors, paying strict attention to the techniques of evangelization, utilizing eye-catching phrases on bulletin
boards, cultivating the attention-catching manner of presentation in sermonizing, and above all lubricating the "stewardship" machinery so that success can be visualized in the
congregation's financial reports. The well intentioned aim
is to bring the "old Gospel" to the new generation by way of
stream-lined, modern methods. The result is much "busy
work," added numbers on the church rolls, an increased
budget, a building program, and hopefully a few souls
brought to Christ.

But what about the cost? It could be the death of the
so active minister -- not by heart attack, but by strangulation of his own spirit. The man of action in the ministry, the successful evangelist, the missionary who gets
things done may end up under the tragic illusion that his
spirit is really the Holy Spirit. Without thinking it
through he may begin to take for granted that his drive, his
contacting people, his following up leads, his friendly personality, his ability to out-talk the gainsayers, the efficiency of his evangelistic program is what really makes
the difference. If this occurs, the true minister may well

die while being called to a larger field, while being made superintendent of missions or coordinator of evangelism, and while being congratulated by his peers who secretly envy his knack for getting things done in the Kingdom.

Ministering the balm of Gilead unto others does call for the expending of energy to the point of physical exhaustion. Our Lord fell so soundly asleep in the boat that even the boisterous waves did not awaken Him. But successful ministering unto others cannot be begun or carried on, much less brought to a conclusion, without the ever conscious realization that in ministering we are and ever must remain agents of the Holy Spirit. He alone can humble the proud sinner, lead the self-reliant to rely upon Christ, make palatable truths that today brand the believer as bigoted, narrow-minded, hopelessly out-of-step not only by the world but by most church people also.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

I Corinthians 2:14.

These words of the most successful New Testament evangelist must be more than a proof text to be used under the Third Article. They must be day by day in the mind and consciousness of every minister. To ignore them when making a contact, when following up a contact, when instructing the youth or adults, when making a sick call or visiting the aged is to expose oneself to a minister's fatal megalomania -- confusing his own spirit with the Holy Spirit. The prophets of old, the apostles and evangelists of the New Testament, every professor, pastor, missionary, teacher in a Christian Day School or Sunday School functions in one and the same way -- as but sowers of the Seed. The Spirit, and only the Spirit, makes the Seed take root, grow, and bear fruit when and where He wills.

MISUSE OF THE ROLE OF AN AGENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of the characteristics of the human personality is the tendency to let the pendulum swing from one extreme to the other. The activist in the min-

istry tends to confuse his spirit with the Holy Spirit. The passivist tends to use the Holy Spirit as an excuse for his own inactivity. Who knew the need for the effective working of the Spirit more than He who sent the Spirit. Yet who labored more incessantly than did He? Who will attempt to emulate the ministry of St. Paul? Yet he is the one who

taught us that precious truth: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." II Corinthians 12:9.

The command was "Go," not "Sit." Experience has taught many an urban pastor that the old method of house to house doorbell ringing is an exercise in futility. But that does not give license for inactivity, for sitting in one's office and waiting for a prospect to walk in and request ministering. The Spirit has His ways of opening doors. Families may be referred by another pastor in a distant part of the country. Visitors may turn up at services. Members may make initial contacts. Husbands have unchurched wives, and wives unchurched husbands. A casual meeting, a business contact may be the opening of the door made by the Spirit. Anyone who is dedicated to "ministering unto" will be quick to seize the opportunity to sow the Seed. It may require patience and persistence. It may take months, even years for that crack in the door to widen sufficiently to enter with the Word that is "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29) and is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). But if the minister fails to seize the opportunity because of laziness, because it is inconvenient for him at the time, because of bashfulness or timidity, he is guilty of failing to minister unto a soul that the Spirit has caused to cross his path. Woe be to such an unfaithful servant!

RATIONALIZING ONE'S PERSONAL WEAKNESSES

A pastor may find it difficult to bring the Word of the Lord to an individual in a one to one situation, face to face. He finds it difficult "to talk to people." So he may mimeograph them to death. In so doing he is justifying his own weakness and rationalizing and compensating for failing to do what he should be doing -- bringing the word of admonition, instruction, comfort in a direct, personal manner, as our Lord sat with the woman at the well and Nicodemus in those night sessions that bore fruit so long after. Instead of justifying, rationalizing, and trying to compensate for a weakness, a faithful minister, who is determined by the Spirit's power to minister unto his people, should be making every effort to correct a failing or overcome a weakness.

One of the most flagrant sins that beset a pastor is stealing time. Pastors punch no time clocks. No one checks when they go to bed or arise, what office hours they keep, how many calls they make, just how they utilize their time.

Because of these factors a pastor must be self-disciplined-- a virtue that is unfortunately a rarity among men. Some pastors are plagued by the late, late show -- later rising syndrome. How can anyone justify such a waste of time that could and should be used for "ministering unto"? Recreation and relaxation are necessary to keep one's performance capacity at a high level. But many a pastor has made the golf bag, the boob tube, the great out-of-doors his god while his sheep suffer from lack of pasturage, fresh water, and personal spiritual ministration. What is this but ministering unto oneself, under the plea that everyone needs a little time off and a diversion, instead of being concerned first and foremost and at all times with ministering unto others?

MOTIVATION

What is the basic problem if a pastor sits up late and rises later, if golfing or card playing are the experiences eagerly awaited at conferences and conventions, if fishing for the big one becomes more enjoyable and exciting than fishing for some poor human soul? The problem may well be greater than the "hit and run" tactics of the flesh -- against which all ministers of the Gospel must contend. The problem may well be one's personal state of grace. St. Paul warned against considering the ministry but a profession or worse yet -- but a job. Whenever a pastor uses the law in a sermon or in an instruction class or in personal counseling, he is apt to misuse it, if he does not apply it first unto himself. The "thou art the man" of Nathan must constantly and repeatedly strike also the minister down. Every study and presentation of God's demands must also serve to deepen the minister's awareness of the holiness of his God, his own utter and complete sinfulness, and his so natural attraction for his own pet sins. In a day when sin is a concept that has been outmoded, when psychological justification of sin has replaced moral guilt, every teacher and preacher of the Truth needs to be relentlessly on guard lest he fall victim of the siren call of Satan that sin no longer involves damning guilt -- because there are no unvarying standards for human conduct, because God is "love," because society not the individual is really at fault, and so on and on. Unless the minister has a deep and abiding awareness of his own sin and guilt, he cannot be moved with compassion over the plight of his fellow sinners.

We are ministers of the Gospel, not the law. But the Gospel has been diluted from God's activity in man's behalf to man's cooperative activity with God in his own behalf.

The infused grace of Roman Catholicism is paralleled by the Reformed emphasis on "Christ in the heart." Lutheran synergism runs parallel to Reformed Arminianism. The work-righteous systems of the lodges and Scouting have infiltrated and found refuge within the so-called Christian churches. Justification by faith with the emphasis on faith converts justification into a law rather than a Gospel concept. All of this -- published in an unending flow of books, broadcast over radio and television, practiced by liberals and conservatives, evangelists and fundamentalists has undermined the understanding of God's way of saving man. The monergism of grace for all practical purposes has been replaced in churches by the self-flattering illusion that man can and must to at least some degree save himself. The preacher who does not understand grace, who has not and does not again and again taste that the Lord is good and good enough, may well have fallen from grace. Such a one cannot be enthused about ministering unto others with that grace.

But the minister who has by the power of the Spirit been led to the simple confession, "I have sinned; the Lord hath put away my sin," has the basic spiritual prerequisite for ministering unto others. What is needed thereafter is to realize that every contact, every opportunity, every moment is an opening to minister unto others with the medicine of life and with therapy that can cure sin-warped lives and convert them into lives lived to the full and forever. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good thing." I Timothy 3:1. What more excellent way for the spending of one's life is there than in ministering unto men, women, and children whose souls and bodies are more precious than all the wealth of this world? How can we better spend our days, exhaust our talents and energies than in following after Him who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Paul F. Nolting



THE ART OF DYING

Solomon spoke a universal truth when he said, by divine inspiration, that for each one of us there is "a time to die," Eccl. 3:2. This has been the case ever since Abel, the first human being ever to experience death, was slain by his murderer-brother Cain. Adam and Eve knew very well what had brought this about. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Rom. 5:12.

Death always seems to have a certain mysterious fascination about it. Poets have spoken of it in hushed terms. Shakespeare had frequent references to death, e.g. in Measure for Measure (Act 3, Sc. 1): "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where; To lie in cold obstruction and to rot; This sensible warm motion to become a kneaded clod."

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) says in his essay On Death: "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other." The agnostic Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) had nothing better to offer when he wrote: "Is there beyond the silent night an endless day? Is death a door that leads to light? We cannot say." (Declaration of the Free, St. 16).

In more recent years, and especially since the death of President Kennedy, the study of death has engaged the minds of many. Unfortunately, these studies for the most part have only increased the "tales" of which Francis Bacon wrote. One book that seems to be considered a modern classic on the subject is entitled: On Death and Dying, by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969, Macmillan Co.). This woman M.D. and students at the University of Chicago spoke with terminally ill patients to get their views of death, with the results being recorded and analyzed for the readers. Another book appeared in 1967 entitled: Explaining Death to Children. This is an anthology containing 10 articles by as many different authors, including a Methodist minister (who supposedly represents the so-called Protestant view), a Roman Catholic bishop (who at least bases a portion of his presentation on Scripture), and a Jewish rabbi, who is also editor of the book. It is published by Beacon Press, Boston, under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Very recently periodicals such as Newsweek, Atlantic Monthly, and Harper's Commentary have carried extended discussions of death. In Psychology Today (Aug. 1970, p. 37), Prof. Edwin Schneidman, who had spent over 20 years in researching death phenomena, was amazed to find 200 undergraduates from Harvard and Radcliffe show up for his course on death in a classroom set with 20 chairs. Seminars on death are appearing in the curricula of colleges and universities throughout the country. At the University of Minnesota a "Center for Death Education and Research" has been created. The Summer 1972 issue of Dialog magazine contains 5 major articles on the subject of death. (This is a theological journal published in St. Paul, Minn., with an editorial board consisting of professors and pastors belonging to various church bodies affiliated with the LCUSA).

Let it be said at the outset that we shall not depend on these recent studies by medical doctors, psychiatrists, and theologians to bring us the final word on the subject. We go first and last to the Bible. This present study is based on the premise that the Bible is what it says it is, namely, the verbally-inspired Word of God. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:12-13. What it says is not mere human opinion, but everything that God would have us know to get to heaven. We share the evaluation which George P. Morris placed upon the Holy Scriptures when he wrote: My Mother's Bible:

Thou truest friend man ever knew,
Thy constancy I've tried;
Where all were false I found thee true,
My counsellor and guide.
The mines of earth no treasure give
That could this volume buy;
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die.

With this background, let us proceed with our study of "The Art of Dying."

I.

Dr. Robert Fulton, a professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, is one of the contributors to the anthology: Explaining Death to Children, referred to earlier. In his article entitled: "On the Death of Dying," he speaks of the current shift in attitude by Americans toward death. He says: "An increasing number of Americans

no longer view death as the result of Divine displeasure or as the price of moral trespass; rather, in our modern, secular society death is coming to be seen as the result of personal negligence or of an unforeseen accident" (p. 31).

Again: "Death in our society is no longer the wages of sin. Today it is seen as something that does not have to happen. Furthermore, the idea is being entertained that it is remotely conceivable that for a very significant minority, that death eventually won't need to happen at all" (p. 34). Mention is then made of recent attempts to freeze bodies in order later on to benefit from future advances in medical technology, so as to be restored to life and good health. The author also calls attention to this: "One strategy that has emerged in contemporary society to cope with the dying and death of our aging members in a more immediate way is the retirement city movement. This movement encourages the segregation and isolation of those most likely to die before they actually do so. Such a development in modern life allows us for the first time to avoid death almost entirely. ... Time and separation loosen family and friendship ties. Once an older person is emotionally separated from the members of his family or group his death will register but lightly upon them, if at all" (p. 34).

It is quite possible that Dr. Fulton has correctly assessed the thinking of our modern society regarding death. But those who hope for an eventual "dying of death" are engaging in wishful thinking. They base their hope on advances in science and medical technology, and only incidentally take into consideration some kind of "supreme being." Basically they are afraid of death and don't want to believe that what the Bible says concerning sin and death is true. They acknowledge that they are sinners, but think that by denying that "the wages of sin is death," Rom: 6:23, they can somehow change the pronouncement of God in Eden. We are reminded of the words of the apostle Paul: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," Rom. 1:22. Any wisdom that goes counter to the revealed Word of God is only foolishness, which will be of no lasting benefit in time or in eternity.

We who occupy the office of the ministry of the Word surely have a great responsibility here. For one thing, it is our duty to "shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness," 2 Tim. 2:16. Then too, we are to "feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28. This spiritual

nourishment is not to be drawn from the dry wells of man's wisdom, but from the inerrant Word of the eternal God. When people also today "imagine a vain thing ... He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," Ps. 2:1,4. Therefore we dare not be impressed by the results of present-day research into death, when its conclusions are contrary to what God tells us in the Bible.

As a result of her research, Dr. Kübler-Ross describes death in terms of five stages through which the patient progresses prior to death. These are: 1) denial and isolation; 2) anger; 3) bargaining; 4) depression; 5) acceptance. In general, she pictures death as an enemy. Those who are dying are pictured as resisting the idea as long as possible, and finally end up trying to make the best of it. The author questions the death-bed practices of many clergy by saying: "What amazed me, however, was the number of clergy who felt quite comfortable using a prayer book or a chapter out of the Bible as the sole communication between them and the patients, thus avoiding listening to their needs and being exposed to questions they might be unable or unwilling to answer" (p. 226).

Our conviction is that when a person is brought face to face with his own impending death, there can be no better medicine than the "balm of Gilead," the Word of God's grace. When the sinner knows that he must soon stand in the presence of the heavenly Judge to give an accounting, we can think of no better comfort to offer him than God's own comfort, for example, in Psalms 6, 23, 25, 32, 42, and 51. Experience proves that a person can sing away much sadness and melancholy with beautiful Christian songs, when they are spoken or sung in a devotional manner. The hearts of the dying can be filled with true joy and hope through such songs. Thereby they are reminded of the heavenly music of the angels, which we shall there join in singing. Every pastor should have such a store of Christian hymns readily available when he calls upon the sick and dying. In our Lutheran Hymnal we do well to make good use of such hymns as:

- No. 137 - In peace and joy I now depart.
- No. 231 - We now implore God the Holy Ghost.
- No. 247 - God the Father, be our Stay.
- No. 251 and 252 - We all believe in one true God.
- No. 319 - In Thee alone, O Christ, my Lord.
- No. 329 - From depths of woe I cry to Thee.
- No. 369 - All mankind fell in Adam's fall.
- No. 377 - Salvation unto us has come.

No. 458 - Our Father, Thou in heaven above.

No. 590 - In the midst of earthly life.

No. 592 - I know of a sleep in Jesus' name.

No. 594 - When my last hour is close at hand.

No. 596 - This body in the grave we lay.

It is self-understood that pastors will not avoid listening to the needs of the dying nor will he be unwilling to answer the questions that are asked. The pastor with Bible in hand has the answer to the needs of the dying, those questions which are of real importance when one is about to enter eternity. We shall not criticize a pastor who reads or sings a treasured hymn to bring joy and peace to the heart. We would rather question the wisdom of the pastor who would set aside his Bible and Hymnal in order to answer questions about death and beyond for which God has provided us no answer in His holy Word.

Dr. Kübler-Ross also says: "Once the patient dies, I find it cruel and inappropriate to speak of the love of God. When we lose someone, especially when we have had little if any time to prepare ourselves, we are enraged, angry, in despair; we should be allowed to express these feelings" (p. 156). For our part, we would not consider it "cruel and inappropriate" to read and apply the following verse to the members of a family who have just witnessed the death of a Christian: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. Shall we permit the survivors to give vent to anger and despair, and remain silent concerning the words of the Psalmist: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"? Ps. 16:11. Even during this Christmas season, shall we in the presence of death refrain from repeating the words of the heavenly angel: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke 2:10-11.

It goes without saying that the pastor's first concern will be to prepare himself for a blessed death. It will do him no good to serve as a steward of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4:1, if he in the end is himself a castaway, 1 Cor. 9:27. "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock," Acts 20:28. We pastors are human beings, sinners like everyone else. We need a Savior just as much as anyone else. We find our comfort only in the God of all comfort "who com-

forteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. 1:4. Whatever a pastor preaches to others, whether in public or in private, he should preach first of all to himself. When he sets forth the Law, he should apply it first to himself. When he proclaims from a full heart the Gospel of a Savior slain and risen again from the grave, he finds therein that which he himself needs more than anything else in this world.

II.

Let us learn well the blessed art of dying. It is no complicated process. It is not something which only the learned can master. In fact, the Lord Jesus gave His disciples a most necessary bit of instruction when He said: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 18:3. Our Savior lovingly invites us: "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. 11:29.

Man dies on account of sin. But whoever has the sweet comfort of Jesus Christ in his heart and rejoices in things eternal, such an one looks upon death merely as a separation and release from this vale of tears and as a journey home to our eternal inheritance. For Christ, who dwells in them, has tasted death for them, deprived it of its power, and has broken its sting. Death can no longer do anything more to the believers than merely to separate body and soul and deprive them of this fleeting life. But just as all things must work together for good to them that love God, Rom. 8:28, so even death serves them in this way, that it releases them from all evil and brings them to rest. Jesus assures His followers: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:3. We listen carefully therefore to what Scripture says about death. It is nothing more than a journey to peace. When believers in Jesus Christ die, it means nothing else than that the Lord Jesus comes and takes them to Himself.

There is a penalty which God has permitted to come upon the body on account of sin. But the believing children of God do not look only at how horribly death treats them. They don't consider only the coldness and decay in the grave. They rather look further and try to imagine how beautiful, how charming, how pure and glorious their bodies

will be on that Day when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15:54-55.

That was Job's comfort when he was full of boils and misery. He commended himself to God, looked beyond, and said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," Job 19:25-27. O how beautiful and pure and clean our bodies will be on that Day! There is no star glittering in the heavens, not even the sun and the moon, that will shine like our bodies, when the Lord shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, Phil. 3:21. We shall be likened not merely unto the angels, but unto the Lord Himself.

Now we are the grains of wheat of our Lord God, which He sows in His acre of ground. But when God's springtime comes, the true warmth will come and the true sun will rise. Then we shall grow forth and arise and bear truly eternal fruits. "For it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body," 1 Cor. 15:42-44. Let us look in joyful hope, not only at the decay and the dust, but at the glory and purity which will be revealed not only in the soul but also in the body. Let us learn to sing and say:

No fruit the grain of wheat brings forth
If it falls not in the ground:
So must this body, formed of clay,
In dust and ashes be found
Before it can that glory share,
Which Thou, Lord Jesus, didst prepare
By going to Thy Father.

Our sinful nature thinks of death as we have deserved it according to the Law, namely, that we will die not only here in time on account of our sins, but will also be destroyed eternally, if Christ our Savior would not help us. It is from this that such fears come and cling to us even unto the grave. It is like a person who has been rescued from drowning or from a burning building, but who still trembles whenever he thinks of it. So also our whole nature

trembles when we think of the great misery in which we were to have been destroyed, and consider that we must still suffer the sting of death on account of our sins and must die.

But here the children of God should learn an entirely new language when it comes to speaking about death, and hear what the holy Gospel says about this. The Gospel calls the death of believers a sleep, and it calls the grave a chamber of rest. For since Christ has endured the punishment of death for us, suffered the anguish of hell for us, satisfied the justice of God for us, and has earned life for us, therefore in the Gospel the Holy Ghost abolishes the ugly names and comforts His believers with an entirely new language. For the Lord speaks thus: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast," Isa. 26:20. Again: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," Dan. 12:2. And Christ Himself says: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep," John 11:11. The Passion History also says: "Many bodies of the saints which slept arose," Matt. 27:52.

Through His death the Lord Jesus has changed your dying into a gentle falling asleep, and has made your grave into a soft bed of rest. When you die, that is called falling asleep. When you are laid in the grave, that is called going to bed. When someone fills the grave with dirt, that is called closing the door behind you. When your body decays, that is called resting and hiding yourself, until the indignation be overpast. Let us learn this language well!

III.

The best preparation for a blessed end is a daily, Christian, repentant life. Repentance consists, first of all, in this that a person recognizes his sins and sorrows over them in his heart. Without knowledge of sin, faith is only hypocrisy. A repentant sinner knows from Scripture that he is conceived and born in original sin, that he was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him, Ps. 51:5. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, yes, from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, nothing upright in me, Isa. 1:5-6. All is corrupted through the sin that dwelleth in me, Rom. 7:17, and that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no

good thing, Rom. 7:18, that all is full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, Isa. 1:6.

In addition, we have also from our earliest youth transgressed all of the Ten Commandments by sinful thoughts, desires, words, silence, and deeds of commission and omission. The repentant sinner will surely say with David: "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." Ps. 38:6.

The second part of repentance consists in true honest faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has paid for our sins and reconciled us with God, Rom. 5:9-10. His name was called Jesus, because He came to save us from our sins, Matt. 1:21. The trembling sinner hears the Savior's voice saying: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. 11:28. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, John 1:29. His pure conception has purified my sinful conception. His unspotted birth has sanctified my impure birth. His holy conduct atones for my sinful conduct. His humiliation is my exaltation. His pains of hell are my comfort of heaven. His bonds are my redemption. His dishonor is my honor. His wounds and stripes are my glorious dress. His suffering is my payment, His merit my ransom. His bloody death is the true guilt-offering for all my sins. His obedience renders satisfaction for all my misdeeds. His descent into hell is my deliverance from the power of hell and the devil. His resurrection is my justification. His ascension is my assurance that I am indeed an heir of eternal life and already possess heaven through Him.

Surely He hath done all things well, Mark 7:37. Scripture leaves us in no doubt, thanks be to God, as to what is involved in learning the art of dying. The Savior puts it all in a few simple words when He says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me," John 14:6. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12.

In preparing for a blessed death, a Christian will make daily use of God's Word, learning rightly to understand it and to distinguish between Law and Gospel. He will take comfort in his Baptism, in which God cleansed him and received him as His child. He will celebrate diligently the Lord's Supper, in which the Savior gives to each believing communicant the personal assurance of the forgiveness of all his sins. He will learn to prepare for the daily cross

which children of God must always bear after their Lord in this vale of tears, knowing that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. He will remain faithful in carrying out the duties of his earthly calling, knowing that God does not want people to be idle. Finally, he will not forget prayer, for prayer is the means whereby we plead for the gifts of God.

To this very day, scholars who seemingly do not know what Christianity is all about have much different advice to offer. Oscar Wilde opined that the best preparation for death was to think up some particularly witty saying to utter with one's dying breath. Others say that when it comes to dying, no better advice can be given than that a person should take fresh courage, scorn death, and remember that it can't be otherwise, that it will last for only a brief bad moment and then it will be over with. They consider this to be great art and wisdom. That is what the heathen king Agag did when he saw that the prophet Samuel intended to cut him to pieces. He came cheerfully to Samuel and said: "Surely the bitterness of death is past," 1 Sam. 15:32.

By contrast, the believing children of God have a much better medicine against the fear of death. The true art of dying has been revealed from heaven itself. Yes, we must take strong issue with the Rev. Dr. Edgar N. Jackson, former Methodist pastor and now serving as head of a psychiatric clinic for children at New Rochelle, N.Y., when he says: "The talk about heaven and hell is as outmoded as the moon of green cheese in an age of astronauts who are prepared to colonize the moon." (From an article entitled "Dimensions of Death in Protestantism," in Explaining Death to Children, p. 180). Such scholarship notwithstanding, we shall continue to pass on to our children and to the whole world the facts which have come to us from heaven concerning the art of dying.

Our certainty and hope of eternal salvation in the face of death rests not on any artificial courage within us, but on the words and promises of God. To the person who fears that his faith is not strong enough, Scripture gives the assurance that weak faith is still true faith so long as it clings to the Word of promise. Dr. Martin Luther said: "If God would not keep His promise, then our salvation has already taken place. But God keeps His Word and does not lie. Therefore, even though our heart wavers, we can still take refuge in Him who does not waver. For He says: I am the

Lord, who lieth not." (Quoted in Sterbekunst by Martin Moller, 1910 Edition, p. 122.)

Our salvation is not to be sought in the here and now. What a miserable salvation that would be! No, the Christian even now hears the heavenly Bridegroom saying with His charming voice: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away," Song of Solomon 2:10-11. Let us not hesitate to follow Him Whose very Word is truth, John 17:17. Let us permit no amount of scholarship or of science falsely-so-called to mislead us from our only sure and certain source of truth. Let us even now prepare our hearts for that time when, perhaps on a bed of pain, we can nevertheless pray:

Here I now lie, a little worm,
Both hand and foot are so infirm;
From pain my body seems to burst,
Death now to life will do its worst;
My senses have forsaken me,
Of life I now so weary be;
To see and hear, I can't attain,
A blessed death shall be my gain.

When soon my little hour draws nigh,
Let Thy dear angel stand me by,
And lead from out this tearful place
My soul to heav'n to see Thy face,
That I with all Thy saints above
May sing with angels of Thy love,
Sing praises to Thy name again
For all eternity. Amen.

A. Schulz



" T H Y W O R D I S T R U T H "

At long last, Martin E. Marty has expressed himself publicly and definitely regarding the theological battle going on within his church body, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In an article in the liberal Christian Century,¹ of which he is an associate editor, he clearly aligns himself with the so-called "moderates" and unlooses several theological barrages against the synod's embattled president, J.A.O. Preus, and his supporters. Marty says of this battle that "the antagonists live in different worlds," and that "the struggle reveals two world views, two mentalities, two intentions, two spiritual and psychological casts" -- an evaluation with which we are fully inclined to agree.

What lies at the heart of the struggle? Marty leaves no one in doubt: "While there are side issues, the heart of the matter is the Preus faction's defense of biblical inerrancy -- even in matters geographic and scientific." The moderates would be quite willing to subscribe to a general doctrine of Biblical inspiration and Scriptural authority, but let no one insist that they subscribe to the total infallibility of Holy Scripture! In his article, Marty takes numerous pot shots at the doctrine of inerrancy, all of which combine to suggest that this doctrine can in no way be accepted by enlightened Christians. He admits that the synodical forefathers "did speak the language of inerrancy," but states that they "derive this concept from 17th century scholasticism," rather than from the Bible. The insistence upon inerrancy, he charges, "does not do justice to the gospel," but rather impairs true evangelical freedom. And those who are fighting for this doctrine are showing their "anti-intellectualism" and revealing a spirit of "legalism." Marty maintains that Luther "found errors of fact and argument and grammar in biblical documents," and asserts that the Lutheran Confessions, while describing the Bible as infallible in matters of salvation, nowhere speak of scientific errorlessness. What is more, there are, according to Marty, no passages in Scripture, not even John 10:35, which teach inerrancy, so that such a doctrine cannot be affirmed as an article of faith.

When all this is said by a man so prominent in learned

Lutheran circles as Marty, and when he states it in so positive a fashion, he surely invites a response from what he calls the theological "hinterland." And so we shall respond, lest our silence on this question be construed by anyone as agreement with his conclusions. Yet the paragraphs below are not designed primarily as an answer to Marty. Therefore some of the statements that we make may not apply specifically to him. What follows is our confession of faith in what we believe Scripture says of itself, namely, that it is God's verbally-inspired Word of truth, wholly free from human fallibility and factual error. We would join Christ in asserting of this holy Book, "Thy Word is Truth."

Verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy -- A Matter of Faith

We speak of our belief in verbal inspiration and inerrancy, for we recognize that these doctrines, like the Gospel itself, cannot be received by the natural mind of man. In a context which speaks both of the Gospel of Christ and of verbal inspiration, the Apostle Paul states as a general principle that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) Such spiritual discernment involves, not only an objective revelation of the truth by the Spirit, such as we have in Scripture, but the creation of true spirituality in the heart through a Spirit-given faith in Christ.

Theologians of the Reformed school, in defending the twin doctrines of verbal inspiration and inerrancy, are at times inclined to stress the reasonableness of these truths. They submit "proofs of inspiration," based on such premises as "the character of God," and state that "a high view of God seems to require a correspondingly high view of inspiration."² While we indeed concur in the substance of such proofs, we do not agree with the method. For in themselves such proofs do not possess the ability to create belief in the divine character and infallibility of the Bible. Such faith, as all true faith, involves the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Christ.

This, then, is how a man comes to accept Scripture for what it is. God comes to us in the Good News of salvation, and through that Gospel supplies our deepest and most compelling needs. We find ourselves sinners, with guilty con-

science and the dread awareness of the Law's condemnation, and He reveals to us the blessed fact that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" and that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (1 John 1:7; Rom. 8:1) We see the effects of sin in our body and fear the coming of mankind's "last enemy" and "the king of terrors," Death, and God assures us that through our Lord Jesus Christ we have "victory" over this cruel foe and "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." (1 Cor. 15:26; Job 18:14; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 Pet. 1:4) By thus solving, through the Gospel, these most urgent problems of our earthly existence, sin and death, God wins our confidence. And then, when He comes to us in the Bible and tells us that the Old Testament and the New Testament are His Word in all of their words, and that all of Scripture is therefore completely reliable and without error, we believe it, for He has won our confidence. Any man who is able to join the Psalmist in confessing, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word," should recognize and treasure such a conviction as a precious gift of faith, worked in his heart by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel! (Ps. 119:161)

Scripture -- The Word of God

But someone may ask, Does the Bible indeed speak of itself as being the Word of God, as a whole and in all its words? It is our complete conviction that it does. In a brief article such as this, it would in fact be utterly impossible to present all the Scriptural evidence on this question. For "a thousand times Scripture says that the writings of the prophets and apostles are God's own Word."³ Theodore Engelder, who makes this statement, quotes in support these words of Prof. James B. Green: "The Law and the Prophets, the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of Paul, these are declared to be the Word of God. It has been estimated that the Bible in various ways asserts its own inspiration some three thousand times. How often does the Bible have to say a thing before men will believe it?"⁴

The writers of the Old Testament spoke and wrote with the full awareness that they were serving as the instrument of the Lord in conveying His Word to the people. We are told that the Spirit of God came or fell upon these holy men of God, that they received the Word of God and were under constraint to utter it.⁵ In their writings they indicate

clearly that they were fully conscious of coming to the people with nothing less than the Word of the Lord. Again and again they begin their utterances with such expressions as "Thus saith the Lord," or "Hear ye the word of the Lord," or "Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me," or "The word of the Lord came unto ..." Repeatedly they show themselves to be the very mouthpieces of the Lord. "In many of their discourses in which the Lord is introduced as speaking, the prophets suddenly turn from the use of the third to that of the first person, without any transitional 'saith the Lord.' In other words, they surprise the reader by beginning to speak as if they were God. Cf. Isa. 3:4; 5:3ff.; 10:5ff.; 27:3; Jer. 5:7; 16:21; Hos. 6:4ff.; Joel 2:25; Amos 5:21ff.; Zech. 9:7; etc. This would be unexampled boldness on the part of the prophets, if they were not absolutely sure that God was putting the words, which they were speaking, into their mouths as His own."⁶

The New Testament gives copious testimony to this verbal inspiration of the Old. We find numerous formulas like the one used by Matthew in the first chapter of his Gospel: "Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ..." (1:22, NASB) In Matthew 7:10-13, Christ not only identifies Moses as the writer of the Pentateuch, but testifies that he spoke "the word of God." In Luke 24:44, He seals the entire Old Testament with His divine authority when He says to the Emmaus disciples: "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Paul, in Romans 3:2, alludes to the Old Testament Scriptures as "the oracles (sayings) of God"; and in 9:16 he tellingly identifies Scripture with the Word of God: "For the scripture saith unto Pharoah, Even for this purpose have I (the Lord) raised thee up ..." The apostle Peter tells us that he was an eyewitness to the majesty of Christ at the transfiguration, but he adds that we have something even more sure than such direct confrontation with God,⁷ namely, the prophetic Word of the Old Testament, spoken from God by the holy writers as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit: "And we have the even surer prophetic word, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from

God." (2 Pet. 1:19-21, NASB with margin) And there is, of course, that locus classicus for the doctrine of verbal inspiration, 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God (lit., God-breathed)." (NASB with margin)

That this divine inspiration is verbal, should be manifest to anyone. For the speaking and writing of God through the holy men of God necessarily involved human language,⁸ which is made up of words. The words are the thing, as is illustrated more than once in the Bible. To Christ the very "jot and tittle" were matters of exceeding importance.⁹ In John 10:34ff., which we shall discuss below in greater detail, He points to an individual word of Scripture as being divinely authoritative and inerrant. And Paul, in Galatians 3:16, cites even the grammatical form of a word in order to underscore what he is saying: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."¹⁰

But verbal inspiration is ascribed also to the writings of the New Testament. In His high-priestly prayer, the Lord Christ points to the apostles as the ones who would convey the Word of God to future generations: "I have given them thy word; ... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:14, 20) This Word was to consist of nothing less, and nothing more, than His own authoritative words, for He enjoins them prior to His ascension to "make disciples of all the nations, ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19f., NASB) That the proclamation of these apostles would be safeguarded from human fallibility was guaranteed by His effective promise: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. ... When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: ... and he will show you things to come." (John 14:26; 16:13) And that truth which the apostles received from God they not only proclaimed orally, but also wrote down, as the following passages testify: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (1 John 1:3) "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thess. 2:15) "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:37)

Furthermore, we are to regard, not only the message of the apostles, but the very words in which this message is clothed, as taught by the Holy Spirit. For Paul speaks thus concerning the apostolic message: "Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." (1 Cor. 2:13, NASB) So authoritative, therefore, are the writings of the apostles, that they are placed on a par with the writings of the Old Testament, as we see in such passages as 1 Peter 1:10-12,* where the Holy Spirit is said to be testifying through both the prophets and the apostles; 2 Peter 3:16,** where the writings of Paul are included with the Old Testament writings in the term "scripture"; Ephesians 2:20, "the foundation of the apostles and prophets"; cf. also 2 Peter 3:2,*** and Hebrews 1:1f.

We hesitate not at all, therefore, to confess with full assurance that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the verbally, word-for-word, inspired Word of God. This doctrine is not a subtle theological construction of the 17th century dogmatists, but is a clear teaching of the Bible. And what the Bible claims for itself we confidently accept, for through the Gospel it has won our trust!

Scripture -- Inerrant

The Bible, then, teaches that whatever a holy writer

* "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

** "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

*** "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

recorded, he wrote by direction of the Holy Ghost and in the words chosen by Him. From this truth it follows, as a necessary and easily drawn consequence, that the Bible is also inerrant, that is, free from human fallibility and factual error in all matters that it treats.¹¹ Simple Christians find no trouble in arriving at this corollary, and it betokens their childlike faith in Scripture -- which faith is to be praised, even as Christ does praise it.¹²

But the learned theologians, including some of those who claim to accept inspiration, seem to have great difficulty in arriving at this inescapable conclusion. There are those who claim to find "contradictions" or "mistakes" in the Bible, and who must therefore assume that inspiration was a hit-or-miss, on-and-off kind of process. Others, who wish to retain plenary inspiration at least in theory, speak of degrees of inspiration, so that some passages are "more inspired" than others. It would seem that they would have to conclude that the Holy Spirit became a bit careless at times, permitting less worthy passages to enter in among the truly divine. To us it seems evident that any denial of a uniform, full, and all-inclusive inspiration could easily involve a type of blasphemy against God.

This is especially true in that the Bible actually claims inerrancy for itself. A concordance will reveal how often the quality of truth is ascribed to the holy writings, a quality attaching even to the individual words. We think, for example, of passages like John 17:17, where Christ says in prayer to His Father: "Thy word is truth"; or John 8:31f., where He states: "If ye continue in my word, ... ye shall know the truth." And that this freedom from error attaches to the very words of Scripture is seen in John 10:34ff., in which Christ defends the one word "Gods" on the basis of the principle: "The scripture cannot be broken." Such passages indeed present a formidable obstacle to those who refuse to accept Biblical inerrancy, and they have therefore expended much effort to becloud or deny their clear import. But their efforts are, in our opinion, wholly unsuccessful. To illustrate what we mean, we shall look more closely at two of these passages, John 17:17 and John 10:35.

John 17:17: "Thy word is truth."

It is particularly the word "truth" (ἀλήθεια) that we are interested in here, the word which occurs so frequently

in the New Testament as a descriptive attribute of Holy Scripture. We are told by some theologians that we dare not read our 20th century concept of factual accuracy and errorlessness into this 1st century Greek word when it is used of the Bible. They assure us that the apostles meant something quite different, namely, that the Word of God is thereby characterized by a quality of "faithfulness," for it witnesses to a God who is faithful and dependable in His dealings with men -- or, put in a somewhat different way, that God's Word is "truth" inasmuch as His dealings with men invariably correspond to His Word.

James Barr, in his book, The Semantics of Biblical Language,¹³ explores the meaning of ἀληθεια in a detached linguistic fashion, and concludes that the word suggested to 1st century Greeks a meaning which is little different from the common meaning of the word "truth" in our day. He cites random passages from Homer, Herodotus, Plato, Thucydides, Josephus, the Septuagint (Judges 9:15), and the New Testament (Luke 22:59), and then states: "Surely it is beyond dispute that in such a series there is a basic semantic contrast between what is 'true' and what is falsehood, pretence, insincerity, outward appearance, and half-truth; and that neither do the Greek examples refer to 'abstract and metaphysical truth' nor do the Jewish-Christian ones refer to 'the reality of God in covenant-relationship, God's being true to himself, truth grounded upon God's faithfulness' or anything of the sort. It is because the basic semantics of the Greek word was not its relation to abstract and metaphysical thinking but the contrast pattern between 'true' and 'false' or 'unreal,' a contrast pattern which was normal and living in the actual speech encountered, that the Seventy were able to use the word quite naturally in their translation."¹⁴

Arndt and Gingrich recognize the same thing when in our passages they contrast ἀληθεια with ψεῦδος ("lie" or "falsehood").¹⁵ This opposition appears in a very evident fashion in a passage like John 8:44-45: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." In connection with this passage, J.A.O. Preus states: "Jesus speaks of Himself as telling the truth and as being the truth. To Him it is very important whether a thing is

in accord with facts or not. ... Here [John 8:44-45] lying and truth are put in contradistinction. This is an absolute antithesis, unless we are to assume that Satan is not completely a liar and Christ is not completely truthful. Christ is here speaking of His message, of all that He says, in direct opposition to Satan, the father of lies. In John 8:45 Jesus points out that He not only is the truth but that He speaks the truth: 'I tell you the truth.'¹⁶

When we say, now, that ἀλήθεια would have suggested immediately the meaning "truth" (as opposed to "what is false") to the Greek readers of the New Testament, we do not thereby imply that the contexts in which this word is found would not suggest additional theological concepts.¹⁷ Indeed, the modifiers and adjuncts of a word do bring in such additional concepts. But we are transgressing a basic principle of sound linguistic practice if we add such concepts to the semantics of the word, and then assume the presence of these additional meanings in other passages where the word is found. We do wrong, therefore, when we inject into the meaning of ἀλήθεια a theological construction which may indeed be valid in itself, but which is not part of the semantics of the word. While it is a teaching of Scripture that God is faithful in His dealings with men, a faithfulness to which His Word gives ample witness, we are not justified in concluding that the basic meaning of ἀλήθεια in its New Testament usage is "faithfulness." A second linguistic error is committed when we in addition deny the common meaning which the word had for the original readers of the New Testament.

There are theologians who have made such linguistic mistakes in their treatment of ἀλήθεια. Hoskyns and Davey are two of them.¹⁸ They admit: "Now the Greek ἀλήθεια in the spoken Greek of the first century A.D. did mean very much what the English adjective true means to the ordinary Englishman today. It meant something genuine and not counterfeit, without emphasis on any particular standard by which a statement or thing may be judged true or false." But then they proceed to supply such a "standard" for ἀλήθεια in Scripture, which for them was "a transcendent God," to whom "the idea of steadfastness, 'true to one's self', came naturally to be applied."

Rudolf Bultmann has committed both of the linguistic errors mentioned above. In his article on ἀλήθεια in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, he speaks of the word as "subsuming" concepts in its various

contexts.¹⁹ In the paragraph treating our passage, John 17:17, Bultmann stipulates: "For ἀληθεια naturally does not mean the formal truth of the facts in question. ... It would be a gross misunderstanding to take it here in the general and formal sense." What does the word mean in this context? "Revelation," says Bultmann. But lest we take this word as an objective body of divinely revealed truth, he immediately tells us that "the Word of revelation is not a complex of statements or ideas," but rather "an address fulfilled in a concrete encounter" -- an existential confrontation with God!²⁰ Anyone who has read Bultmann knows what truth value he would ascribe to the written Scripture. He finds so much of the mythological in the Gospels, for example, that he feels compelled to conclude: "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus."²¹

According to Barr, this faulty linguistic method of replacing the actual semantic content of a word with some theological construction, rightly or wrongly drawn from the context, is found all too frequently in Kittel's Theological Dictionary. In a detailed chapter, entitled "Some Principles of Kittel's Theological Dictionary," he criticizes this work for being founded upon the faulty linguistic principles promoted by Cremer in his Lexicon, and for then employing these principles again and again in articles on individual words. The result is that the user of Kittel is often not led to a better understanding of the actual semantics of a given word, but is instead given a resume of the author's own understanding of the passages in which the word occurs. The danger lies in the fact that the user of the Theological Dictionary may easily substitute the author's interpretation for the actual meaning of the word. Barr concludes his chapter with the observation that the linguistic method of Kittel may ultimately do much damage in the area of Biblical studies: "It may well be that TWNT [the Theological Dictionary] will do more harm through its bad linguistic conceptions than it will do good through the useful material compiled in it, and in particular that those aspects of its linguistic philosophy which I have criticized, and which were foremost in the mind of the editors, may become widespread far beyond the range of the actual readers of TWNT. I do not doubt that this has already come to be so."²² We shudder, also, to think of the "contribution" that a man like Bultmann may make to Lutheran theology through his articles in the Theological Dictionary!

The primary function, surely, of a New Testament Greek dictionary should be to present the meaning, or "pool" of meanings, that a given word had for Greek-speaking people of the 1st century -- meanings which would have been present to the mind of the original readers of the New Testament. A secondary function of such a dictionary might be the presentation of the etymology, or semantic history, of the word. Proper linguistic practice suggests that the exegete, in translating a passage, should examine the context of that word and then make an appropriate selection from this "pool" of meanings. One abuse involves what is referred to by Barr and others as "etymologizing." Such etymologizing occurs whenever the exegete reads into a word some "attractive" meaning which may lie somewhere in its semantic history, such as the root meaning, but which the word does not have in actual usage. Another abuse, a theologizing approach, involves the setting aside of the common meanings of the word in 1st century Greek, and the giving to the word of some theological sense, which may be found in other contexts, but which would not have been present to the mind of the original readers of the New Testament. Even Arndt-Gingrich at times goes beyond the proper function of a dictionary, as for example when it suggests as two broad meanings of ζωή in the New Testament "1. of life in the physical sense," and "2. of the supernatural life belonging to God and Christ, which the believers will receive in the future, but which they also enjoy here and now."²³ It is quite unlikely that the word ζωή, as an indicator of meaning, carried with it the full-blown theological concept expressed in the second category. Such a concept belongs, not to the word ζωή itself, but to some of the contexts in which it is found. We must make this kind of distinction if we are to avoid a subtle kind of eisegesis -- reading into a passage a meaning which may in itself be quite Scriptural, but which does not lie in the passage we are treating. Such practice can lead in time to the gross abuse of Scripture which we have seen in Bultmann above.

But let us return to ἀλήθεια. Surely it is a highly arbitrary exegetical procedure, and linguistically irresponsible, to empty a word of the semantic content it undeniably carried in 1st century Greek, and then replace it with a theological construction of one's own choosing. And that is precisely what some theologians have done. There can be no doubt that ἀλήθεια in its general usage referred to the "truth" or facticity of the matters in question, and even

Bultmann is forced to recognize the existence of such a "general and formal sense."²⁴ We may be sure, then, that the original hearers and readers of the apostles brought this meaning into the contexts where ἀλήθεια is used -- including the context of John 17:17: "Thy word is truth." Let us, then, not hesitate to use this passage, and the many others which are similar to it, as proof passages for the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy!

C. Kuehne

(to be continued)

FOOTNOTES

1. "Showdown in the Missouri Synod," issue of September 27, 1972, p. 943ff.

2. Henry C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 81ff.

3. Theodore Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken (Mora, Minnesota: Hope, Inc., n.d.), p. 51. This excellent volume is again available in a reprinted edition.

4. Ibid.

5. Cf. L. Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), p. 42f.

6. Ibid.

7. On the words "more sure," cf. George Stoeckhardt, Lectures on the Second Epistle of St. Peter (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publ. Co., Inc., 1967), p. 19f. Cf. also Berkhof, op. cit., p. 45.

8. "human language," yet inerrant; cf. the next section of this article.

9. Cf. Matt. 5:18. The NASB conveys the sense of the passage effectively: "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

10. Berkhof points out here: "This argument of the apostle has been attacked on the ground that the Hebrew word to which he refers cannot be used in the plural to denote posterity. Cf. Gen. 13:15. But this does not destroy the validity of his argument, for the writer of Genesis might have used another word or expression in the plural. And even if it did, the passage would still prove that Paul

believed in the inspiration of the individual words."

Op. cit., p. 47.

11. The inseparable connection between inspiration and inerrancy is treated in a more philosophical fashion by J. W. Montgomery, Crisis in Lutheran Theology (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1967), vol. I. In an article entitled "Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure," he states: "Note carefully that I have not said merely (as others have said) that inspiration and inerrancy should not be separated (i.e., that they can be separated but for various biblical and theological reasons ought not to be), but rather that scriptural inspiration and inerrancy cannot exist apart from each other (i.e., that to separate them results not just in error, but in plain and simple meaninglessness)." p. 18.

12. Cf. Matt. 18:1-6: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

13. James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Barr is Professor of Old Testament Literature and Theology in the University of Edinburgh.

14. Idem, p. 189f. It is significant that, according to Barr, a similar semantic content can be found in the corresponding Hebrew word, 'emeth.

15. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 35.

16. Jacob A. O. Preus, It Is Written (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971), p. 24f. The entire chapter, "Christ Regarded the Scripture as True and Reliable," is well worth reading.

17. Cf. a verse like John 14:6, where Jesus says "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

18. Cited by Barr, op. cit., p. 195.

19. Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964 -), vol. I, p. 244.

20. Idem, p. 246. How improbable Bultmann's remarks here are, is indicated by a comparison of John 14:26 and 16:13. The content of "truth" in the latter verse would surely seem to be the "things" of the former, namely, the facts of Christ's words and works.

21. Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 8.

22. Barr, op. cit., p. 262.

23. Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 340. See Barr's discussion of Bauer's Wörterbuch, op. cit., p. 254ff. The linguistic procedures of Bauer have, of course, been carried over into the translation by Arndt and Gingrich.

24. Kittel, op. cit., p. 246.



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== PANORAMA ==

WELS and CLC -- As reported to the Convention in Eau
IS THERE STILL Claire this summer, the Commissions of
A DIFFERENCE? WELS and CLC agreed to meet for a discussion of an agenda to be guided by the following provisions: "That we enter upon a discussion of 'weak brother' and 'false teachers,' in contrast to the distinction between 'weak brother' and 'persistent errorist,' in the area of admonition and church fellowship. That each side is to be free to make such references to official resolutions and official reports as may be deemed necessary."

This meeting was held at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 18 and 19. The friendly atmosphere and the close attention given to all the speakers was certainly conducive to free speech and uninhibited presentation. Every opportunity was given for individual expression within the scope of the agenda. When it became apparent that the discussions were becoming cyclical and repetitious, it was resolved to bring the meeting to a close. The minutes of the CLC secretary state at this point: "CLC voiced the opinion that the discussions had demonstrated that WELS and CLC are not agreed on the principles of fellowship and separation in dealing with a church body. The CLC representatives were satisfied to have left their thoughts and witness with the WELS representatives for consideration."

It has been noted then that a difference exists between the CLC and the WELS on the principles of fellowship and separation in dealing with a church body. No agreement on this matter was reached as also the October issue of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (p. 282) reports to its readers. Now certainly controversy with WELS has from the beginning centered upon the principles to be applied in dealing with a church body that has been infected by error. On the one side it has been held that the word of God calls for separation from a heterodox church body without reference to subjective human judgment regarding timing and so forth which makes for ambivalence and uncertainty. On the other hand, it has been held that such action is to be postponed so long as there is a ray of hope that a change may take

place and there is prospect of extricating protesting brethren from their fellowship with error. But let the proponents of this latter view express it in their own words. We now quote from the minutes presented by the secretary of the WELS Commission:

"The discussion thereupon turned to the matter of dealing between church bodies when error or false doctrine has arisen. In this connection references were made to official resolutions, particularly of the WELS, on the basis of a document distributed by the CLC representatives. No Scriptural warrant was granted by the CLC representatives for a state of confession in dealing with the situations in which error in doctrine or practice has infected a larger group of confessional brethren (e.g., congregations or sister synod). The WELS representatives held, however, that such a state of confession is frequently called for before terminating fellowship with a group that has been infected by error:

"1. In order to offer opportunity for determining what the confessional position of the group for which it must be held responsible really is (this may become necessary because of mutually exclusive statements, pronouncements, resolutions made in such a group; because of conflicting positions contending for mastery in this group, one or the other of which may for good reasons be considered to be only temporarily in control);

"2. To offer opportunity to bring Scriptural testimony against the error infecting the group to those brethren who are not themselves advocating and propagandizing the errors -- before treating such brethren as responsible partakers of the error or false practice infecting their group.

"The WELS representatives held that such procedure is called for to satisfy the many Scriptural injunctions quoted in their Church Fellowship Statement bidding us to exercise and make earnest effort to preserve the bond of confessional fellowship, to help the weak and the confused."

The corresponding section from the minutes of the secretary of the CLC Board of Doctrine are here reproduced for the information of our readers:

"The WELS found it necessary to employ IN STATU CONFESSIONIS when applying the principles of fellowship and separation to the L.C.M.S.: 'Is it not in keeping with fellowship principles to declare one's self IN STATU, disavow the error, and try to extri-

cate brethren from error in the meanwhile?'

"CLC applies the principles which apply to the individual situation directly to the instance of the church body: 'In all the years referred to, the L.C.M.S. was propagating error. Scripture calls for no more fellowship, but to avoid such, lest the flock suffer deception and be damaged. What program dare one substitute for the Lord's 'avoid'?'

"WELS holds to the Scriptural warrant of the use of IN STATU.

"CLC believes that continued admonition (within the framework of fellowship) while the admonished errorist is teaching the error is disobedience to the Word of God, Romans 16:17.18.

"WELS points out that they do not wish to concentrate upon one Scripture (avoid) and neglect the other Scriptures ... 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

"CLC asks: 'After establishing the fact that church body is causing divisions and offenses ... must not our dealing with the church body be the same as with the individual?'

"WELS made clear that the application of Romans 16:17.18 to the L.C.M.S. was not passed as a judgment until 1961.

"CLC points out that the application of Rom. 16:17.18 when our Lord calls for it does not eliminate the opportunity for admonition. In itself the act of avoid is admonition, and there may be opportunity for admonition outside the fellowship also."

Both the minutes of the WELS secretary and the CLC secretary were read to the joint meeting and were received with corrections and amendments made by mutual consent.

Certainly one cannot lightly dismiss the WELS representatives' claim that their procedure in dealing with a body infected with error is called for "to satisfy the many Scriptural injunctions quoted in their church fellowship statement bidding us to exercise and make earnest effort to preserve the bond of confessional fellowship, to help the weak and the confused." We have reviewed the WELS church fellowship statement and have also studied the essay delivered in exposition of the theses but find no Bible passage which allows for the above mentioned "IN STATU CONFES- SIONIS" procedure. We simply come back to the plain injunction of Romans 16:17.18: "Now I beseech you, brethren,

mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." To act in obedience to this word, this is indeed in itself an admonition and is the best service that can be rendered those who remain in the fellowship of error. Such obedience also shows due concern for the flock which is to be protected from the false teacher. Human constructions, the shibboleths of reason, the impact of emotion, as well as false loyalties can only serve to blur the vision and lead in the wrong direction.

A major concern to us is the problem that WELS raises when it "points out that they do not wish to concentrate upon one Scripture (avoid) and neglect the other Scriptures ... 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'." This is indeed a matter that involves the clarity of Scripture. Surely the passage in Romans is clear on the matter of separation and the passage in Ephesians is clear on the matter of preserving the unity. To follow the one in obedience does not conflict with the other nor does it involve a neglect. The separation called for in Romans may run concurrently with the keeping of the unity of the Spirit called for in Ephesians. In fact the two actions will, if all be done in the right spirit and with the proper motivation.

C.M.G.



SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.

In connection with Prof. C. Kuehne's article "Thy Word is Truth," the following quotation from Dr. Engelder's book "Scripture Cannot be Broken" may be helpful to our readers:

"Holy Scripture is to us the most holy thing in the world. That is the attitude which God requires of the Christian. 'To this man will I look that trembleth at My Word,' Is. 66:2. We cannot treat it as a human book, subject to criticism and censorship. What we read in this Book we receive not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. 1 Thess. 2:13. When the Christian preacher proclaims the contents of this Book, he knows that he is speaking the oracles of God, 1 Pet. 4:11. With awe and reverence St. Peter read his Bible, for here 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. 1:21. So Luther looked upon the Bible. 'To me God's Word is above all, and the majesty of God is on my side.' (XIX: 337.) 'You must follow straight after Scripture and receive it and utter not one syllable against it, for it is God's mouth.' Even when this Book speaks of mere temporal matters, 'you are so to deal with it that you think that God Himself is saying this' (III: 21). Every single passage of Scripture is clothed with the majesty of God. 'As for me, every single Bible-text makes the world too narrow for me.' (XX: 788.) John Wesley, too, 'saw God at the beginning of every section of Holy Scripture.... To Wesley, there were two great realities -- the visible Book and its invisible but ever-present Author.' (See J.A. Cottam, Know the Truth, p. 28.) The holy awe that dominates the Christian's study of the Bible makes it utterly impossible for him to utter such a prayer as this: Dear Lord, enlighten my mind that I may separate the errors in Thy Word from the truth it contains. Whatever evil thoughts arise in the Christian's head, his heart will not permit him thus to dishonor God's Word.

"Again, the Christian loves the Bible. He loves it because he owes to it everything he prizes. Searching the Scripture, he has found therein eternal life (John 5:39), certainty in doubt, comfort in affliction, strength in weakness, and all spiritual blessings. And loving this Book above all things, he will not permit any man to cast aspersions upon it and dishonor it. Do the moderns really believe that, when they besmirch and befoul the Bible, they have the approbation of the Christian?" (pp. 31-32).

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