



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

I Timothy 4:15

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DISPENSATIONALISM

The aim of this article is to acquaint the reader with Dispensationalism -- its origin, basic terminology and tenets, favorite proof texts, and areas of conflict with historic Lutheran theology and exegesis. Readers should be aware of the fact that Dispensationalism is related to Premillennialism in this way that all dispensationalists are premillennarians, while all premillennarians are not necessarily dispensationalists. But both groups are intensely interested in prophecy. In many areas there is a frenetic searching of biblical prophecy in an effort to cast light upon the present national and international situation. There appears to be intra-group vying for discovering novelties of interpretation and applications to the modern scene. The sale of Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth," with its outlines of international politics for the end-time, must be well over the million mark. From time to time the writer receives invitations from Salem Kirban to a banquet-seminar held at one of the local motels. The admittance price is sweetened with the offer of a complimentary copy of yet another book on prophecy. The Los Angeles "Herald Examiner" (March 18, 1973) featured an article on the problems of the North Hollywood Assembly of God Church. Their concerns were relative to the continuation of the work of the congregation, the ownership of their church property, and the handling of their church debt after the "rapture" has removed the pastors and church board from the scene. We're living in an apocalyptic age with the crisis in the Middle-East serving as the current catalyst. The modern prophets are appealing to the prophets of old for substantiation of their messages. They advertise themselves as "Bible believing Christians" and "Evangelicals." They are "conservatives" or "fundamentalists" who are determined both to combat liberalism and to "go by the Bible." There are obviously many quacks, preying upon the religiously illiterate and superstitious and amassing sizable fortunes, but there are also highly credited, sober-minded men who honestly believe that their message is God's message for our times. Among them are many who firmly believe, on the basis of their life-long study of the Word, that

Dispensationalism is the key to the proper understanding of the Scriptures. It becomes a solemn obligation of a true shepherd of a flock to know what is being taught, what its alleged basis in Scripture is, and whether the principles and conclusions do in fact reflect the Holy Scriptures or whether they are the result of "wresting" the Scriptures (II Peter 3:16). The apostolic injunction, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21), is applicable to the situation. This article is being written to provide basic orientation relative to Dispensationalism.

Definition Dispensationalism is essentially an approach to the Scriptures or a method of interpreting the Scriptures. It is not exclusively characteristic of any one denomination. Historically, it is connected with the "Plymouth Brethren," but today the dispensational method of interpreting Scriptures characterizes various denominations and is followed by many individuals within other denominations.

St. Paul exhorted Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." II Tim. 2:15. The dispensationalist reads these words as an exhortation to divide the Word dispensationally. In contrast those with a Lutheran theological background understand Paul's words as an earnest exhortation to divide the law and the gospel properly.

History Dispensationalism in its modern form goes back to John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Darby was a lawyer who forsook a career in law to take "orders" in the Anglican Church. But he left the established church when he began to doubt the scriptural authority for church establishments, especially ordination. In 1829 the first permanent meeting of the "Brethren," as the group called itself, was held in Dublin, Ireland. Subsequent organizational meetings were held in Plymouth and Bristol, England. The name, "Plymouth Brethren," was adopted as a result of the meetings in Plymouth. Since Darby was the dominant personality, the group was also known as the "Darbyites." The anti-ecclesiastical establishment position of the original group and their spiritual descendants is evident from some of their tenets and practices, such as no regular ministry, the

acknowledgment of no creeds, no rituals or ecclesiastical organization, and no human ordination of the ministry.

A second factor in shaping the movement was the interest in prophecy which was originally stimulated by Edward Irving and promoted by a series of conferences on prophecy. The second coming of the Lord and the events preceding and following it became the center of attention. Historically, therefore, Dispensationalism was formed by the confluence of anti-clericalism and prophetism.

Darby traveled widely and wrote voluminously. In this country the movement was championed and popularized by Dr. C. I. Scofield, whose "Reference Bible" was widely distributed and has been reprinted and is available today as "The New Scofield Reference Bible."

Significance The writer can recall no reference whatever to Dispensationalism from his seminary days -- now a quarter of a century ago. It could well be that this was due to our Midwestern conservative Lutheran background. The Midwest has not been a favorite habitat for Dispensationalism. The Concordia Theological Monthly carried an article by F. E. Mayer on the subject -- entitled "Dispensationalism Examined and Found Wanting" (Vol. XVII, 1946, No. 2, pp. 89-94). But generally it would seem that Dispensationalism and conservative Lutheranism just ignored each other. In a modern defense of Dispensationalism Dr. Charles Caldwell Ryrie in his book entitled Dispensationalism Today views the "Covenant Theology" of the Reformed, such as Hodge and Allis, as his opponents. He seems to be as unaware of conservative Lutheranism as we have been of Dispensationalism.

Why the interest now? The simple reason is that conservative Lutheranism is moving out of the Midwest into the Southeast, Southwest, and West. These are areas in which Dispensationalism is securely entrenched. Dispensationalism has been called a "conservative heresy." It is to be found among the fundamentalist, evangelical groups. Dallas Theological Seminary has been and is one of the strongholds, so also Bob Jones University. The Moody Press produces their books. Any confessional, conservative Lutheran pastor witnessing in the South or West will find himself squeezed between the ultra-liberal National Council of Churches on the one side and the conservative, fundamentalist, and frequently dispensa-

tionalist groups on the other side. Pastoral counseling, testifying, preaching, and instructing demand that a pastor know what Dispensationalism is and how it is to be evaluated in the light of Scripture. Generally speaking the liberal Lutheran pastor tends to avoid any confrontation because the dispensationalist can overwhelm his opponent with "biblical proof."

As an added incentive to this study readers should realize that one of the most flourishing of modern cults, Armstrongism with its "The Plain Truth" magazine is dispensational in many of its interpretations.

"Dispensation" The New Scofield Reference Bible defines a dispensation as follows: "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. Three important concepts are implied in this definition: (1) a *deposit* of divine revelation concerning God's will, embodying what God requires of man as to his conduct; (2) man's *stewardship* of this divine revelation, in which he is responsible to obey it; and (3) a *time-period*, often called an 'age,' during which this divine revelation is dominant in the testing of man's obedience to God." (p. 3) Dr. Ryrie summarized as follows: "The principal characteristic of a dispensation is the economic arrangement and responsibility which God reveals in each dispensation. Such responsibility is a test in itself. Most men fail the test, and then judgment follows." (Dispensationalism Today, p. 43.)

The Scofield Bible distinguishes seven dispensations. The terminology in parentheses is from Dispensationalism Today by Dr. Ryrie.

1. Innocence - Gen. 1:28 (or Freedom)
2. Conscience or Moral Responsibility - Gen. 3:7
(or Self-Determination)
3. Human Government - Gen. 8:15 (Civil Government)
4. Promise - Gen. 12:1 (or Patriarchal Rule)
5. Law - Ex. 19:1 (Mosaic Law)
6. Church - Acts 2:1 (Grace)
7. Kingdom - Rev. 20:4 (Millennium)

The first point of the definition of a dispensation is the element of a "*deposit* of divine revelation concerning God's will." God revealed His will in the form of covenants. The Scofield Bible defines a covenant as "a sovereign pronouncement of God by which He establishes

a relationship of responsibility between Himself and an individual ... mankind ... nation ... family." Eight major covenants are listed by the Scofield Bible:

1. The Edenic - Gen. 2:16
2. The Adamic - Gen. 3:15
3. The Noachic - Gen. 9:16
4. The Abrahamitic - Gen. 12:2
5. The Mosaic - Ex. 19:5
6. The Palestinianians - Dt. 30:3
7. The Davidic - II Sam. 7:16
8. The New Covenant - Heb. 8:8. (NSRB, p. 5)

The importance of these dispensations and covenants to Dispensationalism can be observed from the fact that Dr. Ryrie speaks of the essence of Dispensationalism as lying "in the recognition of the fact that God has distinguished different economies in governing the affairs of the world." (Dispensationalism Today, p. 43.)

The sine qua non of
Dispensationalism

Dr. Ryrie lists three basic principles of Dispensationalism: "(1)

A Dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct." This means that "Israel" is consistently an ethnic term, never a spiritual one. According to the dispensationalists the Old Testament prophets knew and wrote nothing of the Church, which is allegedly a "mystery parenthesis" in God's dealing with mankind, revealed exclusively to St. Paul. This comes as quite a shock to anyone who has been brought up to prize Pieper's Jesaias II and who has welcomed Young's three-volume commentary on Isaiah 40-66. We are to believe that such men simply didn't understand the prophet since Isaiah wrote concerning the future glory of the Jews as a nation and not concerning the Church.

The refusal to admit of any relationship between "Israel" and the "Church" results in this that God allegedly has a different set of blueprints for Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles. The simple understanding that man fell into sin and then God set about providing a solution to that problem by sending a Savior for all mankind -- which is what the Bible is all about -- is considered a gross misunderstanding. In his commentary on Revelation John Walvoord makes this statement: "The unfounded notion that God treats all saints of all ages exactly alike is hard to displace in the theology of the church. The fact that the divine purpose is not the same

for Israel, the Gentile believers, or the church of the present age is plainly written in the Word of God." (p. 273)

Returning once again to Dr. Ryrie we find that the second *sine qua non* of Dispensationalism concerns hermeneutics: "(2) This distinction between Israel and the Church is born out of a system of hermeneutics which is usually called literal interpretation. ... The word *literal* is perhaps not so good as either the word *normal* or *plain*, but in any case it is interpretation that does not spiritualize or allegorize as nondispensational interpretation does. ... Consistently literal or plain interpretation is indicative of a dispensational approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures." In our day when "Thus saith the Lord" is quite casually replaced with "Thus saith this scholar or that authority," this principle of literal interpretation sounds reassuring. We are reminded of the fact that it was Luther who restored hermeneutical sanity to the church by insisting upon the literal, grammatical sense of the words and sentences. But Luther's interpretation of the Scriptures is quite the opposite of many dispensational interpretations. There must be something wrong here. Taking the words of Scripture in their literal sense when the writer did not want them to be so taken perverts the Scriptures as completely as forcing a figurative sense upon words that the writer intended to be understood in their literal sense. Consistency is not a virtue characteristic of sinful man. And so it is, for example, that dispensationalists insist on interpreting the highly figurative and symbolic language of the prophets and the Apocalypse literally, while at the same time insisting that the final testament of our Lord when He instituted the Holy Supper be interpreted figuratively or symbolically.

Dr. Ryrie's third *sine qua non* of Dispensationalism concerns the underlying purpose of God in the world: "(3) The covenant theologian in practice makes this purpose salvation, and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that, namely, the glory of God." (Dispensationalism Today, pp. 44-46) What this means, in effect, is that the glory of God is to become visible here on earth by the Lord's personal return to rule here on earth as Chief of State for one thousand years.

Eschatology The dispensationalists claim to have discovered the key to the interpretation of the book of Revelation in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." This verse is said to outline the entire book as follows:

- Chapter 1: "The things which thou hast seen"
- Chapters 2-3: "The things which are" -- the letters to the seven churches
- Chapters 4-19: "The things which shall come to pass hereafter"
- Chapters 20-22: The Millennium, the little season, and the final consummation

In his commentary John Walvoord contends: "It is not too much to claim that this outline is the only one which allows the book to speak for itself without artificial manipulation and which lays guidelines of sufficient importance so that expositors who follow this approach have been able to establish a system of interpretation of the book of Revelation, namely, the futurist school." (p. 48)

According to this system everything from chapter four on lies ahead of us. The next great event on God's program is to be the Rapture, the coming of the Lord for His Church. That is to be followed by the Great Tribulation, a period of seven years -- the "seventieth week" of Daniel's prophecy. Thus Dispensationalism is pre-tribulational. During this time of the Great Tribulation the Antichrist is to make his appearance as a man of peace who shall establish a covenant with the Jews, permitting them to rebuild their temple and reestablish their forms of worship. But then in the middle of the "week," the seven-year period, he will break the treaty and initiate a period of severe tribulation for the Jews. The gathering of the enemies of God's people, the Jews and tribulation saints, will be frustrated by the coming of the Lord with His saints to establish His millennial rule here on this earth. Thereafter comes the "little season," the final destruction of the Lord's enemies in the battle of Armageddon, and the ushering in of eternity. The reader will recognize this scheme of events as the common property of Dispensationalism and Premillennialism.

Key Passages When one thinks of Luther and his struggle to find peace with his God, the passage, "The just shall live by faith," comes immediately to mind. The books of Galatians and Romans were central to Luther's theology and the entire Reformation.

A study of Dispensationalism reveals that the accent is in a different area -- the prophetic portions of Holy Writ. Daniel 2 (The Great Colossus), Daniel 7 (The Four Beasts) and Daniel 9 (The Seventy Weeks) are indispensable. There are labored efforts to reconcile and harmonize the visions of Daniel with the Olivet Address of our Lord and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. These are sections of Scripture which are not a part of the traditional core of Lutheran theology. Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog and Magog) and Ezekiel 40-48 (The Vision of the New Temple) are considered literal prophecies of endtime developments. All the prophecies of Israel's glorious future are considered as literally applicable to the modern nation of Israel, born in 1948. Pro-Israel politics becomes a spiritual must. I Thess. 4:14-17 and I Cor. 15:23 and 51-53 are the key passages for the teaching of "The Rapture" and "The First Resurrection." Acts 15 (The Apostolic Council) is interpreted to make Amos support the literal restoration of the nation of Israel. Revelation 20 is, of course, the *locus classicus* for the Millennium. The emphasis on prophecy, interpreted futuristically, shifts the message from "Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2) to Christ, the personal King of the earthly millennial kingdom.

Issues A study of dispensational literature causes issues to surface that must be faced. The energy of conservative Lutheran pastors has been sapped during the past quarter century by intra-Lutheran struggles. The wider battle front has been liberalism in the form of the historical-critical method which has successfully disposed of the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* in the major Lutheran seminaries and synods. The struggle against the force of liberalism must continue unabated. But the struggle against the inroads of liberalism dare not make us unmindful of dangers that come from seeming allies on the "conservative" or fundamentalist side. The authority of the Word can be undermined by a faulty "literal" hermeneutical principle as well as by the historical-critical method.

The futurist social gospel of the millennium is as deadly as the social gospel emphasis of the World Council of Churches. The conversion of the Savior from sin to a political-social ruler in a future kingdom is as destructive of the faith as is the conversion of the Savior from sin into a paragon of moralistic virtue.

What we have inherited from our fathers we are to earn by intensive study and restudy of the Holy Word over against all heresies, ancient and modern. I would suggest that the modern situation demands thorough study of the following selective issues:

1. Rightly dividing the Word -- dispensationally or law/gospel dichotomy?
2. The hermeneutical principle of literal interpretation.
3. The relationship of "Israel" to the "Church".
4. The Antichrist: Past, present, and future or just future? Political or ecclesiastical?
5. The Rapture: The appearing of the Lord for His saints before the "tribulation" or a view of the Lord's second coming?
6. The Olivet Address: The historical and eschatological elements or is the main thrust futuristic?
7. The Great Tribulation: Past or future?
8. The prophecies made to Israel: Are they fulfilled in the Church or the nation of Israel?
9. The book of Revelation: Has it an on-going message for the church or is it chiefly a pre-written history of the last seven years before the Lord's return?
10. The Millennium: Current or future? Physical and material or spiritual?

Hopefully these issues can be examined in depth in future issues of this Journal.

Bibliography It could well be that others share the concerns of this writer in regard to the issues raised. From personal correspondence and contacts at conferences the writer knows that other pastors are being asked pointed questions concerning premillennial and dispensational doctrine. In an effort to be of service to others I would like to list the books that I have personally found useful:

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THE GREEK ARTICLE AND THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S DEITY

(Part III)

This third installment in a series of articles on the Greek definite article and the deity of Christ carries forward the discussion of the rule of Granville Sharp. This rule was introduced in the September, 1973, issue of the *Journal of Theology*, and its validity with respect to the usage of the New Testament was explored in the December, 1973, issue.¹

A brief summary of what has been covered so far might be helpful. Granville Sharp (1735-1813), an English philanthropist, abolitionist, and philologist, published in 1798 a monograph with the title: *Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament, Containing Many New Proofs of the Divinity of Christ, from Passages Which Are Wrongly Translated in the Common English Version*. In this treatise, which was sufficiently popular and controversial to make necessary the early printing of a second and a third edition, he presented that statement of Greek syntax which today is generally referred to as "Sharp's Rule." In its simplified wording, the rule states:

When two personal nouns of the same case are connected by the copulative καί, if the former has the definite article, and the latter has not, they both relate to the same person.

Sharp excluded both proper names and plural nouns from the application of his rule.

In the latter part of his monograph, Sharp attempted to show that, in view of his rule of syntax, several passages in the Greek text of the New Testament clearly ascribe the name "God" (θεός) to Jesus Christ -- passages which are at best rendered ambiguously in the *King James Version* of the Bible.

Following an evaluation of Sharp's Rule and his applications of it, this evaluation being carried on in the light of the usage of the New Testament, I offered the following tentative conclusions: the rule appears to be a well-founded and accurate description of the usage of the article which it covers; and, the following passages may, it seems, be accepted as proof passages for

Christ's deity: Ephesians 5:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Titus 2:13, and 2 Peter 1:1. These passages, to which reference shall repeatedly be made on the pages which follow, read thus in the Greek:

Ephesians 5:5.... οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ (does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God).

2 Thessalonians 1:12....κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ).

Titus 2:13. προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (waiting for the blessed hope and appearance of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus).

2 Peter 1:1.... ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ).

It is recognized, however, that a number of modern-day grammarians of the Greek New Testament fail to cite the rule of Granville Sharp as a valid principle, and that many commentators refuse to accept the above passages as proof texts for the deity of Christ. This contradictory situation makes necessary a further discussion of the rule and of the exegetical history of these passages.

The Findings of Christopher Wordsworth

One of the earliest and most interested readers of Sharp's treatise was the youngest brother of the poet William Wordsworth -- the English divine and scholar, Christopher Wordsworth (1774-1846). He received his education at Trinity College, Cambridge, becoming a fellow of that college in the year that Sharp published his monograph. Wordsworth's rather erudite response to Sharp's work came in 1802, in a volume entitled *Six Letters to Granville Sharp, Esq., Respecting His Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article, in the Greek Text of the New Testament*.² Wordsworth states that his first reaction to Sharp's conclusions was one of incredulity -- a reaction, I think, that may be quite typical among Greek scholars who come upon Sharp's Rule for the first time. Wordsworth explains himself as follows (p. 1f.): "You will not, I think Sir, be surprised to learn, that one of the first feelings which I experienced upon the

reading of your Remarks, was a feeling of uncertainty and scepticism. I soon perceived, however, that my doubts originated in the very weight and clearness of the evidence on which your theory was founded. I felt as if it were incredible, but that evidence so remarkable must have occurred, in all its strength, to learned men of former days. How then is it, that this rule should have remained so long unknown, or unacknowledged; and the important texts of the New Testament depending upon it, how is it that the vulgar translation of them [the KJV] is so far from being allowed universally to be erroneous, that public opinion has hardly yet learned of the matter being ever doubted of; that the generality of commentators should uphold the established interpretation; and that no notice should be taken of any thing wrong in it, in works written professedly to point out the errors of our English version; and yet we are told, that the rule, and the interpretation of those dependent examples, were expressly asserted by a writer so long ago as Beza? Surely, said I, Mr. Sharp has only not gone so far in the investigation as earlier critics. There must be some secret fallacy: and he is producing to us as a valuable discovery, that which his predecessors, after having for a time followed it, must have found out to be an empty phantom, and so they returned from their pursuit, and sat down again, not venturing to tell the world how idly they had been occupied."³

But Wordsworth did not give in to these initial feelings of doubt. He resolved, first, to make an actual comparison of Sharp's theory with the books of the New Testament. As a second step, he determined to search the writings of the Greek church fathers, to see if their exegesis of the passages in question would conform to that of Sharp. "If Mr. Sharp's rule be true, then will their interpretations of those texts be invariably in the same sense in which he understands them; unless indeed it should appear, that some change in later times took place in the use of the article." (p. 3) Wordsworth went at his researches with eagerness, and what he was able in a short time to gather considerably exceeded his expectations. This prompted him to an even greater endeavor, and relevant materials continued to accumulate to such a degree that he ventured upon the publication of his findings. He felt justified in thus pursuing the matter, for a two-fold reason. He recognized "the importance of

the subject as a general philological question, and the infinitely greater importance of those particular texts in the sacred writings thus involved with it." (p. 4) But he also found it "painful in the highest degree" to note how various commentators during the preceding three centuries so disagreed in their interpretations of these passages. The orthodox had occasionally employed them in the defense of Christ's deity, but often for no better reason than that others had done so before them, while those of opposite sentiments either pointed to the alleged ambiguity of expression or else passed by the texts "in mysterious and utter silence." With the hope of putting a stop to "circumstances so unfortunate as these," Wordsworth was emboldened to lay the fruits of his labors before the public. (p. 4)

In his second letter (pp. 12-38), Wordsworth discusses the passage at Ephesians 5:5: ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ (in the kingdom of the Christ and God). He cites twenty-one Greek writers in which this passage is quoted. In twelve of them, because of a lack of commentary, nothing can be determined concerning the meaning of the words. But in the remaining nine, including writings by Chrysostom (347?-407), Cyril of Alexandria (376?-444), and Theodoret (390?-457?), it is clear that both words, "Christ" and "God," are understood of the second person of the Trinity. Wordsworth says to Sharp concerning the evidence from the Greek fathers: "No other interpretation than your's was ever heard in all the Greek churches.... All the Greek authorities that do speak at all are on your side." (p. 26,36)

The situation is quite different, however, among the Latin writers who cite this passage. In sixteen of the citations brought by Wordsworth it is possible to determine the meaning of the writer, and all but three of these are plainly *against* Sharp. Wordsworth suggests several reasons for this contrary situation. To begin with, the Latin language contains no definite article, and it therefore cannot convey the Greek idiom without ambiguity. The Latin translation, *in regno Christi et Dei*, is capable of either meaning: "in the kingdom of the Christ and God" (one person), or "in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (two persons). But why did so many of the Latin fathers choose the second of these meanings? For the most part, they were not capable of referring to

the Greek for the correct understanding, and the meaning "of Christ and of God" (two persons) would in fact be more readily suggested by the Latin translation. Furthermore, this latter meaning generally suited their doctrinal arguments better than the former. For their theological debate was particularly with the Arians, who were not reluctant to call Christ "God" -- although in a lesser sense than when the term was used of the Father. The Arian heresy could, in fact, be better combated by citing verses that showed Christ and the Father to be coequal in their eternity, their works, and their glory. The orthodox teachers could, therefore, use Ephesians 5:5 more effectively against the Arians by taking it in the sense "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (two persons), thus showing that Christ and the Father are coequal in their royal authority. The fact that Christ is here named *first*, would make this passage an especially effective weapon against the heretics -- if it be taken as a reference to both Christ and the Father!

Thus the contrary testimony of most of the Latin fathers, according to Wordsworth, bears little weight against the unanimous testimony of the Greek fathers in support of Sharp's exegesis. Moreover, the testimony of the three Latins who do agree with Sharp, namely Jerome (340?-420), Faustinus (a contemporary of Jerome), and Alcuin (735-804), bears fully as much weight as that of all the rest of the Latin interpreters. For the first two were well acquainted with the Greek language, and the third was accurately translating a section from the Greek father, Cyril of Alexandria.

Wordsworth, near the end of the second letter, asks why none of those Greek fathers whose writings he explored ever took Ephesians 5:5 as a reference to both the Son and the Father, particularly since they too were involved in the Arian controversy and could have profited from such an interpretation. The answer, which he expects the reader of his letter to deduce, is that the Greek was not capable of such an understanding, for in the Greek the words τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ could be taken as a reference to only one person, namely the Son. Thus Sharp's Rule is vindicated with respect to this passage, and the KJV translation, "of Christ and of God" (two persons), is found to be an inheritance solely from the Latin text and from the Latin interpreters.

In his third letter (pp. 39-47), Wordsworth discusses 2 Thessalonians 1:12: κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ). He states that he was unable to produce any clear evidence from the writings of the fathers, on either side of the question, respecting the interpretation of this text. The verse was, in fact, seldom cited by the fathers. Is this lack of evidence, now, to be regarded as a strong presumption that this passage cannot be a testimony to the deity of Christ, for otherwise it would certainly have been used frequently against the Arians? Not so, according to Wordsworth. "The nature of those heresies which produced almost all the polemical writings of the ancient Church which are now extant, is sufficient to teach us not to look *there* particularly [namely in a passage like 2 Thessalonians 1:12], for arguments in behalf of Christ's mere Divinity. In the controversies of those days it would have been of little use to produce passages of Scripture which spake of Christ as God, and did not withal convey something respecting the proper nature and dignity of his person. It is those places where it is written 'In the *beginning* was the Word'; where he is called the 'God over all, blessed for ever,' (Rom. ix. 5.) 'the great God and our Saviour,' (Tit. ii.13.) 'the true God, and eternal life,' (1 John v.20.) which were *then* of especial importance, and are accordingly perpetually insisted upon." (p. 39f.)

Additional information, applicable to this passage, is found in the fourth letter (pp. 48-64). Wordsworth states concerning the general phrase ὁ θεὸς καὶ κύριος (the God and Lord) that he "had indeed once thought, that the appellation κύριος might, perhaps, have become so *appropriated* to our Saviour, as to be considered as a *proper* name." (p. 63) In such a case, the phrase τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου in 2 Thessalonians 1:12 would be excluded from the application of Sharp's Rule, and the terms "God" and "Lord" would not then necessarily apply to only one person, namely Jesus Christ. But in his researches Wordsworth found many passages in a variety of Greek fathers in which, when the general phrase ὁ θεὸς καὶ κύριος occurs, it is always used of one person -- in some contexts of the Father, in others of the Son. He discovered, moreover, that "when the writer had to designate the *two* persons, he invariably *quitted* the

ὁ θεὸς καὶ κύριος, to adopt (among others) the form ὁ θεὸς, καὶ ὁ κύριος," with the article repeated before κύριος! (p. 62) In view of Wordsworth's finding, one might indeed well question the translation of the KJV: "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (two persons).

Wordsworth devotes the lengthy fifth letter (pp. 65-104) to a discussion of Titus 2:13, and to the exegetical history of this passage. It reads: τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus). Wordsworth cites a very large number of passages from the Greek and Latin fathers in which this verse occurs,⁴ and reaches the following conclusions: 1) the Greek interpreters uniformly ascribe both titles, "the great God" and "Savior" to Jesus Christ; 2) all of the Latin writers, as many as convey their sense of the meaning of Paul's words, agree with the Greek authorities, except perhaps for two poor exceptions. Wordsworth therefore laments: "It is the more to be regretted, and wondered at, that our English translators should have deprived us of that interpretation, which was the only one ever preached in all the ancient Churches." (p. 90). (Once again the KJV indicates two persons in its translation: "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.")

Significantly, even such heretics as the Arians acknowledged as correct that interpretation of the passage which Sharp defended. According to Wordsworth, "The interpretation of our version [the KJV] was never once thought of in any part of the Christian world, even when Arianism was triumphant over the Catholic faith. Surely, this fact, might of itself suffice to overturn every notion of an ambiguity in the form of expression. It was probably, in allusion to this verse, that we find the Arians, in their Discourse, a short tract answered by St. Augustine, speaking thus of the Father: 'et magno major, et bono melior est manifestatus (He is manifested both Greater than the Great, and Better than the Good).'" (p. 95) By this specious argument the Arians apparently sought to evade the clear force of our passage -- that Jesus Christ is Himself "the great God"!

In commenting on the exegetical history of Titus 2:13, Wordsworth states that by the time of Alcuin (ca. 800) some persons in the western church had begun to ask

whether *magni Dei* might not mean rather the Father. In a sense, the question was not out of place, for so far as their Latin text went, lacking as it did the services of a definite article, the phrase might be explained as readily of the Father as of the Son. As time went on, these Latin notions began gradually to prevail still more, and therefore some writers, to secure the old interpretation, left out the *et* (and) after "*magni Dei* (of the great God)" and wrote the passage thus: "*magni Dei, Salvatoris nostri* (of the great God, our Savior)." Wordsworth suggests that it was probably Erasmus (1466?-1536) and Grotius (1583-1645), particularly the former, who were chiefly instrumental in propagating the interpretation that the words "the great God" refer to the Father rather than to Christ. "Succeeding commentators," he continues, "have faithfully trodden in the steps of those writers." (p. 103)

Wordsworth completes the discussion of Titus 2:13 with a general observation concerning the validity of Sharp's Rule. For the sake of argument he temporarily excludes those passages which bear upon the deity of Christ, and then states: "I fully believe, that there is no one exception to your first rule in the whole New Testament: and the assertion might be extended infinitely further.... I am persuaded that the idiom is not 'anceps' [double, doubtful], not 'ambiguum' [ambiguous]. Nay, may I not venture to add, that the Greek must be a strange language, if such a thing were possible?" (p. 103)

The sixth letter (pp. 105-134) includes Wordsworth's comments on 2 Peter 1:1: τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ). He notes that quotations from the catholic epistles are relatively rare in the writings of the church fathers. Thus the materials on this verse are very scanty, and such as exist give no explanation of the words in question.

Before closing his sixth letter, Wordsworth presents an imposing list of quotations from twenty Greek writers extending from Clement of Rome (30?-100?) into the 13th century, all the quotations serving to illustrate and substantiate Sharp's Rule and its application to the above passages. He concludes with the statement: "We might continue our progress still further, but even

this brings us into the middle of the 13th century; so that we shall easily be excused for descending no lower. And it may be fairly estimated, what stress is to be laid on this part of the argument, when it shall have been told, that I have observed more (I am persuaded) than a thousand instances of the form ὁ Χριστός καὶ θεός (Ephes. v.5); some hundreds of instances of the ὁ μέγας θεός καὶ αὐτὸς (Tit. ii.13); and not fewer than several thousands of the form ὁ θεός καὶ αὐτὸς (2 Pet. i.1.) while in no single case, have I seen (where the sense could be determined) any one of them used, but only of *one* person." (p. 132)

It is impossible not to be impressed with the apparent intellectual honesty and the evident broad learning which Christopher Wordsworth displays throughout his *Six Letters to Granville Sharp*. By means of a vast number of quotations from the church fathers and from later Greek and Latin writers, he vindicates Sharp's Rule and supports his exegesis of the aforementioned passages. He traces the alleged ambiguity of these passages to the influence of the Latin language, which because of its absence of an article is incapable of reproducing the Greek idiom. The Greek text, he insists, is in no way ambiguous, and he regrets deeply that so many modern commentators have wrongfully charged these passages with such unclarity.

(To be continued)

C. Kuehne

FOOTNOTES

1. This would seem to be an opportune place to indicate several minor corrections which should be made in the article which appeared in the December, 1973, issue. 1) On p. 25, line 29, change Gal. 1:5 to Gal. 1:4. 2) On page 27, omit from the first full paragraph the following examples: Gal. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, and James 1:1. The first two passages are inappropriate to the discussion at that point, inasmuch as they contain phrases which were subsequently labeled as compound proper names, "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus," respectively. James 1:1 should be omitted because it

is not certain that the words "God" and "Lord" denote different persons of the Trinity. Christopher Wordsworth, in his *Six Letters to Granville Sharp, Esq.* (cf. footnote 2), finds several items of evidence in the writings of the Greek fathers to indicate that both of these anarthrous nouns are to be referred to the person of Christ. (See pages 114ff. and 133f. of Wordsworth's book.) It would be tempting to pursue this matter further at this time, but I shall refrain from doing so, since the question cannot be resolved decisively on the basis of Greek grammar and syntax. Let it suffice to state that the common exegesis in the early church suggests that we regard also James 1:1 as a proof text for Christ's deity, taking both words, "God" and "Lord," as titles of the one person, Jesus Christ. 3) The following note should be added by way of clarification. The discussion in the December issue cited all passages in the New Testament which are in any way illustrative of Sharp's Rule. Some of the citations (pp. 23-25) involve participles and adjectives which are used attributively rather than substantively. While such passages, strictly speaking, do not fit under the rule, which confines itself specifically to "nouns," yet they do serve to illustrate further that rule of syntax which is described by the rule.

2. Christopher Wordsworth, *Six Letters to Granville Sharp* ... (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1802).

3. The principle of syntax contained in Sharp's Rule had indeed been recognized and acknowledged by Beza (1519-1605) and several other earlier commentators. But it remained for Sharp to research the principle and give adequate expression to it. Cf. the reviews of Sharp's treatise, contained in appendices to Sharp's *Remarks* in the 3rd London edition of 1803, pp. 104f. and 115f.

4. The Greek passages cited here by Wordsworth are fifty-four in number, and extend from the second century to the twelfth, a period of nearly a thousand years. The Latin citations total sixty.

C. Kuehne

A STUDY OF JOSHUA

(Part II)

II. The Conquest of Canaan, Ch. 6 - 12.

Chapter 6. This chapter describes the conquest and destruction of the well-guarded fortress of Jericho, this being the first of Israel's military operations in the Promised Land. It was obvious that Jericho must be taken if Canaan was to be conquered. To by-pass the city would have meant that they would have enemies at their back as well as in front of them. But how would this fortified city be taken? The Lord told Joshua how. "See," He said, "I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour" (6:2). He doesn't say: "I will give," but He speaks as though the city were already captured. And yet the manner in which Joshua and his men of war, together with the priests, were to do so seemed so completely unmilitary, so very silly and unreasonable, that they must be concerned about giving their enemies cause for ridicule. Trumpets and great shouts might indeed fire up an invading army. But that the walls of the city would fall down thereby without even storming the city -- who ever heard of such a thing!

But Joshua and Israel obeyed. This is an almost unheard-of example of the obedience of faith, when one considers that it was rendered by an entire nation. We know that Israel had been entirely different from the time of Moses on. For the most part, their obedience during the entire activity of Joshua is astounding in comparison with that during Moses' time. Israel did not now allow itself to be sidetracked. Whatever jeering remarks may have come into the ears of the men of Israel as they merely walked around the city in a procession each of the first 6 days, and as they walked around the city 7 times on the seventh day, they paid no attention to them. And it turned out just as the Lord had promised. On the seventh day the people gave a great shout and the trumpets were blown. The walls of the city fell down. Not one Israelite was killed or even injured. Then "every man went straight before him, and they took the city" (v. 20).

Also inside the city they were obedient to the words which the Lord spoke through Joshua. They destroyed everything that was in the city with the edge of the sword, both man and woman, young and old, ox, sheep, and ass (6:17,21). They burned all the houses of the city. Only Rahab and her household and all their possessions were allowed to remain unharmed and alive (v. 17,25), because Rahab had preserved alive the messengers of Joshua and had obtained from them an oath that she would be saved alive (2:12-14). -- If anything is clear from the manner of Jericho's capture, it is that the Lord gave the city to Israel. It was not gained by sword, spear and shield. So, from that time on, God's people should not trust in walls and houses, as much as they might yearn for permanent buildings after using tents for forty years. They would receive instructions from the Lord as to what and how much belonged to them. Not all cities were afterward dealt with as was Jericho, concerning which Joshua took an oath and said: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho! He shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it!" (6:26).

We shall make one more observation concerning the rescue of Rahab. There were in Jericho more respected, powerful, rich, and honorable persons than Rahab the harlot. But she alone was allowed to live. Yes, she was afterwards the wife of Salmon (Matt. 1:5) and an ancestress of David and of Jesus. What is of little value in the world can, by God's mercy, become great in the kingdom of God. Publicans and harlots can go into the kingdom of God (Matt. 21:31), just as it is also true that the first can easily become the last (Matt. 19:30). Cp. Heb. 11:31 and James 2:25. -- Scripture records one instance of an individual who tried to rebuild the city of Jericho. The fate of Hiel the Bethelite is recorded in 1 Kings 16:34. It will ever remain true that no one can have good fortune and prosperity who seeks to build up what God Himself has torn down.

Chapter 7. Before the capture of Jericho, Joshua impressed one thing upon the children of Israel: "Keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are

consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord" (6:18-19). All had kept this command, with only one exception. Achan of the tribe of Judah took of the accursed thing. He saw among the spoils a valuable Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a tongue of gold of fifty shekels weight. He coveted them, and took them, and hid them in the earth in the midst of his tent, and the silver under it (7:21). All of this together was probably not so bulky that he could not have brought it out of the city beneath his cloak and into his tent. But he could not leave it lying there out in the open without being discovered. And he could scarcely have buried it there without his wife and children knowing about it and agreeing to say nothing about it, perhaps as a result of threats on his part. In any case, his deed remained secret outside of his family.

The Lord made it public. He did so in a round-about way. Israel, with proportionately fewer men (3000) attacked the nearby city of Ai with 12,000 inhabitants. But Israel was put to flight and 36 Israelites were killed. God had not promised that Israel would capture all the cities between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea without loss of life. Occasional losses must still be expected. Yet it is surprising that a nation, whose men fit for military service numbered over 100,000, should see in this loss of only 36 men reason for great concern. "Wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (7:5). Moreover Joshua, a brave general far removed from all cowardice, and with him the elders of Israel, threw dust upon their heads. Joshua rent his clothes, fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until eventide. What he said (7:7-9) sounded so despondent that he appeared more discouraged than anyone else. The only way we can account for this is that a fear of the Lord had fallen on him and on all Israel. This fear moved Joshua to lament: "Alas, O Lord God, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" The Lord then answered him: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before

their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you." And now God also provided the means to destroy the accursed thing (7:13-15). The guilty person was to be discovered by lot early the very next morning, and he was then to be burned with fire together with all that he had.

The Lord's command was carried out. Early the next morning the assembled people learned the purpose of their gathering, and all waited eagerly for God's plan to unfold. Of the twelve tribes, Judah was taken. From the families of Judah he took the Zarhites. From the family of the Zarhites he took Zabdi. From the household of Zabdi he took Achan. -- Following Joshua's urgent exhortation, Achan gave honor to the Lord and confessed his sin (7:19-21). Messengers found the spoils hidden in his tent. The judgment of death was immediately carried out on Achan and his entire family. All of his possessions together with the spoils were burned. A great heap of stones served as a monument to mark for the distant future the place where the accursed thing was removed from Israel and the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger (7:22-26).

How Achan must have felt when the news first spread through the tents of the Israelite camp: Some of our people were killed and the rest have fled before Ai, because someone in Israel has taken of the accursed thing; and early tomorrow morning that person, whoever he is, will be brought forth and will be burned with fire, together with everything that he has! The Lord Himself has commanded it. -- Will not Achan go, announce himself to Joshua, and of his own free will confess his wicked deed? He doesn't do that. He is too fearful and anxious. He waits. Isn't it possible that in the end someone else may be more guilty than I am? Why should I give myself up? The next day arrives. The tribe of Judah is chosen; that is his tribe! The family of the Zarhites; that is his family! Oh, the retribution is drawing ever nearer! Should he not now at last step forward and say: Don't go to any more trouble, I am the guilty person? But he cannot make up his mind to do that. He waits, until the ring becomes ever tighter and at last his name is called out. Surely sin is a great and terrible force. When a person has allowed himself to be entangled in sin by Satan, he will not be set free

very quickly. -- There can be little doubt but that Achan's family shared in his guilt of concealing stolen property. Otherwise they would not also have incurred the penalty of death (vs. 24-23), while the punishment was threatened only to the guilty person and all of his possessions (v. 15). What fear must have come upon Achan's sons and daughters (the wife is not mentioned), as they saw that God was revealing Himself as a very quick witness against their father's stealing and their own concealing of what he had stolen! Achan realized that there was no escape. Joshua now admonished him: "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." Joshua didn't ask: "Have you done something?" but "What hast thou done?" There was no reason to doubt his guilt. Achan then confessed what he had taken, and described where the spoils were to be found. Joshua sent messengers, and everything was just as Achan had described. The spoils were brought. All the children of Israel saw them. There could no longer be the slightest doubt as to Achan's guilt and that his family shared in his guilt. So without delay the judgment which the Lord had already decreed was carried out on the guilty persons. "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day," says Joshua.

Some people have criticized the Mosaic Law for its inhuman severity in administering justice. In this case, the death sentence is immediately carried out without the possibility of an appeal being carried out. The condemned person was not granted even the appearance of a respite of a week or of a few days, or even of 24 hours, in order to be converted or to make out a will. But such objections are unjust. For one thing, civil government (no matter whether Jewish or heathen or "Christian") really has nothing to do with a "respite for conversion." Government should kill the evildoers who are guilty of death, whether converted or unconverted, in order that the crime may be avenged and punished, and in order that the curse does not rest on the land and call down God's wrath upon itself. Moreover, the possibility of an unjust sentence of death was much less in Israel, if not completely impossible, as compared to our highly civilized and cultured state. There the procedure of proof was strictly ruled by the Law (Cp. Num. 35:30; Deut.

17:6; 19:15; Lev. 5:1).

Many exegetes have discussed at great length the question as to whether or not Achan died repentant and was saved. The text does not give us enough information to answer this question. But we feel that something can be learned from the fatherly manner in which Joshua tried to bring Achan to a confession, and how he afterward met with him. To confess past sins is to give honor and glory to God, who is able to bring to light what was hidden in darkness. It is a confession which proclaims that God is not pleased with ungodly ways, and that one who is evil cannot stand before Him. -- Many a teacher, in his little sphere of activity, has spoken as did Joshua when dealing with children who are probably guilty of stealing. He obtains a willing confession and finds a willingness to endure punishment. Even at an early age and even when true repentance is apparent, one can see how they have had to endure certain consequences of their sin.

Some feel that the question as to whether or not Achan's children were accomplices in the crime should remain an open question. In that case, their deaths would be no different than the many children in Jericho or in Sodom or at the time of the Flood, who also had to suffer under the judgment befalling their elders. To be sure, civil government cannot punish the children along with the guilty parents, but in this case it was God who did the judging. -- Some conclude that we may follow this example and draw lots to determine the guilty party. But Joshua had a direct promise (7:14) that the Lord would take the tribe and the family and the household. Where there is no direct promise, then the casting of lots should be left alone in such situations. When the legal means have been exhausted without success in bringing about the conviction of an evil-doer, then we should await that Day when all things will be revealed.

Chapter 8. We now hear how Joshua took Ai by permissible strategem of war, after the curse had been removed from Israel. Joshua knew that the curse had been removed. Nevertheless, he led his entire army against Ai only when he had an express command from God. He was still too despondent to venture out on a march against Ai, merely because Achan had been stoned. Now he was encouraged by the explicit promise: "See, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his

city, and his land" (8:1). The conquest of Ai was to be carried out in the same manner as with Jericho: "only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves" (8:2). Even the ambush was based upon an express command of God. God chose not to give Ai and the other cities yet to be conquered into the hands of Israel without effort on their part. On this occasion, Israel was to pretend that the curse was still resting on them. In this way the men of Ai were all enticed out of the city, since it appeared as though it were simply a matter of pursuing and scattering the fleeing Israelites. Then the ambush of Joshua set fire to the city. His main force suddenly turned back against the pursuers (8:20), so that the men of Ai were hard-pressed both from the front and the rear. They were completely defeated "so that they let none of them remain or escape" (8:22). Twelve thousand men and women fell that same day. The king of Ai was captured alive and was hanged on a tree until evening (8:29). His body was then taken down according to the Law of Moses (Deut. 21:23), and was cast down at the entering of the gate of the city and was covered with a great heap of stones "that remaineth unto this day" (8:29).

Joshua now erected on Mount Ebal an altar of whole stones, not hewn with iron, and offered thereon burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the Lord. He then read all the words of the Law of Deuteronomy, the blessings and cursings, before the whole congregation of Israel, with the women, children, and the strangers that walked among them, "and wrote there upon the stones," not those forming the altar, but on others prepared for this purpose, "a copy of the Law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel" (8:30-35). This was a monumental setting-forth of the Law and justice of Jehovah. Henceforth this would be in force in the Promised Land, which Israel had now begun to occupy. The words in v. 35 remind us that this ceremonial act proceeded in every detail just as Joshua had been instructed by Moses himself (Deut. 27:4-8).

Chapter 9. Jericho and Ai were no more. The complete extermination of these two well-guarded cities made a deep impression on the inhabitants of Canaan and on their kings. What else could they expect but a similar fate! But should they simply pick up bag and baggage and leave Canaan as hurriedly as possible, and hand over this

glorious land to the Israelites without striking a blow? Perish the thought! But alone and individually they had little hope of accomplishing anything against Israel. Their best hope of success seemed to lie in forming a united front. So they gathered themselves together, the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to fight against Joshua and Israel with one accord (9:1-2). How far they got in their undertaking we read in Ch. 10 and following. But a few rather insignificant cities in the territory of the Hivites (namely, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim), and above all the important and mighty city of Gibeon (9:17 and 10:2), decided that they did not care to take a chance on an armed conflict from which they could anticipate no good results. Therefore they resolved at least to save their own lives by cunning. And so with old, broken, patched wine bottles, in old patched garments, with dry moldy bread, as though they had come from distant lands, their representatives appeared before Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and desired to make a league with Israel. They didn't breathe a word that they had heard something about the miraculous crossing over the Jordan, or the fall of Jericho and Ai. But they said they had heard what had happened to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and to Og, king of Bashan, and what the God of Israel had done for His people in Egypt, before they started out on their very long journey. They wished to make a league with a nation that had such a God.

Their cunning succeeded because of the gullibility of Joshua and the other Israelite leaders. These knew very well that they could make no league with anyone who lived in the borders of the intended land of promise (9:7). The Gibeonites also knew that, as can be seen later on in v. 24 where they said: "to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants." But Joshua and his men imagined that it was surely impossible for these nice people who had travelled so far to belong in that category. So, they "took of the Gibeonites victuals," this being a sign of friendship throughout most of the world. And they rashly neglected to "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (9:14). This was most certainly something which Joshua should have done (Num. 27:18-21). Thus the Gibeonites made peace with the Israelites. They established a covenant with them, that they would be permitted to live, and the princes of the congregation con-

firmed it with an oath.

Three days later they found out that they had been outwitted, "beguiled" (v. 22). The entire congregation was very angry at the princes (and that was a good sign this time) who had neglected to ask guidance of the Lord. Won't the Lord punish us for allowing the Gibeonites to dwell among us, contrary to His command? And if we kill them, will we not appear as faithless people who break their word? So their thinking went. But they were inclined to kill the Gibeonites rather than fail to keep God's command (9:26). Joshua "delivered" the Gibeonites out of the hand of the children of Israel. In the end, the people were appeased. The Gibeonites were allowed to live "lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swear unto them" (9:20). But they must be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation (9:21), and for the altar of the Lord (9:27). -- It was right that the oath should not be broken. Joshua and his men were more alert. There would not be a second time when a city would voluntarily give itself up. All other cities were taken in battle (11:19). In addition to the gift of life, the Gibeonites came into the fellowship of the true God and of the worship service. They humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God (9:24-25), and grace came upon them.

Later on the prophet Zechariah wrote by inspiration: "I will bring forth My curse, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter ... into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof" (Zech. 5:4). This curse would have come upon Israel if it had not kept its word to Gibeon. Moreover, one can see in Saul and his descendants how God punishes those who do not keep the oath. Saul wanted to annihilate the Gibeonites in his imagined zeal for the children of Israel (2 Sam. 21:2). He killed some of them, just as if one need not keep an oath obtained through cunning. But because of this, God punished Israel afterwards with 3 years of continuous famine, and seven of Saul's sons had to die wretchedly because of it. This oath therefore belongs in the same class as that which the spies carried out to Raĥab. No enemies of Israel and of its God were here allowed to live. But these humbly subjugated themselves, and did not constitute a danger for anyone by misleading them

into idolatry.

Chapter 10. The Gibeonites had kept their distance from the rest of the Hivites and had formed an alliance with Joshua. Their fellow-countrymen were greatly angered at this, for they had formed an alliance with other Canaanite kings and were ready to fight against Israel. The five kings of Jerusalem, of Hebron, of Jarmuth, of Lachish, and of Eglon therefore decided to regard it as their common patriotic duty to avenge with united power the defection of Gibeon. They would take care of this even before they set out against Joshua. Gibeon must first be disciplined, they thought, to prevent their bad example of defection from spreading. So they encamped before Gibeon and laid siege to this great royal city. But now the men of Gibeon implored Joshua: "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us!" (10:6). The faithfulness of Joshua now appears in its fullest brightness. Someone else in his position might have said: "Good, we promised life to Gibeon. We do not want to seize them because of the oath. But since they deceived us when they were originally destined to fall by the sword, therefore we will not prevent their falling to the sword of the fellow-countrymen. Then nothing unjust will have happened to them." -- But Joshua was not guilty of such unfaithfulness, even though it surely would have found approval with many of those who had murmured at Joshua and his men. Joshua now rightly regarded the Gibeonites as his subjects and therefore as those whom he was bound to protect. He didn't wait until the next morning to depart, but marched off that same evening from Gilgal, coming "quickly" throughout the entire night to help the besieged city as he had been requested. He had no doubts that this was his duty. If he would have had any doubts, the promise of the Lord removed them: "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee" (10:8). Immediately after his arrival he suddenly attacked them, discomfited them, handed them a great slaughter before Gibeon, drove them away in flight, and chased them all the way to Azekah and Makkedah (10:10). But in their flight, the soldiers of the five kings were smitten by large hailstones which the Lord permitted to fall on them, but not on the Israelites following them. "And they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of

Israel slew with the sword" (10:11). Again the Israelites could grasp this fact: The Lord is fighting for us!

God now permitted an even greater miracle to follow. At the same time, He bore the strongest possible witness concerning the power of believing prayer. Joshua saw that there would not be enough daylight to annihilate the enemy. At the same time, he had the promise that the enemy would be given into his hands. So Joshua "spake to the Lord, and said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon!" (10:12). His command to the sun and moon was an ardent prayer proceeding from the strongest possible faith. And God did exactly as Joshua desired. "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (10:13). How long did that last? "So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." Thus that day was light almost twice as long as it should have been, according to the calendar in Gen. 1:14. This miracle at Gibeon and in the valley of Ajalon was not merely an optical illusion for Israel and its enemies. Nor was it purely local, as was the 3-day darkness in Egypt (Ex. 10:21), for the whole earth received light from the sun and moon. The prayer of one man here had the result of bringing about this miracle, so that "there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel" (10:14).

God Himself has wisely established certain laws in nature. But the Holy Ghost here teaches us that these laws are not so unalterable to Him that He will not permit Himself to be moved by a believing man's prayer to make an exception, for the good of His own. Who can possibly describe this great miracle adequately? What is there that is less under man's control than the sun and the moon! In recent years men have set foot on the moon, as the result of great scientific technology and expense. And today men are working to harness energy from the sun. God has given certain abilities to men, including the abilities to accomplish these feats. But all of this is a far cry from conquering the sun and moon, making them to do our bidding. Only God has the sun and moon in His power. For man to compel the sun and moon to obey him means that he has overwhelmed God by his prayer of faith. The very thought overwhelms us, but

this is what Joshua accomplished. -- And this was not the only time that God suspended the laws of nature in response to the prayers of men. Elijah would not allow dew nor rain to come for 3 years, and heaven listened (1 Kings 17:1). One is reminded of the time that Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, he triumphed, and was then given the name Israel ("he that prevails with God").

Some exegetes, who otherwise admit miracles, go around this miracle like a cat around a hot piece of metal. They claim to find here no actual interference in the order established on the fourth creation day. But should something like this be impossible for the Lord? Do rocks by nature give forth water when one speaks to them or strikes them (Num. 20:7-11)? Is not every miracle a suspension of the laws of nature by supernatural power? Cannot one who takes a little wheel out of use for a while from a machine he has built, also bring its great drive-wheel to a standstill, without ruining the machine or harming himself? But many a modern exegete, while regarding such a thing as possible for men, regard it with suspicion and doubt when it has to do with God suspending the laws of nature which He Himself has established.

In their flight, the five kings found a hiding-place in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua ordered the cave to be barricaded with stones and guarded until the pursuit of the fleeing soldiers was completed. Only then did he permit the cave to be opened and pronounced the death sentence upon them. The captains of Israel's men of war put their feet upon the necks of the kings. Then they were killed, were hanged on five trees, and at sunset they were cast into the cave in which they had hidden themselves. Great stones were laid in the mouth of the cave "which remain until this very day" (10:27). Then the cities of Makkedah, Libnah, and Lachish were taken, as well as Gezer that came to help Lachish. Thereafter Eglon, Hebron, and Debir were taken, and all that breathed were utterly destroyed, as the Lord had commanded. Thus "all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time ... And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal" (10:42-43). The conquest of a large portion of the land of Canaan was assured by this great victory. That which had seemed so impossible to the people 40 or 38 years earlier, when

the spies reported concerning the large cities and the giants occupying the land of Canaan, had now been accomplished. What was the reason why they had met with such success and with comparatively little effort? "Because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel" (10:42).

Chapter 11. As a result of Joshua's wonderful victory over the five Amorite kings and the destruction of their cities, southern Canaan had come into Israel's possession. The conquest of the northern part of the land now took place essentially through one campaign, even though this lasted for "a long time" (11:18). The main source of resistance to Israel now was Jabin, king of Hazor (11:1,10). He tried to unite as a resistance movement all the Canaanite kings who had not yet been brought into subjection: the kings of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, as well as the Hivites at Mt. Hermon. A great host of people, as sand upon the seashore, with very many horses and chariots, came together at the Waters of Merom lying north of the Sea of Gennesaret, in order to fight with Israel (11:5). All who could be mobilized against Israel in the north, east, and west now stood together at one time in a relationship of inter-dependence on each other, all brought together by Jabin. The downfall of the southern Canaanites had not made them wiser. The thought had not occurred to them that there was no use fighting against Israel and its God. Therefore they did not leave the land voluntarily, although they had heard that it had been given to the children of Israel by Jehovah. Nor did they surrender in peace as did the people at Gibeon. With defiant and hardened hearts (11:20), they chose to depend on the fortune of weapons. And Israel was not a little anxious about engaging in battle with them. Once again they had to be exhorted not to be afraid (11:6), and had to be strengthened with the promise: "Tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel." Since Israel was especially alarmed at the horses and chariots, God's promise included the words: "You shall disable their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

This was fulfilled to the letter. When Joshua suddenly attacked, Jabin with his allies were completely routed at the Waters of Merom. Israel pursued them far to the north to great Zidon (11:8). The chariots were

burned. The horses were disabled. Israel had to learn this lesson, that "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7). The reason for this command was not that they should trust in Jehovah alone and not on horses and chariots. Jabin fell by the sword of Israel. His city Hazor was burned with fire. Jabin's allies were also killed. But with God's permission, the children of Israel allowed their cities to remain and used them later on as dwelling-places. "And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves" (v. 14). And so Joshua "took all that land ... that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon" (v. 16f.).

The hardening of the hearts of the Canaanite people is attested to in 11:20. Here we learn that it came of the Lord's dispensation that they hardened their hearts and fought against Israel. That is just what Paul wrote to the Romans, that "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). This nation had been ungodly from the time of its ancestors, Ham and Canaan. It had grown up and grown old in ungodliness. So now God gave them up into the judgment of their ungodliness. They must harden themselves against Israel and die in their opposition, just as God had earlier hardened Pharaoh (Ex. 10:1). When a person continues in unrighteousness from youth into old age, then God gives such a person over to the desires of his heart, so that he falls into ever new sins, perishes, and is damned. How important it is, therefore, to resist in the beginning and turn quickly to repentance, so that we may suppress the sinful desires of our heart and give ourselves all the more captive to the will of God.

Chapter 12. From Josh. 11:21 to 12:24 we now find a list of the 31 kings and their cities brought into subjection by Joshua. Once more there is a summary of how the kings Sihon and Og had been brought into subjection already at the time of Moses (12:1-6). Then Joshua was called by God to occupy the promised land. At the same time, mention is made (11:22) how Joshua "left Anakims in the land of the children of Israel," namely, at Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. In addition, there were still the territories of the Philistines and Geshurites (13:1-6), with all of whom the battle was yet to come. But Joshua's first main assignment was essentially completed. What-

ever still remained of it should not prevent him now from going on to his second main assignment: portioning out the land (13:7). So this section (11:21 to 13:6) brings us very little new information. But this should not be considered unnecessary repetition. It is actually impressive proof for God's truthfulness, that all of His promises will be fulfilled. "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel ... he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses" (11:23,15). Centuries before, God had promised Abraham that He would give this land to his seed. God had renewed this same promise to Isaac and to Jacob. They died believing this promise, having seen its fulfillment from afar (Heb. 11:13). This repetition is also a loud accusation against the unbelief of those who "fell in the wilderness," and were not permitted to enter into the land of promise. God often delays the fulfilling of His promises, but in the end He surely does what He has promised.

Joshua now proceeded with the distribution of the land among the tribes. This will occupy our attention in the third and final portion of this study.

A. Schulz



C H A P E L A D D R E S S

Text: Matthew 3:1-2 and 10: In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ... And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

"Woodsman, spare that tree!" used to be the cry of the nature-lover in years gone by, then of the conservationist, more recently of the ecologist, and consistently, of the romantic. Every tree, spared to live, means production of oxygen for other living organisms, purifying of the air by taking carbon out of the atmosphere, prevention of erosion, sheltering for birds, food for wild creatures, and ultimately firewood.

Now in the energy crisis the chain saw is heard again in the land, and the woodsman's ax will bite deeply into the timberland -- not taking down the living tree, but the diseased, dying, broken -- to rid the forest of wood otherwise wasted, since it goes to rot. The man with the ax or chainsaw can again do something beneficial by culling out the deadwood from the forest. Picture him going through the woods, with his eye scanning trunk and limb, branch and twig, leaf and seedpod for the tell-tale signs of decay or death. Here and there he notes an oak with the blight, choked off by a virus, dying or already dead, a disease-spreader. It is so much dead wood to be burnt up in the dump or salvaged for the fireplace.

It has ever been this way, and John the Baptist gave the message to his generation. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.... And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Of course, he was speaking of a different type of plant: a forest of souls and lives, dying on the thin soil of their own spiritual making. He was seeing souls choked off by the diseases of sin; he was seeing infection clogging up the passageways of the Spirit until no

sustenance could get through from God. What clogs up the soul and kills it off? SIN. Any sin you can think of has the germinal ability to wreck a beautiful planting of God. Any sin can do it, any time, any where! By nurturing it in your heart -- by defending it and excusing it -- by keeping it close and warm, it incubates and reproduces more of its own kind and ultimately, unless cured by the Holy Spirit with divine power, it kills.

And when a soul is dead to God, then God promises to get rid of it, lest it spread its disease to others. God knows where the deadwood is in the world, or in a congregation, or in a student body. He knows who is growing deaf and blind to His Word; He looks over the world of hearts, raises up the ax, gives a last warning: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.... And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees...." Whenever the ax comes down, the time of grace is over with and past, and the soul is cut off out of the land of the living, thrown into eternal fires.

Can that happen to a teenager? Can a Lutheran young adult get to the point that he or she is spiritually dead ... and God cuts that soul down? Yes! As sure as sin is sure, as sure as hearts are sinful hearts, as sure as Satan works through sin to produce decay and rot in souls, teenagers can fall away from their Lord and be lost.

By what process does Satan accomplish such a horrible thing? Probably most often by a very gradual process: little things at first ... seemingly minor infractions of more-or-less dispensable house rules or dormitory regulations. Yes!! Right there! because right there going against conscience undercuts the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. Whenever a Christian deliberately does what he knows is wrong -- what happens? He retreats away from facing God; he gets to sneaking around spiritually because he knows he has done something immoral. The very act of tuning out the voice of conscience is the act of tuning off God's agent for faith-living. It amounts to deliberately cutting off one's communing with God. The heart that turns away from the voice of conscience is the heart that learns how to live apart from God. That heart turns into deadwood, fit to be cut down. How awful for that soul! How saddening to God! Repent therefore, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; don't let the ax be at hand for you, and the fire,

but the kingdom of heaven. Divine Woodsman, spare the tree planted here!

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel
of the ungodly,

Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord;
and in His law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers
of water,

that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;

his leaf also shall not wither;

and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Paul Koch

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===== PANORAMA =====

WELS AND SELK The 1973 Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod heard a report from its Commission on Doctrinal matters regarding the outcome of meetings that have been held with representatives of a new church body in Germany known as Selbstaendige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (SELK). This new church body was formed through a merger of The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany (Saxon), the Evangelical Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church (Breslau), and the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Wisconsin Synod had been in confessional fellowship with the former Saxon and Breslau churches but not with the last-named church body. It was reported that agreement had been reached between the representatives on certain previously unresolved doctrinal differences. Along with this report it is stated: "There are also no longer any divisive principles pertaining to church fellowship between WELS AND SELK." This is stated in spite of the fact that SELK is in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, a protesting fellowship it is true, yet a fellowship which is in force. WELS does state that this cannot continue indefinitely but it does not regard it as a hindrance to the establishment of fellowship. It is indeed a three-cornered relationship, a thing not new to WELS. We can well understand that this is consistent with the church fellowship principles which WELS has been defending these many years and concerning which we have expressed our disagreement. (Cf. Journal of Theology, Dec. 1972, p. 36ff.) It should, however, give WELS some cause for concern when the representatives of the new church body state frankly that the resolutions of the New Orleans Convention of the Missouri Synod will no doubt have a delaying effect on any action as regards their fellowship with that church body. But the deferring of action from one convention to another is not new to WELS either. The Synod's resolution on this is weak to say the least: "That we join with our commission in impressing on SELK the need to give special consideration to the implications of its continuing relation with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod." WELS could hardly say more than

this without condemning its own previous practice.

The formal declaration of fellowship with SELK is contingent upon endorsement of the doctrinal agreement by SELK itself and upon the approval of the synods with which WELS is affiliated. The initiation of the practice of fellowship is left in the hands of the synod's praesidium. However, it should be noted that there has been a practice of fellowship already on the part of WELS, namely through its representatives at a service at Mequon on July 20, 1973, conducted jointly by President O. Naumann and Dr. Jobst Schoene. This was reported to the convention and the convention approved it and stated that this was not out of harmony with the synod's fellowship practice. This we believe to be true, but it should be no secret that we on our part have taken strong exception to a number of WELS's fellowship practices.

C.M.G.

TURMOIL IN We have no desire, nor do we have the heart
MISSOURI to repeat the tragic details of the eruption
which has taken place at Concordia Seminary
in St. Louis. The public press as well as church papers
have provided more than enough news coverage of the
events which have brought sadness to many hearts. The
split that has long been there has now been revealed in
such manner that none can miss it or pass it by. The
Journal of Theology commented on this split in connection
with its reporting on the New Orleans Convention and now
one can only say that approximately the same proportion-
ate split is reflected throughout the church body if
reports on reactions from districts, boards, and of-
ficials can be relied upon. The split at the Seminary,
of course, shows a greater support for the advocates of
the historical critical method than is evident elsewhere.
The Lutheran Witness Reporter, in its most recent issue,
brings the information that 382 students of some 450
undergraduates signed up for SemineX (Seminary in exile)
courses, these to be taught by faculty members who walked
off when Dr. John Tietjen was suspended from the office
of Seminary president. Forty-six faculty and staff mem-
bers were informed that if they did not return to their

positions on campus, their "contracts of employment" would be considered broken by them. The majority of the faculty will be teaching the 382 students in exile on the campuses of St. Louis University (Roman Catholic) and Eden Seminary (United Church of Christ). The votes in the Board of Control of the Seminary have been running 6-5 in favor of the actions taken against the faculty majority supporting Dr. Tietjen. What will happen to the graduates of Seminex is hanging in the balance. Administration sources are saying that they will be ineligible for calls in the Missouri Synod since they will be lacking the proper certification. On the other hand, some district presidents are saying that calls will be forthcoming for them in their areas.

Naturally one must be happy that the liberal theology of the historical critical school will not now be tolerated in the classrooms at Concordia Seminary. Even though classes will be smaller and faculty cut down, the stand which has been taken against the error on Scripture that has so long held sway there must meet with the approval of all who are committed to the inerrancy of the Bible and its infallible authority in all things, also in the geographical, scientific and historical matters. What saddens one though is the fact that this is not the only area in which differences exist in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod itself and between us and this synod with which we were affiliated in former days of blessed memory. Certainly all those who have been saying for a long time that there has been no change in the Missouri Synod should consider the words of former Vice-president Wiederanders: "Despite repeated efforts we have not dealt honestly with our pastors and people. We have refused to state our changing theological position in open, honest, forthright, simple and clear words. Over and over again we said that nothing was changing when all the while we were aware of changes taking place. Either we should have informed our pastors and people that changes were taking place and, if possible, convinced them from Scripture that these changes were in full harmony with 'Thus saith the Lord!' or we should have stopped playing games as we gave the assurance that no changes were taking place. With increasing measure the synodical trumpet has been given an uncertain sound Quite generally our pastors and almost entirely our laity became more and more confused. Confusion led to

uncertainty. Uncertainty led to polarization. Polarization destroyed credibility. Loss of credibility destroyed the possibility for meaningful discussion. The loss of meaningful discussion set the stage for a head-on collision." (Quoted from a release of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Department of Public Relations, Victor W. Bryant, Director). We have been saying since 1938 that the Missouri Synod took a turn in the wrong direction at its St. Louis convention of that year and conditions have steadily worsened ever since. Now the trouble is so apparent that no-one can miss it. The heterodox and unionistic character of this once sound church body should be clear to those who will read and consider the evidence. It doesn't help to say there are extremes on both sides and that all will come out well as soon as the dust settles and tempers cool. It is our fervent hope that there will be found in Missouri many who will follow their own Brief Statement: "All Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17."

C.M.G.

WELS AND The 42nd Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin
CLC Evangelical Lutheran Synod received a report
 of its Commission on Doctrinal Matters (now
known as Commission on Inter-Church Relations) regarding
the meeting held with our CLC Board of Doctrine in July
of 1972. In the December 1972 issue of the Journal we
brought a report of this meeting and included an extensive
quotation from the minutes presented by the secretary
of the WELS Commission. In response to the Commission's
report, the convention adopted the following resolutions:

"Whereas a joint meeting of our Commission on Inter-Church relations with the Board of Doctrine of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in July, 1972, produced no positive results on questions dealing

with the doctrine of Church Fellowship (specifically, the matter of dealing between church bodies when error or false doctrine has arisen); and

"Whereas our Commission agreed with the conviction expressed by the CLC representatives that continued discussion on this matter at that meeting would serve no purpose; and

"Whereas no further arrangements have been made for doctrinal discussions with the CLC Board of Doctrine; therefore be it

"Resolved,

- a) That we express regret over the failure at that meeting to reach agreement on the doctrine under discussion; and be it finally

"Resolved,

- b) That we ask our Commission on Inter-Church Relations to avail itself of any new opportunities to resume discussions with the CLC Board of Doctrine, as conditions may warrant."

It is to be noted that the resolution states: "We express regret over the failure at that meeting to reach agreement on the doctrine under discussion." From time to time expressions are heard to the effect that the disagreement between the CLC and WELS is not a disagreement in doctrine. On our part, it has been repeatedly said that there is a doctrinal disagreement (specifically on the doctrine of Church Fellowship). If this were not the case then we could rightfully be labelled as schismatics. The WELS convention in its resolution faces the issue squarely by recognizing that there is a disagreement in doctrine. Certainly we share the feeling of regret over the failure to reach agreement in the doctrine under discussion.

We have one comment which is necessary for the sake of clarification. The first "whereas" of the convention resolution specifies the area of disagreement as centering upon "the matter of dealing between church bodies when error or false doctrine has arisen". While this expression is indeed used in the WELS minutes of the July 1972 meeting, it should be noted that the minutes describe this situation also in these words: "the situation in which error in doctrine or practice has infected

a larger group of confessional brethren (e.g. congregations or sister synod)". It should be clear from this that the reference is not to a casual intrusion of error or false doctrine but to an infection of the group. Certainly we are agreed with the expression of the Brief Statement on this matter: "A church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of error, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; I Tim. 1:3." One certainly cannot wait to see if admonition will be of no avail before making a judgment on the heterodoxy of a church body that has itself been infected with error.

C.M.G.



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