

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

I Timothy 4:15

Journal
of
Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

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Editor-in-chief: Prof. C. M. Gullerud
 Immanuel Lutheran College
 Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Managing Editor: Prof. John Lau
 Immanuel Lutheran College
 Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Staff Contributors: A. Schulz, C. Kuehne,
 L. Redlin, P. Nolting.

Correspondence regarding subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should be directed to the Managing Editor. Correspondence regarding material published in the JOURNAL should be addressed to the Editor-in-chief.

IN MEMORIAM: PASTOR PAUL G. ALBRECHT (1898-1976)

THE WORK OF THE LORD GOES ON

In days of strife and strain it becomes more evident than ever that the hand of God is the hand of power. The rule is His and not ours. He maintains and builds when men tear down. When the boat is rocked and beaten by the waves, He brings calm and stills the storm. When men ask: "Where shall we receive bread that we may eat?", He blesses the loaves and all are filled. When the people question their future and ask: "Wherewith shall we be clothed?", the great Provider raises His hand and says of His children as He does of the lilies of the field: "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like these." When Israel wanders in the wilderness and knows not where to go, the Lord provides the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to lead the way. And in that column, moving on and stopping as He wills, the Lord Himself is present and comes to rest in the place of worship where faithful children stop to adore and to praise. And so it is in the Church also in our day, if we will but open our eyes to see and to observe. Men may come and men may go, but Truth marches on, and He Who is the Truth never deserts but guides with steady hand.

Men are chosen to do His work as they were in days of yore. When David was set aside in a day when the strong had become weak, it was He Who was the Strength of Israel that said to Samuel: "Thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." The choice was His, and in this divine call David labored and did his work until the day of which it is said: "After he had served his own generation by the will of God he fell on sleep and was laid unto his fathers." But the work of the Kingdom continued as "the Word of the Lord grows."

Now we have laid to rest a number of the laborers whom the Lord gave us as founding fathers of the CLC. They would have us who remain not grieve as do those who

have no hope, but to rejoice in their home-coming. We would do them honor by saying to one another: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace" (Hebrews 13:7-9a, *NIV*). In that spirit we honor the memory of our departed brother in the faith, Paul G. Albrecht, to whom we dedicate this issue of the *Journal of Theology*.

*For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confest,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress, and their
Might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true Light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

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

C. M. Gullerud



FUNERAL SERMON FOR PAUL G. ALBRECHT *

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is Thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

For our comfort and instruction, I would direct you to the Word which God has caused to be recorded through the apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy in the first chapter, the twelfth verse:

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

In Christ Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, dear family of the departed and fellow-redeemed:

No matter how unconcerned people may be about spiritual matters, there comes a time in their lives when they are forced to give attention to them. Such a time comes when they are face to face with death, especially when death comes to one of the members of their family. It is interesting to note that at such a time their words reveal "spiritual" thoughts. No matter what the past life of the individual may have been, they begin to remember and recite all the good things that can be attributed to the one who died. We see immediately that even those who are relatively unconcerned about spiritual matters are forced into a concern about them at the time of death. And what do they turn to for comfort? They turn to the only thing natural man knows, the goodness of man.

* Preached on March 26, 1976, at Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

If we were to proceed to judge in such an earthly way about Pastor Albrecht, I don't believe that anyone would dispute the fact that he was a good man. He was a kind and loving husband, a faithful father, a hard and steadfast worker, a good and faithful friend to many. But Pastor Albrecht himself would not want us to speak of these things; for before his God he laid no claim to them at all. He was always aware of death and knew the cause of death: his own sin. He found his answer to sin and death not in the goodness that he could present to God, but in the goodness that was given to him as a gift of God's grace in the person of Jesus Christ, his Redeemer and Savior. In that Savior he found the full assurance of a blessed death. Of that blessed assurance the apostle Paul speaks in our text. On the basis of that truth I would speak to you about

THE FAITH THAT ASSURES A BLESSED DEATH.

I would point out to you

- I. Its source;
- II. Its certainty; and
- III. Its blessing.

I.

The words of our text were written by a faithful servant of God at a time when death was very near. They were written by the apostle Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome. Unlike the first imprisonment, which had a happy outcome in his release, this imprisonment held only the prospect of death. The apostle Paul faced the reality of the situation, telling us in this same letter, "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand."

Yet the prospect of death did not upset or terrify him. He faced it with calm assurance. Why? Because he possessed the assurance of blessedness in life and death, an assurance that rested on a single person, which was none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This he states in our text most plainly: "I know whom I have believed." He describes this Christ, the source

of his assurance, in the verses preceding our text as the Lord "who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

That the apostle Paul knew that he was a sinner is clear to anyone who knows his writings from the Scriptures. Not only had he persecuted Christ before his conversion, but even after he was brought to faith in Jesus he was distressed by his continued sinning. In the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans he wrote in all openness and honesty, saying: "the good that I would, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do." Reviewing his life as a child of God, he came to this distressing judgment of himself: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he knew the blessed answer to his own self-judgment: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This Christ had been his Savior and Deliverer even before he was born, yes, even before the world was created, when God determined to save the whole world of sinners through His Son, Jesus Christ. He had been brought to know and believe in God's Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Even that faith was a gift of God's purpose and grace, a result of God's holy calling through the Gospel. All this caused the apostle to exult: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

This was the source of the apostle Paul's assurance of a blessed death; for this Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

This faith in Christ was also Pastor Albrecht's hope and assurance of deliverance from his sins and from the curse and terror of death. That Savior Who had called him to faith was the source of his assurance that all his sins were washed away in Jesus' blood and that therefore death had lost its sting and power.

His faith has been turned into sight. But we still

remain and still face the death through which he has passed. God is calling upon us today to embrace that same mercy and grace and love in the redeeming Savior, so that in Christ we too may die in the full assurance of a blessed death.

II.

The apostle Paul also wanted Timothy and all men to know that the faith which gives the assurance of a blessed death was a steadfast faith, resting solidly upon a sure foundation. This he expresses in our text when he says: "I know whom I have believed." The faith of the apostle Paul was not some vague feeling or emotion, but clearly presented and defined in the revelation of God in His Word. He points us to the source of a certain faith in the verse immediately following our text, when he says: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The apostle Paul's faith was intimately connected with the Word of God. His faith and the Word of God could not be separated. Anything that threatened the Word of God threatened his faith and therefore his assurance of a blessed death. Had not his own Savior said in the plainest language, "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed"? To yield anything of the Word of God would have meant a forfeiture of his certainty and assurance of a blessed death.

Pastor Albrecht shared the apostle's concern for a certain faith and the assurance of a blessed death that it gives. He joined the apostle in saying, "I know whom I have believed." Therefore, he was concerned about sound doctrine. He was unwilling to yield one word of the revealed truth of the Scriptures.

To some, at least while he was alive, he was a hard and unreasoning man. That judgment will not stand the test of time and certainly not of eternity. In matters not related to the Word of God he could be kind and yielding; but when it came to the Word of God he was firm and unyielding against every departure from or threat to the Word of his God. His was not the heroic stance of a man of steadfast principle who stood by his convictions. Ra-

ther, it was the simple obedience of a ransomed soul to the voice of his Redeemer. In that obedience he found the assurance of a blessed death.

It is such a steadfast assurance, resting upon the truth of God in His Word, that I ask for myself and for everyone present here this afternoon, so that we may confidently assert, "I know whom I have believed." For such a Word-based faith gives the assurance of a blessed death.

III.

Finally, the apostle Paul reminds us of the blessing he knows awaits him in his steadfast faith in Christ. He says, "I am persuaded that He (Christ) is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." That day refers to the day of judgment when every man will stand before his Creator-God. The piercing eye of God's holiness will be upon him, and God will seek of him that perfect holiness that is a reflection of God's own holiness. In view of that day the apostle Paul, the sinner, is confident in his faith; for he has placed all his trust in Christ. How could he do that? He had given his reason in writing to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." In the first chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians he also wrote: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Every demand of God against Paul had been satisfied by Christ. Everything that God insisted that he be, Christ was for him. Therefore, he knew that God would judge him righteous, guiltless and holy on the last day, because Jesus was righteous, guiltless and holy.

This was also the faith of the departed that gave him the assurance of blessedness on the day of judgment. Though he knew and acknowledged himself to be a sinner, he quietly committed his hope of standing acquitted on the day of judgment into the hands of his Savior; for

Christ was his righteousness and sanctification and redemption, and will be his blessedness on that day.

May we by the same grace and the power of that same Gospel commit ourselves to Christ against the day of judgment, in order that in Christ we may be everything that we are not. May the mercies of God abide in our hearts that we may ever pray with the hymn writer,

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace.
Foul I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee. Amen.

L. Schierenbeck



REMARKS OF THE CLC PRESIDENT AT THE FUNERAL
OF PAUL G. ALBRECHT

Jesus was blessing the disciples when He parted from them and ascended into heaven. Ever since, He has poured down upon His Church on earth countless gifts and blessings. President Paul Albrecht was one of those gifts.

He was a kind, friendly, Christian man who loved the Lord Jesus and the Gospel which Jesus called him to preach. The Lord gave him many gifts and made him a leader among men. Not only did he faithfully care for the needs of his own congregation, but he was made responsible for the care of all the churches, for he served as a president of one of the districts of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for many years, and, more recently, as the first president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

The Lord gave him to the Church at the time when his gifts were needed most, when unionism was making its damaging inroads into conservative Lutheran churches. When unionism had taken its toll, the Lord used him to set together again the bits and pieces of concerned Lutheranism and to unite them into a staunch, confessional Lutheran Church. He was well equipped for this work, for he allowed no personal considerations of any kind to interfere with his own obedience to the Lord's Word.

The Lord made President Paul Albrecht a very practical man. With his own hands he personally led in the work of converting the Ingram Estate here in Eau Claire into our Immanuel Lutheran College. This was a labor of love and joy for him, for he loved Christian education, and he knew how important it is for a church body to have its own school if it is to preserve the Truth for future generations.

The Lord gave him the qualities of humility and wisdom. He was never ashamed to be the president of a

small synod; and he had the spiritual wisdom to know that the true greatness of a church body does not lie in the number of its members, but rather in its faithfulness and obedience to the Lord's Word.

Since Jesus has ascended into heaven, He has given many gifts to His Church here on earth. President Paul Albrecht was one of those gifts. The Lord gave, and the Lord has now taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And blessed be the memory of President Paul Albrecht.

Egbert Albrecht



IN APPRECIATION: A DOCTRINAL ARTICLE BY PAUL G. ALBRECHT

One of the most significant documents in the history of the CLC is the article written by Paul G. Albrecht and published in the January, 1962, issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. (The article was also reprinted as a pamphlet.) The title given to the article clearly indicated the contents: "What Separates the CLC from Wisconsin?" President Albrecht pointed out, in very clear language, that there were three primary areas of disagreement. The first involved deviations on the part of the Wisconsin Synod (WELS) from the Scriptural doctrine of Church Fellowship; the second concerned deviations from the doctrine of the Clarity and Authority of the Scriptures; and the third dealt with instances of violation of the sanctity of the Call.

The article appeared at a significant point in our history. The WELS had, in 1961, suspended fellowship with the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, and declared that it did so on the basis of Romans 16:17-18. Since

it was precisely on the basis of that self-same passage that the members of the CLC had withdrawn from fellowship in the Synodical Conference some time earlier, the important question had to be answered: Did Wisconsin's action now show that the doctrinal position of WELS and the CLC was the same? Could fellowship now be resumed between those two church bodies? Certainly that question was being raised by members of the WELS as well as by members of the CLC. The temptation to move hastily back into an association from which it had caused us much grief to separate ourselves was very great.

It was extremely helpful, then, to have the facts (recognized by the CLC) put into the form of an article. We needed to make it known that the action of the WELS in suspending fellowship with the LCMS was based on its incorrect position regarding the termination of fellowship — namely that "termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail" [emphasis ours]. In answer, President Albrecht declared: "The Lord says, Romans 16:17, Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them, that is, take careful note of them, which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them, have no fellowship with them, not tomorrow or next year or when you reach the conviction that admonition is of no further avail, or when a majority of convention delegates reaches this conviction, but when you see what they are doing."

In dealing with the second area of disagreement with the WELS, regarding the clarity and authority of the Scriptures, President Albrecht demonstrated that the WELS had set forth two contrary courses of action at the same time, when in 1955 it declared: "A church body which creates divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture — becomes subject to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies, and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference"; and put forth the resolution: "Resolved, that ... we, in obedience to the commands of our Lord in Romans 16:17-18, terminate our fel-

lowship with the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod" — and then also voted to postpone action on the resolution! In effect, the WELS declared itself to be in a dilemma, forced to choose between the directive of God which says: "Avoid!" and the directive of God which tells them to continue to practice fellowship a little longer because they had "a continuing debt of love to those whose fellowship we cherished so many years."

To this President Albrecht simply replied: "This approach to the issue made Scripture equivocal. It says, in effect, that Scripture placed the (Wisconsin) Synod in a dilemma. Toward its solution, one set of Scripture passages is pitted against another. The clarity and authority of Scripture is thus undermined."

In the third section of his article President Albrecht briefly outlined the Scriptural teaching on the authority of the Call. Succinctly he declared: "The relation of a Christian pastor to his congregation, and the relation of a Christian congregation to its pastor is a creation of the Holy Spirit. ... No congregation can, without grievously sinning against God, reject its God-given shepherd unless he has made himself unfit for the high office by persistent adherence to false doctrine, a scandalous life, or wilful neglect of duty."

However, the WELS had chosen, through its district officials, to condone the action of certain of its congregations which in effect terminated the call of their pastor solely because "he does not belong to the Wisconsin Synod."

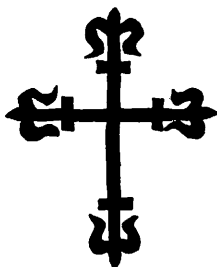
We recognize, as we have all along, that if and when the first two areas of disagreement could be settled in a God-pleasing manner, namely by WELS' coming to an acceptance of the true doctrine in the controverted issues, the third area could and would, no doubt, be settled in individual ways.

What effect did the article have on the subsequent dealings between the WELS and the CLC? At first, the effect seemed to be negative. For example, as recorded in the CLC Proceedings of its convention held at Man-

chester, Wisconsin, August 9-14, 1962, correspondence received not long after the article's publication from O. J. Naumann, president of the WELS, indicated: "Our commission on Doctrinal Matters considered your article in the Jan. issue of the *Spokesman* at its recent meeting. At this meeting it was resolved to ask me to convey to you the Commission's conviction that you do not fully grasp the true intent of our resolutions, and that our position is consequently not accurately reflected in your articles." However, when one reads subsequent correspondence between the presidents of the respective church bodies, as well as the documented history of subsequent meetings, it becomes quite clear that the article could and did serve as a basis for discussion. The fact that agreement was not achieved in no way detracts from the validity of President Albrecht's statements. The *status controversiae* had plainly been set forth.

In our view, it is too early for a thorough evaluation of the total effect of President Albrecht's article on the later developments taking place in the two church bodies involved. We are, however, indebted to the article for two immediate effects: It did lead to further discussions between the WELS and the CLC; it did plainly demonstrate to the members of the CLC that vital and important doctrinal differences still existed between them and the WELS, and that these differences made it impossible for fellowship to be as yet restored between the two church bodies.

John Lau



GRADUATION ADDRESS AT IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE *

Grace be with you, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is the Word of God written in the Book of Genesis in the 28th chapter, verses 16-21:

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God.

In Christ, our exalted Savior, dear friends, and in particular you men and women who have successfully completed the course which you pursued during the past years at this nursery of Christian knowledge and faith and godliness:

Jacob had sinned grievously. He had sinned against his brother Esau in that he had cheated him out of his birthright and in that he had stolen the blessing which his father had promised to Esau. Jacob had sinned against his aged and partially blind father in that he

* *Delivered on May 26, 1972, this was the last public address by President Albrecht at an official function of the CLC.*

brazenly lied to his face twice, "I am your firstborn Esau." Jacob had not only sinned against his brother and his father, but he had sinned against God; for every sin is a sin against God. When Esau realized what Jacob had done, the full weight of his hatred and fury descended on Jacob, and he decided that he would kill Jacob so that neither the birthright nor the blessing could be of any value to him. When their mother became aware of this, she urged Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Haran and to stay there until Esau's wrath would subside.

I think that at the root of Jacob's wickedness was this, that he didn't really fear and love God. If Jacob had feared and loved God as did his pious father Isaac and his devout grandfather Abraham, he just could not have done what he had done. One cannot truly fear and love God and then go out and lie and steal. What made Jacob's sin even more reprehensible was the fact that he didn't even repent. There is no indication that he confessed his sin either to Esau or to his father or to God, nor is there an indication that he prayed for forgiveness. Jacob stubbornly persisted in his sin, continuing to lie to his aged father, saying that he was going to Haran to find a God-fearing wife.

Yes, my friends, Jacob had certainly sinned grievously, but God did not curse him as he so well deserved to be cursed. God did not turn His back on Jacob as Jacob had turned his back on Him. In His infinite, divine grace and mercy God came to Jacob in a beautiful dream, in which he saw angels ascending and descending on a ladder, a sure proof to him that God still loved him and wanted to draw him to Himself. And the best part of it all was this, that at the top of the ladder he saw God. And he heard God say to him, "I am the God of your pious father, who believes and trusts in Me, and I am the God of your devout grandfather, who served Me in simple, childlike faith and obedience. And now, Jacob, as I was with your father and your grandfather, so I am going to be with you. Jacob, I had already chosen you when you were still in your mother's womb. I am going to be with you, and I am going to bless you, and I am going to keep you on this long and dangerous journey on which you have

embarked. And oh, Jacob, believe Me when I say that from your descendants the Messiah, the promised Seed of the woman, will some day be born, so that through you and through your seed salvation will come to all the world. Oh Jacob, believe it, and go your way in peace."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep and thought of what he had seen and heard, his heart was filled with holy joy and he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. . . This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of heaven." We see how God through His infinite, divine mercy and goodness had kindled a few sparks of faith in the heart of Jacob. Through His goodness He had breathed new spiritual life into that cold heart of Jacob, dead in trespasses and sin. Now, if Jacob had only steadfastly clung to this promise which the Lord had given, what he had heard from the Lord, he would have been the most blessed man in all the world, and he could have gone his way with the peace of God which passes all understanding in his heart. But Jacob immediately began to waver between belief and unbelief. He said within himself, "Let's not go too fast; let's wait and see. I'm going to make a deal. If God will be with me, and if God will keep me on this long journey on which I have embarked, and if God will also give me bread to eat, and if He will give me clothes to wear, and if He will actually bring me safely back to my father's house, then He shall be my God. And then I will believe Him and I will serve Him the rest of my days." But, sad to say, very shortly the old Jacob was there again. The old Jacob, who was concerned only with earthly, material things, who, like Thomas, wanted to see before he would believe, got the upper hand.

Now, my friends, as God in His divine grace and mercy came to the sinner Jacob, and chose him and let him hear His voice, so that same Lord in His infinite, divine love and mercy has also come to you and to me; although we were altogether sinful, conceived and born in sin, He came to you and to me already at our Baptism, as in a wonderful dream. And He said to you, "I have redeemed you; you are Mine, and nothing, absolutely nothing, shall ever change that." And afterwards He came to you and He spoke to you in the beautiful Bible stor-

ies and hymn verses that you heard and learned. Yes, He came to you and He spoke to you as often as you appeared in the house of God. But this time I am thinking particularly of the many, many times that the Lord came to you and spoke to you here at Immanuel Lutheran College. He came to you and He spoke to you through your God-fearing instructors in every classroom. He came to you and He spoke to you in every word of Scripture that you heard or that you read or that you studied also in the privacy of your own room. He came to you and He spoke to you also in many a delightful musical number in which you were privileged to participate. And, above all, He came to you and He spoke to you, and this was always loud and clear, in those delightful chapel talks which you were daily privileged to hear.

And what did the Lord say to you? Yes, certainly sometimes He did rebuke you because you had carelessly allowed your sinful old Adam, your old sinful flesh and blood, to deceive and to mislead you. Yes, and at times He chided you because you were so slow to do His will. But through it all there was always the still, small voice of the Gospel. Through it all you were always able to hear the words of your blessed Savior, "I have redeemed you. You are Mine. Be of good cheer, My Son; be of good cheer, My daughter; your sins are forgiven. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. For I have washed you. I have cleansed you. I have taken away your sins. I have cast them into the depths of the sea and they shall not be remembered forever. Yes, I have washed you and I have cleansed you, and not only that. So that you may not have to appear before My heavenly Father poor and naked, I have also clothed you beautifully with the gorgeous robes of salvation. I have covered you with the white and spotless garment of My own perfect Righteousness."

Oh, my friends, how blessed you are thus every day to have heard the voice of the Lord. And now I say to you men and women who are this day graduating from Immanuel Lutheran High School: whether this be the end of your formal education, or whether you have plans to continue your education elsewhere, or whether it is your

honest intention this fall to return to Immanuel Lutheran College to prepare yourself for the teaching or preaching ministry (and I sincerely hope that many of you will be led to do this; you couldn't make a better choice!), I say to you now, always (and I say always), under all circumstances and under all conditions, in joy and in sorrow, conduct yourselves as people who have heard the voice of the Lord. Conduct yourselves in such a way that you will always be a credit to Him Who has called you and Who has redeemed you with His own blood and prepared a place in heaven for you. Now I warn you, this is not going to be easy. It won't be easy, because your old sinful flesh and blood, your old sinful heart, that exceedingly wicked and deceitful thing, is going to be with you always. And the Devil is going to use all his devilish wiles and cunning to deceive and to mislead you. And I warn you, don't underestimate the power of your adversary! The Devil is a mighty spirit. Scripture compares him to a roaring lion, and you know how easily and how quickly a lion will crush his prey, the moment he can lay one of his heavy paws on him. And I plead with you, do not struggle against this enemy in your own strength. If you do, you're lost already. "With might of ours can naught be done; soon were our loss effected." Keep in remembrance the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you and what He has said to you. Call on Him and He will deliver you. In answer to your faithful prayer, He will supply all your needs. He has promised it, and He will do it.

And to you, young women who have been called into the sacred teaching ministry, I say: remember always that the Lord has called you into this ministry so that the little ones that He will entrust to your care will hear, through you, His voice. For that reason, in every subject that you teach, let your charges hear the voice of Him Who made all things and rules all things in Heaven and on earth, and Who will make all things work together for good to them that love Him. Let them always hear the loving voice of their Savior, Who was delivered for their offenses and raised again for their justification. And there is no better way of doing this than by means of the many beautiful Bible stories through which the Savior Himself will speak to them. Your pu-

pils may, perhaps will, forget most of the other things that you are trying to teach them, but the Bible stories will stay with them. They are the words of God. They will stay with them as long as they live. I say, by these things you will be making your classroom a house of God and a gate of Heaven.

And, finally, to you men who have received and have accepted a call into the holy preaching ministry, I say: remember that you are ambassadors of Christ. A good and faithful ambassador does not advance his own ideas. He is the voice of Him that has sent him. Oh yes, through you the Lord again will want to rebuke, because you will be working with sinful people, and this is a day and an age in which the transgression of God's holy will is no longer regarded as sin, but looked upon merely as a deviation from an ancient and outmoded code of ethics. Through you the Lord will want to chide and admonish. But I say: remember that you are not to be detectives, to spy on your people to see where they have sinned. You are not to be condemning judges. You are to be shepherds, to lead and to feed gently your flocks, the flocks of the Chief Shepherd. I say: in every sermon that you preach let the dominant note always be the Gospel of Christ, which alone is the power of God unto salvation. If it should ever happen that you worked hard and long, a whole week, to prepare a sermon for the coming Sunday, and on Saturday evening you find that there is no Gospel in this masterpiece of yours, then don't preach it. Throw it away and begin all over. In all your preaching and teaching set forth Christ. Let your people hear the voice of your blessed Savior. If you do that, then some day, when you are no longer around, someone will say, "When John Klatt was our pastor, when Wayne Mielke was our pastor, when Paul Schaller was our pastor," I say, they will not only say, "We had a wonderful pastor," but they will say, "When Paul Schaller was our pastor, when Wayne Mielke was our pastor, when John Klatt was our pastor, then we had a wonderful Savior. We dwelt in the house of God and we saw the gate of heaven." Amen.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Paul G. Albrecht

THE HOLY ESTATE OF MARRIAGE IN AN UNHOLY WORLD

THE PROBLEM Thirty to forty percent of the marriages today end in divorce. Almost half as many divorces occurred in 1975 as marriages. The civil courts have a substantial waiting list of pending divorce cases. Judges are overloaded to such a degree that in some areas the number of judgments are being doubled and night sessions are being planned. An increase in crimes of various types contributes to this appalling situation, but divorce proceedings is a major factor.

These are evidences of the growing tendencies of our age. These are the marks of a generation whose eyes are fixed upon this little world and which has no vision beyond it. These are fruits of a philosophy which puts man at the center of life and casts God out to the very fringe of life, or else banishes Him entirely. Such an attitude weighs upon and gradually influences the thinking of people everywhere. It threatens to influence us and our fellow Christians. Especially are we concerned with those who have been placed into our spiritual care through the divine call of our Lord. We and they are constantly subjected to the philosophy of a sinful and adulterous generation day after day.

THE COUNSELORS Advice concerning the home, marriage, the family, etc., is spewed forth by the average person with an amazing sound of authority. "If I were you," precedes some very far reaching and often thoughtless advice. Yet it is known to fall from the lips of "friends" with little or no concern for God's will in the matter.

What also becomes rather disconcerting to those who have been entrusted with souls is that those who are concerned only with this little life are looked to for counseling. Indeed, atheistic psychologists and psychiatrists are looked upon as saviors by many. The need to "talk to someone" is, of course, understandable. God

knew that "it is not good that man should be alone." But shouldn't God's people be talking to God's people about what God has said, rather than turning one's life and one's view of life over to the care of an unbeliever? For no matter how deeply these mind-mechanics may penetrate with their questions and answers, the real answers will never be revealed until man faces up to the cause of it all. Sin! The sin with which we were born. The sinful flesh which dogs our every step and threatens to control our every thought, word, and deed. Sin! The death trap from which there is escape only in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But this is denied by the proponents of atheistic psychology and psychiatry. Their theory is that the teaching of original sin and substitutionary atonement of Christ must be eradicated. These man-made philosophies would convince man that he is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul; that he must become released from his guilt feelings by centering upon independence; that he must be convinced that he is not his brother's keeper. And whether it be husband, wife, parents or children, they must think of themselves first. In other words, one's philosophy needs to be egocentric. To those convinced of that philosophy Law and Gospel preaching will be unacceptable.

Besides that, the printing presses never stop! An avalanche of printed material is flooding the market which attempts to provide answers for the unhappiness and discontent which prevails in this generation. But most of the solutions offered become part of the problem because they flow out of sinful heart and mind. And "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? How can a bitter fountain bring forth sweet water?

Yet the counselling goes on, "Get rid of those old hangups about sin and guilt and let yourself go. Do what feels good and don't let foolish thoughts of sin weigh you down." Sinful man in his best state is altogether vanity. Yet he gains an audience, you see, because sinful flesh relates so well to sinful flesh.

So the God-ordained union of marriage is under attack on every hand as the ways and words of God are paid no heed. The courts have become so lenient that obtaining a divorce is as easy as washing one's hands. Attorneys are geared to push for their clients' "good" regardless of how deeply one may need to push the other party down into the dirt. But it's all fair because it's legal.

THE "SO-
LUTION"

And so the world whose vision has no concern for God proposes "solutions" to the misery it has brought upon itself. An example of such a "solution" is a book entitled *Open Marriage*. It was published in 1972 by a husband and wife team who are both doctors in their field of anthropology. It was reprinted twice in 1973. It has gained the acceptance of the public in that it was on the best seller list for almost a year. It is said to have "been used by colleges and universities, medical schools, and psychiatric and social work programs as a text in a wide range of courses including marriage and the family, male-female relations, the modern family, human relations, human sexuality, women in contemporary society, organizational behavior, family studies, marriage workshops, Black studies, and religion. *Open Marriage* is widely recommended by marriage counselors, clinical psychologists, and other therapists. Discussion groups and couple workshops based on *Open Marriage* have been started all over the country."

Now we realize that people do not always adopt the completely crass concept that such authors set forth. But people are influenced. The flesh is given the "go" signal, and moral restraint that people practice for one reason or another is subjected to ridicule. If people are not firmly grounded in God's Word and accept it to be divine Truth in all matters of faith and life, they become easy prey to these vain philosophies of men or at least are influenced to a great degree by them. Our fellow believers are bombarded with these pagan ideologies until they may begin to doubt and wonder if perhaps their church is just too strait-laced and is not relating to the modern day as it ought.

THE "OLD" We wish to quote from the above-mentioned volume, but not because it is anything OR "NEW" new. The philosophies are as old as sin itself. We would call them to your attention to demonstrate the trend of thought which is gaining greater and greater acceptance not only in the world in general but also is having a telling effect upon those who profess to be Christians. The first quotation is a comparison of how the authors of *Open Marriage* [Nena O'Neill and George O'Neill, *Open Marriage*; Avon Books, 1972] view the "old" marital union in comparison with the "new" or "open" concept.

The Old Contract Demands

Ownership of the mate
Denial of self
Playing the couples game
Rigid role behavior
Absolute fidelity
Total exclusivity

The Open Contract Offers

Undependent living
Personal growth
Individual freedom
Flexible roles
Mutual trust
Expansion through openness

(p. 71)

Though some of these terms and phrases need no explanation, here are a few quotations which will clearly demonstrate what is meant by them.

Monogamy Redefined:

"The guidelines throughout this book are dedicated to redefining monogamy, to creating a kind of monogamy in which equality naturally exists and identity flourishes, in which jealousy and sexual exclusivity become beside the point, in which decisions are made by choice, not coercion, and love grows in a climate of freedom."

(p. 243)

One of the reasons given for redefining monogamy is that man has failed to live up to the standard anyway.

"In all societies around the world in which he has been enjoined to become sexually monogamous in marriage ... he has failed to live up to that stand-

ard."

(p. 242)

From this the question comes which is inevitable to the sinful reason of man, "Is it the 'unfaithful' human being who is the failure, or is it the standard itself?" The answer to this question given by this book lays the reason for failure at the feet of the "standard." In other words, man can't live up to it anyway, so why bother with it? Redefine everything, and if it can't be redefined throw it out!

Fidelity Reevaluated:

It is made clear that the old concept of fidelity also must be reevaluated and changed.

"Fidelity in the closed marriage is the measure of limited love, diminished growth and conditional trust. This fixation in the end defeats its own purpose, encouraging deception, sowing the seeds of mistrust and limiting the growth of both partners and so of the love between them.

"Fidelity, in its root meaning, denotes allegiance and fealty to a duty or obligation. But love and sex should never be seen in terms of duty or obligation, as they are in closed marriage. They should be seen as experiences to be shared and enjoyed together, as they are in open marriage. Fidelity then is redefined in open marriage, as commitment to your own growth, equal commitment to your partner's growth, and a sharing of the self-discovery accomplished through such growth. It is loyalty and faithfulness to growth, to integrity of self and respect for the other, not to a sexual and psychological bondage to each other.

"In an open marriage, in which each partner is secure in his own identity and trusts in the other, new possibilities for additional relationships exist, and open (as opposed to limited) love can expand to include others. Fidelity does not have to be interpreted within the narrow context of closed

marriage, in which you are suspected of possible infidelity every time you show an interest in someone of the opposite sex other than your mate. In open marriage, you can come to know, enjoy and share comradeship with others of the opposite sex besides your mate. These relationships enhance and augment the marital relationship of the open couple in turn.

"These outside relationships may, of course, include sex. That is completely up to the partners involved. If partners in an open marriage do have outside sexual relationships, it is on the basis of their own internal relationships — that is, because they have experienced mature love, have real trust, and are able to expand themselves, to love and enjoy others and to bring that love and pleasure back into their marriage, without jealousy.

"We are not recommending outside sex, but we are not saying that it should be avoided, either. The choice is entirely up to you, and can be made only upon your own knowledge of the degree to which you have achieved, within your marriage, the trust, identity, and open communication necessary to the eradication of jealousy. Outside sexual experiences when they are in the context of a meaningful relationship may be rewarding and beneficial to an open marriage. But such relationships are not necessarily an integral part of open marriage. It is another option that you may or may not choose to explore. Open marriage is called open for that very reason: the options are there for you to take or leave according to your individual decisions."

(pp. 253-254)

"We believe that if you achieve an open marriage, your marital relationship will be more vital, more fulfilling, and that you will be continually growing and discovering. Under those circumstances it would be only natural that you should wish to expand the circle of your love, to develop additional relationships in an open way, with or without sex. And that additional sharing can in turn make your marriage a still deeper, richer, more vital experience. Once you have achieved a true sharing

within your marriage, there are no limits on its further development."

(pp. 255-256)

NOT A PASSING FAD We find the seeds of this kind of philosophy growing everywhere. Sometimes they crop up where one least expects it. We are convinced that this attitude is not just a passing fad. Satan is giving it his all during his "little season." And we as the called oracles of God must be fully aware of that. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Gal. 6:12).

Indeed, our words setting forth the principles of Holy Writ may sound almost foreign to many — even among those within our Christian fellowship. But let us not be intimidated because our words are like a strange language to some. God's words always sound strange when the ways of sin dominate the scene and one tunes one's ears to Satan's lies rather than to God's eternal verities. Therefore, without apology or shame we need to stand before the world's spokesmen setting forth the God-ordained principles of "closed" marriage, knowing, as did the Psalmist, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:98-99).

In conclusion let us take a cool, refreshing drink from the fountains of God's Truth.

THE FOUNDATION The foundation for marriage was laid at the time of creation when God created man as male and female. They together were the recipients of God's blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:27-28). This intimate relationship was the point of emphasis, as Moses was caused to write: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

It may improve our understanding of these words to

realize that the Hebrew word for cleave means "to adhere, specially firmly, as if with glue, to be glued" (Hebrew & English Lexicon, Gesenius-Tregelles, p. 185). It is to be a union that shall not be unstuck or separated. It rests upon a deep, permanent and unconditional commitment or promise of a man and a woman to one another.

Where this "cleaving" takes place sexual relations further express that oneness that exists. But it must be remembered that the marriage bond is established before God not simply through sexual cohabitation, but through a deep commitment to one another. This life-long, unconditional commitment to one another provides the proper conditions under which sexual cohabitation may be enjoyed under God.

THIS IS LOVE Within this union a deep love, compassionate concern and consideration for each other grows. The Lord Jesus could find no better example to demonstrate the love that ought to exist within the marriage bond than His own love for us. His was a love of total commitment to us. In His life is found a totally unselfish giving of Himself in His compassionate dealings with sinners in this sin-torn world. And finally He gave His life as the supreme sacrifice in totally unconditional love to us.

Therefore, if we want to know what real love is, let us not get side-tracked by the world and its sorry definition of love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). It is that unconditional love that is held up to husband and wife as a pattern which all should strive to emulate as the apostle Paul is inspired to write:

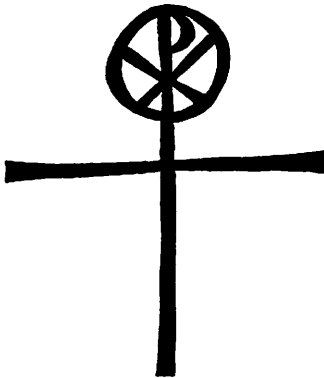
"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... so ought

men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ... For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ... Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:22-25; 28-29; 31; 33).

Except Thou build it, Father,
The house is built in vain;
Except Thou, Savior, bless it,
The joy will turn to pain.
But naught can break the marriage
Of hearts in Thee made one,
And love Thy Spirit hallows
Is endless love begun.

(Lutheran Hymnal 621:4)

L. Dale Redlin



U P D A T I N G R O M A N C A T H O L I C I S M

(Continued)

In our first article on this subject we considered the doctrine of the Church, as it has always been taught by the Roman Catholic Church. We now go on to discuss the authority which the Church of Rome claims for itself. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ exercises the supreme authority over our souls. But at the same time it insists that Christ's authority has been conferred upon the apostles and their rightful successors. And, they say, that would refer to the bishops and priests, in union with the Roman pope. Back in 1870 Vatican Council I declared the authority of the Church in the 10th chapter of its *Declaration on the Church*, as follows:

"The church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of unequals not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach and govern, and to others this power is not given. ... The Church is unlimited and complete in legislative, juridical, and coercive power. ... They govern the Church of God with all fullness of power: by laws which of themselves impose an obligation and are binding in conscience, by judicial decrees, and finally by salutary punishments against those who deserve them, even if they should resist." 1

In the intervening years between Vatican Council I and II the Roman Catholic teachers emphasized these "powers" of the Church. Their authority to teach was based on Matthew 28:19-20. Their authority to sanctify, or give grace, was based on Luke 22:19-20. Their authority to govern was based on Matthew 18:18. The following paragraphs show how this threefold authority is exercised:

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- A. The authority to teach: The Roman Catholic Church teaches what Jesus taught, and she insists that all people accept those teachings. The Pope watches over the world and points out in authoritative letters and decrees the teachings of Christ. Under the Pope are bishops and priests who teach the doctrines of Christ in thousands of churches and schools throughout the world.
- B. The authority to give grace: The Church gives grace to the people through the sacraments. The Catholic Church makes us share in God's life in Baptism. It feeds us with the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion and fortifies us with strength of soul in Confirmation. It grants us forgiveness of sins in Confession, grace to the sick in Extreme Unction, marriage strength in the Sacrament of Matrimony, priestly grace in the Sacrament of Orders.
- C. The authority to govern or make laws: From the very beginning of the Catholic Church the apostles used their power to make laws which would help men lead a good Christian life. Thus the Church makes laws that are not found in the Bible. ... In serious matters the Church punishes us for disobedience. The bishops, the real successors of the Apostles, use this authority which Christ gave His Church to punish notorious sinners. 2

The exercise of this threefold authority led inevitably to many abuses, which were then challenged at the time of the Reformation. The Roman Church was charged with infidelity because many of the clergy had, by their corrupt lives and heretical practices, departed from the plain teachings of Holy Scripture. Moreover, the Reformation denied that which the pope and his church had assumed, that the Holy Spirit had guaranteed to them the exclusive authority of infallibly interpreting all of Scripture, or of pronouncing infallible doctrines not clearly set forth in the written Word of God. Thus this question of authority and its limitations was involved in the very heart of the Reformation controversy. Does the Church have the right to propagate doctrines based

either upon oral traditions or ancient practices, but which are in themselves without any foundation in Scripture?

The Lutheran Reformation acclaimed the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and that the Holy Spirit was its authentic interpreter. The life of the Church had become alienated from Scripture by the errors of its theologians and by the corrupt practices of its priests who were steeped in a vast body of religious tradition. These religious traditions had usurped the place of Biblical authority. The Reformation, therefore, was inevitable, for it was part of God's plan to continue the proclamation of the pure Gospel among men.

VATICAN COUNCIL II The bishops assembled in Vatican Council II divided their attention between the Church and God's Revelation in two separate Decrees. In their deliberations on each of these doctrines, however, they felt obliged to make some reference to those disciples and doctrines not found in the Roman Catholic Church. In the *Constitution on the Church* reference is made to "communities" of faith whose members "believe in Christ, and have been properly baptized," and are therefore "brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church." These believers, according to the *Decree on Ecumenism*, have very desirable "endowments," all of which "derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church." (We discussed this at some length in the previous article of this series.)

In its *Decree on Revelation* Vatican Council II reasserted the dual source of its faith and practice, declaring: "She (the Church) has always regarded the Scriptures together with sacred tradition as the supreme rule of faith, and will ever do so." ³ Furthermore, the same decree emphatically announced: "Both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence." ⁴ This is so, the decree goes on to explain: "For sacred Scripture is the Word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred tradition

hands on in its full purity God's Word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ and the Holy Spirit." Since both Scripture and tradition are said to be equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, the decree comes then to the obvious conclusion that "it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Roman Catholic Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed."

The preservation of all that is revealed through both Scripture and tradition, and the certainty derived from the revelation of God's will and purpose as conveyed by their combined witness, depends upon still another authority, which is likewise said to be established and certified by the Holy Spirit:

"The task of authentically interpreting the word of God whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the (Catholic) Church ... and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed." 5

Moreover, Vatican Council II allowed for no misunderstanding concerning the importance with which the Church regards this doctrine of God's self-revelation:

"It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." 6

It is at this point that the Council's *Decree on Revelation* makes reference to the "separated brethren." They acknowledge that God has revealed Himself for the salvation of men who will hear and believe His Word, John 5:24. But since the Council insisted that God's Word "cannot stand" without traditions and the teaching authority of the Roman Church, those who refuse to submit to the Catholic interpretation cannot be saved effectively or with certainty.

This was clearly demonstrated in Pope Paul's last minute revision of paragraph 21 in the *Decree on Ecumenism*. Early drafts of the decree presented to the bishops for discussion made reference to Christians not in fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church, saying: "At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, they find God in the Holy Scripture, who speaks to them in Christ." Pope Paul VI, exercising his supreme teaching authority and power over the College of Bishops, ordered the word "find" to be replaced with the word "seek." The final draft, therefore, denies that separated brethren actually find Christ or with certainty can testify to their salvation through faith in the sacred Scripture alone. The final draft of the decree, after Pope Paul's correction, admits only that non-Catholics "seek" God in the Scriptures. This, of course, is in direct conflict with the words of the inspired apostle Paul, who wrote to the Christians at Rome: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE The Reformation was rooted in two essential doctrines: 1) the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and 2) every believer is made a priest unto God, and, together with all true disciples, is constituted a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). As a member of this royal priesthood, the believer is assured by Christ that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth ... and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13; cp. II Tim. 1:14). Just as Scripture was written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16-17), so this Word of God is to be interpreted by all believers under the guidance of that same Holy Spirit. Paul writes: "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11).

This does not mean that every person is free to interpret Scripture to his own satisfaction and inclination. Nor does it give approval to the notion that there may be as many interpretations of a passage in Scripture as there are interpreters. No, it simply means that the Holy Spirit who originally inspired the Scriptures is also the only competent and authentic interpreter thereof.

Many times it has happened that people, both in informal gatherings and in church assemblies, have ridiculed what they call contradictory interpretations of some passage in Scripture. They say: One teacher or professor says that this is the meaning of the verse, while another says with equal sincerity that his is the true interpretation. Now, who is right?

Prof. Ewald M. Plass tells how Spalatin had asked Luther which method of study one interested in theology ought to pursue. In 1518 Luther told his friend that while many hands handle Scripture, only folded hands bring success. He wrote:

"That the Holy Scriptures cannot be penetrated by study and talent is most certain. Therefore your first duty is to begin to pray, and to pray to this effect that if it please God to accomplish something for His glory — not for yours or any other person's — He very graciously grant you a true understanding of His words. For no master of the divine words exists except the Author of these words, as He says: 'They shall be all taught of God' (John 6:45). You must, therefore, completely despair of your own industry and ability and rely solely on the inspiration of the Spirit." 7

We notice how Luther recognizes that the person who has the Word of God, but is not "taught of God" by the Holy Spirit, cannot possibly derive benefit from it as a rule and standard of life. Paul writes: "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:12-14).

Luther acknowledged with sorrow that many teachers attempt to interpret Scripture without the help of the Holy Spirit. In a sermon on the Eighth Commandment,

preached in 1517, Luther said that it is not the keenest mind but the humblest heart that is the best workshop for the Holy Spirit. He said:

"Since Holy Writ wants to be dealt with in fear and humility and penetrated more by studying with pious prayer than with keenness of intellect, therefore it is impossible for those who rely only on their intellect and rush into Scripture with dirty feet, like pigs, as though Scripture were merely a sort of human knowledge, not to harm themselves and others whom they instruct. So utterly do they fail to differentiate; and they move about in Scripture without any reverence. That is why so many dare to be teachers. As soon as they have learned grammar, they profess, without any further study, to know theology and say: Oh, well, the Bible is an easy matter! Particularly those do this whose bellies have been distended by the husks of those swine, the philosophers." 8

Nevertheless, the principle stands firm. The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This cannot be changed simply because some have abused it. God has promised to send His Holy Spirit because He wants all people to be taught of God.

When a person accepts the Bible as the sole rule of faith and practice, then that person at the same time is denying that the Holy Spirit was given as a sort of monopoly to any particular class of people, and that His teaching ministry was confined exclusively within assemblies, colleges, conclaves, or a religious capital. This is an important point to be remembered by those of us who acknowledge the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Roman Catholic teachers constantly point to the twelve apostles of Christ and to their exalted successor, the pope, and ask: "Now whom ought you to believe: some preacher, a mere disciple who stands alone, or will you believe these grand apostles who were sent and confirmed by Christ?" But this comparing of the apostles with other preachers who are "mere disciples" is not the question under discussion. Luther wrote in his commentary on Gal. 2:6:

"Let the Apostles be never so great, yea let them be angels from heaven, it is no matter to me. The controversy is not here concerning the excellency of the Apostles, but concerning the Word of God and the truth of the Gospel. This ought to be kept pure and uncorrupt; this ought to be preferred above all things. ... This vice is naturally grafted in us, that we highly esteem the persons and dignity of men, and more regard the same than the Word of God. Contrariwise God will have us to fix our eyes, and to rest wholly upon the Word itself." 9

God gives His Holy Spirit to all of His disciples, in order that they might all be "taught of God." This means, of course, that as His disciples we will want to go to that place through which the Holy Spirit operates: the Scriptures. As Isaiah wrote long ago by inspiration: "Back to revelation and God's Word! If anyone doesn't speak according to this Word, there is no light dawning for him" (Isa. 8:20, according to Beck's *American Translation*). It was in strict accord with this holy command that Jesus, after His resurrection, "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

It was on this basis that the early Christians judged what they heard, even from the lips of the Apostle Paul himself. We are told of the Bereans that "they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). The great apostle himself must submit his teaching, not to the other apostles, however greatly they are esteemed, but to the Holy Scriptures, the infallible rule of faith and practice. It is pure folly to use logic such as this: We approve the Bible; therefore, we are a higher authority than the Scriptures! Yet this is exactly what the Roman Catholic Church contends. But we shall let no man or institution rob us of the right to obey the divine command spoken through Isaiah, as quoted above. Jesus pronounces His blessing on those who "hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). And let none of us forget those other words of the Savior: "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words,

hath One that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Thus the application of the authority of the Bible to the individual Christian is also a work of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to argue for "liberty of conscience" apart from a willing submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Freedom is guaranteed, not by following the dictates of some visible church or even of our conscience, but by our applied knowledge of the truth. Jesus said: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31f.). When we were brought to faith in Jesus Christ, our conscience was purged "from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). The Christian's conscience is now informed and instructed by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

We do well to remember that our Lord Jesus described "the wise man who built his house upon a rock" as one who "heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them" (Matthew 7:24). We do not offer to our people an "easy-going religion," as Roman Catholic teachers shamefully assert. Jesus Himself taught, as we teach with Him, that a person is not to be a hearer only, but also a doer of the Word. The responsibility to "keep the Word" encompasses our whole mind and heart, and can be accomplished only with the help of God's Holy Spirit working within us.

We can think of no better way to close this subject than with another quotation from Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*:

"Wherefore we teach continually that the knowledge of Christ and of faith is no work of man, but simply the gift of God, who as He creates faith, so He keeps it in us. And even as He first gives faith to us through the Word, so afterwards He exercises, increases, strengthens, and makes it perfect in us by the Word. Therefore the highest worship that a man can offer to God, and the very sabbath of sabbaths, is to exercise himself in true godliness, diligently to hear and to read the Word.

Contrariwise, there is nothing more dangerous than to be weary of the Word. He therefore that is cold, and that thinks that he knows enough, and begins little by little to loathe the Word, that man has lost Christ and the Gospel. ... Let every faithful man labour and strive with all diligence to learn and to keep this doctrine." 10

(To be continued)

A. Schulz

FOOTNOTES

1. Neuner & Roos, Rahner, Karl, (ed.), *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1971), pp. 369f.
2. Parish Priests, *Instructions for Non-Catholics* (Des Plaines, Ill.: Fare, Inc., 1969), p. 59.
3. *Decree on Revelation*, Chap. VI, par. 21.
4. *Ibid.*, Chap. I, par. 9.
5. *Ibid.*, Chap. II, par. 10.
6. *Ibid.*, Chap. II, par. 10.
7. Plass, Prof. E. M., *What Luther Says*, Vol. I, p. 7; quoted from St. L. Ed. XVIII: 1977f.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 78; St. L. Ed. III: 1328.
9. Luther, Martin, *Commentary on Galatians*, St. L. Ed. IX: 132f.
10. *Ibid.*, St. L. Ed. IX: 95f.

