

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

I Timothy 4:15

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CONTENTS

APPLYING THE CHRISTMAS EVIDENCE	2
R. E. Wehrwein	
UPDATING ROMAN CATHOLICISM (Continued)	10
A. Schulz	
A SERMON FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE (Matt. 21:28-32)	21
R. E. Wehrwein	
CHAPEL ADDRESS AT ILC (Matt. 24:15-18)	29
C. Kuehne	
PANORAMA: ONE MAN'S VIEW, OR HOW <u>WELS</u> SEES US?	32
John Lau	
REVIEWS: NEW AIDS FOR GREEK TESTAMENT STUDENTS	42
C. Kuehne	

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APPLYING THE CHRISTMAS EVIDENCE

Unusual though it may perhaps be to select an Old Testament text as the basis for considering the application of Christmas evidence, there are good reasons for such a selection. The grace and love of God for sinners are set forth clearly and beautifully throughout the entire Old Testament, just as in the New Testament. We know that the idea that the Old Testament shows us only the severity and judgment of God, containing only law, and that only the New Testament brings the real messages of comfort, is dead wrong.

We refer you to Judges 13:17-23:

And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor? And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

This particular section from the book of Judges is beautifully designed to sum up many of our attitudes and feelings at Christmas. It contains within itself all the elements that lead to a proper celebration of Christmas; its message will imprint upon our hearts a true

Christmas spirit. By showing how Manoah's wife applied the evidence, it teaches us also to APPLY THE CHRISTMAS EVIDENCE. And the evidence shows conclusively that God is gracious to us.

I.

What, then, are the elements described in the text, which also express our thoughts at Christmas? First, there is fear. Fear at Christmas? Yes, fear at Christmas. Not that fear is the desirable thing; sad to say, it is the normal thing. The nature of the sinner is to be fearful, distrustful, suspicious, wary, on his guard. For every sinner has much to conceal. So it was with Manoah and his wife. We read that the angel did some remarkable things as they looked on in wonder. Then the angel ascended in the flame of the altar. Overcome by this demonstration of heavenly things, they fell to the ground. This overwhelming display was too much for them.

Nor is that all. Previously Manoah had thought that this angel was one of the created beings of God who sometimes appeared to men in visible form. But then a sudden realization dawned upon him. This was not an ordinary angel; this was the angel of the Lord: that is, a manifestation of the Son of God Himself, before He assumed human flesh and blood at His incarnation. A proper translation of verse 21 would be: "Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord." Also, in verse 18, the word translated by the KJV "secret" could be translated: "incomprehensible!", "wonderful!"

That explains Manoah's reaction: "And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God." For he realized that he had seen a vision of God in this specific form: the angel of the Lord. Who, Manoah thought to himself, can see such a vision and go on living? I am a sinner; I will have to die. Fear!

Manoah was not the only one. We jump ahead hundreds of years. Things have not changed a great deal. There were still Christians, looking for the promised Savior. They were earnestly waiting for Christmas. The spiritual leaders of the people prayed earnestly in the temple

for the birth of the Desire of Nations. Zacharias was one of them. He was doing his duty in the temple, offering incense, praying, praying for Christmas. But then, fear! For the angel Gabriel was standing before him — a sudden manifestation of the supernatural, the heavenly. And not only fear, but worse than that: unbelief. Fear is the natural reaction of the sinner; could Zacharias help himself? The startled Mary reacted in a similar way, and the angel's immediate response to her was: "Fear not." Mary, too, who was looking for Christmas, showed fear. And ourselves? What would we do if an angel suddenly confronted us at the altar or in the pulpit? We would be afraid. We would be afraid to have that which is heavenly confront us so directly. We, too, would need that comforting word: "Fear not," even though it is Christmas.

When we think about it, we know that no angel could possibly have bad news for us. The angel did not have bad news for Manoah; he did not have bad news for Zacharias; he did not have bad news for Mary. And even if an angel were to bring bad news, even if an angel were to bring us any message other than the good news of the birth of a Savior and forgiveness of sins through Him, that still would not harm us a bit. It would only be so much the worse for the angel. We could confidently hurl curses at such an angel. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," (Gal. 1:8).

Why, then, do we have this problem of fear? Because as sinners we have made a separation between ourselves and God. What contact can there be between sin and holiness, between purity and impurity? Therefore we sinners must cower and shrink from exposure to the pure and the heavenly.

Even at Christmas, then, when we know that we're looking for the grace of God, there remains a lurking suspicion. It is hard to believe how thoroughly God has cleansed us. It is not automatic that we are joyful at the presence of God among us in the person of Jesus Christ. "But who may abide the day of his coming?" (Mal-

achi 3:2). Darkness and sin are attached to us and give rise to suspicion and mistrust. Instinctively we are afraid; we want to hide; we want to conceal our sins. We shrink from the contact. It is too good to be true that this Jesus, from heaven, will come with no other words to us than these: "Fear not." Fear not: I am not hunting out your sins; I am wiping them out. I am not here to point out your sins on the blackboard; I am here to erase them so that neither you nor I will ever be able to see them again.

To that we must cling. Yet the days will come when some sin or sins will disturb us greatly, and we will cry out with Peter to Jesus: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," (Luke 5:8). The old fears and suspicions will keep raising their ugly heads, and we will discern God's anger toward us rather than His love. There will be severe blows in our lives, and heavy sorrows, so that we may find ourselves crying out somewhat as Manoah did: "The Lord is trying to put me to death."

It is then that we will need to take a hard look at the evidence, the Christmas evidence. To the distressed outcry of Manoah, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God," comes the very careful and reasoned reply of his wife, reassuring him on the basis of the evidence. Such evidence will be needed to overcome our fears.

II.

It cannot be that the Lord wants to kill us. First of all, He received a burnt offering and a meat offering from us. "So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord." That surely is a sign of God's grace. How is it possible for God to receive anything from men? It is God Who made and Who owns all things; He it is Who gives to all life and breath and all things. Again, how is it possible for the holy God to receive anything at all from the hand of sinful men? Is that not a contradiction? Must not God in anger reject anything which men might want to give Him? Yet, God received an offering from Manoah and his wife, and the wife correctly took this as evidence of a gracious disposition. God had restored the relationship

between Himself and men; he was willing even to receive offerings from the hand of men.

We have the same evidence which Manóah's wife had, and we are entitled to come to the same conclusion. Throughout the years God has accepted our offerings of praise to His name. He has been pleased to receive and to use our contributions of money and time and talents and efforts which we dedicate to His service and to the glory of His name. What could be more remarkable than that? God will receive that which we humbly and thankfully place before Him. What joy that must give us! It is a sure proof that God is not angry with us, but loves us. To the degree, then, that we bring our hearts before the almighty God and see the Creator of heaven and earth receive our offerings, to that degree we have clear evidence that God stands in a loving relationship to us. And to the degree that we hold back, to that degree we are missing out on being eyewitnesses of this comfort, that God gladly receives the offerings of those whom He has restored, through Christ, to the status of His sons and daughters. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands."

III.

But there is more evidence which shows conclusively that God is gracious to us sinners, more evidence which we can use with confidence to overcome our fears. Manóah's wife continued: "Neither would he have showed us all these things." Manóah and his wife had been promised a child, Samson. Then Manóah prayed earnestly to God to find out more about this and to ascertain more exactly the will of God concerning this child's life and upbringing. Without some intervention from God, Manóah and his wife were at a loss as to how to proceed. This prayer was answered, and the response of God is further described: "The angel of the Lord did wondrously." Manóah and his wife were treated to a remarkable vision. "For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar." Such remarkable things God would never have shown to sinners, if it were in His

mind to kill them. Such remarkable things He would never have done, unless these people were very precious and important to Him, part of His loving, saving purposes of grace.

We, too, at Christmas must echo the statement of Manoah's wife: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us all these things." As Manoah was perplexed, we, too, are deeply perplexed by the spiritual problem of sin. It is out of control, as a raging forest fire. We sigh deeply. "For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me," (Psalm 38:4). God must intervene. He must show us things at Christmas, all these beautiful things. We simply sit and watch, as He shows. Just as the angel directed the shepherds to the Child in Bethlehem, so God takes us there and shows us remarkable things. There is the little Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in the humblest of circumstances. But in this Child He is showing us GOD WITH US. The Child is God. In Him, we are told in Colossians 2:9, dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Where has any of us seen anything so remarkable? God bridges the gap between Himself and us.

There is more. For God points us ahead, still showing us remarkable things, snapshots of what is to come. This Child, grown to adulthood, begins His public ministry in Israel. With our eternal fate at stake, He does battle with the devil in the wilderness and wins the victory. This same Jesus heals the sick and raises the dead. A flash of His glory is shown us at the Transfiguration. Finally, on the cross, we are shown this Man enduring the punishment for our sins. It is an unforgettable scene, that cross on Calvary. And then we are shown an empty tomb, so that our tomb, too, might one day be empty; and we are shown Christ's ascension into heaven, that we, too, might one day ascend into heaven. All these scenes pass before our eyes on Christmas Day, and the commentary in each case is this: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us all these things." Lay hold on the Christmas evidence; apply it. It shows conclusively that God is gracious to us.

IV.

The final piece of evidence is this: "Nor would [He] as at this time have told us such things as these." The angel not only showed; he also told. The very fact that God through the angel of the Lord had talked to Manoah and his wife was evidence of His kind and friendly disposition toward them. If one person is angry with another, perhaps he will not talk to him. But, as Manoah's wife pointed out, God had communicated with them, and that is a sure sign of His favor. Furthermore, He had told them wonderful things.

We also say: if God were pleased to kill us, He would not have told us such things as these. For not only has God showed us many things about Christ, but He has also accompanied all of it with detailed explanations, so that we might not miss the meaning. This, too, is clear evidence of God's grace for us at Christmas. How absurd it is to think that God should so carefully set down His words for us in the Bible and preserve this precious Bible for thousands of years, if there were still even some slight remnant of hard feeling or ill will in His heart toward us.

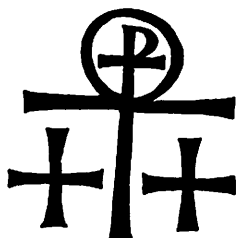
What is the divine explanation? "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men!" — Peace, through the forgiveness of sins. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," (Is. 45:22). "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," (II Cor. 8:9). "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," (I John 3:8). "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification," (Rom. 4:25). "It is finished," (Jn. 19:30). "But now is Christ risen from the dead," (I Cor. 15:20). "I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there ye may be also," (Jn. 14:2-3). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28).

Manoah was not really wrong. "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." That must be our thought as

sinners. But Manoah's wife was also right, and her answer was higher. She had the comfort of God to replace our fears as sinners. She had the evidence. And she had the last word. Manoah's wife to Manoah is the Gospel replacing the law, God's comfort replacing our fears. And in God's arrangement of things, it is the Gospel which has the last word.

May we learn to apply the evidence as did Manoah's wife, thus putting our fears, whatever they might be, to rest. May we deal with ourselves and with others as Manoah's wife did with Manoah. To those, including ourselves, who tremble, saying, "I will surely die," let us bring this solid answer: Wait! The evidence shows otherwise: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

R. E. Wehrwein



UPDATING ROMAN CATHOLICISM

PRIESTS

(Continued)

We cannot think of the Roman Catholic Church without thinking of priests. The members of the clergy in the local congregations are called "priests." We do well to bear in mind that there is good reason for them to bear this title. They are said to continue the priestly office of which we hear so much in the Old Testament, and in particular that office which Christ is said to have left behind Him when He ascended from earth into heaven. Let us make use of this opportunity to review what all was involved in the Old Testament priesthood, and see how a priesthood fits into the picture since our Lord's ascension into heaven.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

The Hebrew word for priest is *Cohen* (כֹּהֵן). There is no agreement as to the root meaning of this word. In Exodus 19:22 it is used of one who may "draw near" to the Divine Presence, while others remain afar off. Accordingly, it is applied, for the most part, to the sons of Aaron, who alone were authorized to offer sacrifices. In some passages it takes a wider range. In Genesis 14:18 it is applied to Melchizedek; in Genesis 41:45 to Potipherah, the Egyptian priest of On; in Exodus 2:16 to the priest of Midian; and in the Exodus 19:22 passage just cited, to those who discharged priestly functions in Israel before the appointment of Aaron and his sons. Another passage which many have puzzled over is II Samuel 8:18, where the sons of David are described as priests (*Cohanim*). The Septuagint translates with the word ἀρχαὶ = princes of the court. Our King James Version translates: "chief rulers." Luther follows the Hebrew strictly and translates it "Priester." Beck's American Translation here follows Luther's lead. David and his sons were, perhaps, admitted to an honorary priesthood. It was a special badge of the priest-

hood to wear a linen ephod (I Sam. 22:18). David wore such a linen ephod in a procession (II Sam. 6:14), and evidently did so with no deviation from the law.

The Old Testament priesthood was established in order that priests might offer up prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the people. We know of no such priesthood during the time of the patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob performed the priestly acts of offering sacrifices and "drawing near" to the Lord. Only in the case of Melchizedek do we meet with the word *Cohen* earlier than the time of Abraham. The Epistle to the Hebrews indicates that there were none who preceded or followed Melchizedek in that office (Hebrews 7). At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, there still was no priestly caste. So, for about the first 2500 years of this world's existence, God saw no need to establish a priesthood to mediate between Him and sinful mankind. In fact, just before God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20), He called Moses and said: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel," (Ex. 19:6). This fact of the priesthood of the entire nation of Israel was brought out in one of their great festivals, the Passover, when the Lord expressly ordered that every housefather among the children of Israel was to slaughter the Passover Lamb with his own hand. This was done, not only at the first celebration in Egypt, but throughout the history of the people. Every householder was a priest at the Feast of Passover, thus typifying the relation which was to exist between God and His people.

After Aaron and his sons became priests, a multitude of regulations guided them through every possible facet of their work and daily life. Collectively, these rules constituted a real education, by which the power of distinguishing between things holy and profane, between good and evil, was awakened and developed (Ezek. 44:23). The priest was always to be at hand to do the priest's office. A worshipper might come at any time. If he was rich and brought a bullock, it was the priest's duty to slay the victim, to place the wood upon the altar, to light the fire, and to sprinkle the altar with

the blood (Lev. 1:5ff.). If he was poor and brought a pigeon, the priest was to wring its neck (Lev. 1:15). After the birth of every child, the mother was to come with her sacrifice of turtle-doves or pigeons (Lev. 12:6; Luke 2:22-24). Lepers were to submit themselves to the priest's inspection, that he might judge whether they were clean or unclean, and when they were healed perform for them the ritual of purification (Lev. 13 and 14; Mark 1:44). Thus they acted as mediators for those who were laboring under the sense of guilt, offering up sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of others. The three great festivals of the year were, however, their seasons of busiest employment. The pilgrims who came up by tens of thousands to keep the feast all came with their sacrifices and oblations. The work at such times was, at least on occasion, beyond the strength of the priests in attendance, and the Levites had to be called in to help them (II Chron 29:34 and 35:14). They were to bless the people at every solemn meeting. In order that this part of their office might never fall into disuse, a special formula of benediction was provided (Num. 6:22-27).

The office of the priesthood thus came into existence after the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. This giving of the Law is described in Exodus 20ff. It is in Exodus 28ff. that Aaron and his sons were separated for the priesthood. We can readily appreciate the reason for this. Now that the Law had been put down in writing, the people would be impressed more than ever with their sinfulness. They would feel their great unworthiness to come into the presence of their Lord. They would feel the need of a go-between who might speak on their behalf. It was the Law that made the priesthood necessary, with all of the sacrifices to be offered up and prayers for mercy to be spoken.

From this point on in the Old Testament, the priests had a prominent part. We think of them in connection with the daily march of the host of Israel (Num. 10:8), in the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 3:14-15), in the destruction of Jericho (Josh 6:12-16). Under Eli's sons, the priesthood sank into the lowest depths of corruption. The capture of the Ark, the removal of the Tabernacle

from Shiloh, no doubt threw everything into confusion, with the result that Samuel, a Levite, but not within the priestly family, offered sacrifices and "came near" to the Lord. The time of Samuel was doubtless a time of reformation for the priesthood, as well as for the people in general. The reign of Saul was a time of suffering for them. He showed an indication to usurp the priest's office (I Sam. 13:9). The massacre of the priests at Nob showed how insecure their lives were against any savage impulse (I Sam. 22:17-18). They could only wait in silence for the coming of a deliverer in the person of David. When the death of Saul set them free, they came in large numbers to the camp of David, prepared apparently not only to testify to their allegiance, but also to support him, armed for battle, against all rivals (I Chron. 12:27). The Old Testament priesthood reached its pinnacle of glory during the reigns of David and Solomon.

Thereafter the priestly office again began to deteriorate. Jeremiah speaks of priests who shared in the worship of Baal (Jer. 2:8). They even worshipped the sun, moon, and stars (Jer. 8:1-2). In the very Temple itself they ministered before their idols, and allowed others who were uncircumcized to join them (Ezek. 44:7, 12). They ate of unclean things and polluted the Sabbaths. As could be expected, this departure from the true idea of the priesthood resulted in a general degradation. Isaiah spoke of them as being drunkards (Is. 28:7) and dumb dogs (Is. 56:10-12). The discipline of the Captivity was not without its fruits. While most priests were content to remain in the land of their exile, those who did return were active in the work of restoration. Under Ezra they submitted to the stern duty of repudiating their heathen wives (Ezra 10:18-19). Although the Levites were more prominent, they took part in the instruction of the people (Neh. 8:9-13). As time went on, the work of the priesthood again was made the instrument of covetousness. The priests at the time of Malachi required payment for every ministerial act, and would not even "shut the doors" or "kindle fire" without charging for it (Mal. 1:10). They "corrupted the covenant of Levi" (Mal. 2:8). Again they lost their influence, and became "contemptible and base before all the

people" (Mal. 2:9).

In the Old Testament, the members of the priestly office were divided into 24 orders, or courses (I Chron. 24:1-19; cf. II Chron. 23:8). Each course was to serve in rotation for one week, while additional assignments were decided by lot. This practice was continued in the New Testament, as we see in the case of Zacharias (Luke 1:5). The heads of these courses, together with those who had held the high-priesthood, were the "chief priests," and took their places in the Sanhedrin. Most of these were poor and despised, not holding the respect or affection of the people. The picture of cowardly selfishness in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:31) can hardly be thought of as other than typical for priests of that time. The priests were theological-ly divided into contending sects. One of these, the Sadduceean, was popular among the wealthier and more powerful members. The chief priests in the Gospels and the Book of Acts seemed to be consistent Sadducees who persecuted the followers of Jesus because they preached the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:1-6 and 5:17-18). On the other hand, many priests must have been free from Sadduceean prejudices, and became Christians (Acts 6:7). It is not strange that those who do not welcome the truth of God's Word, which would have raised them to a higher life, should then sink lower and lower into an ignorant and ferocious fanaticism. Many strange contrasts meet us in the last half-century of the Temple. We see the priesthood going through solemn sacrificial rites and joining in the noblest hymns, raising a fierce clamor at anything which seemed to them a profaning of the sanctuary; but then rushing to dash out the brains of some bold and incautious intruder, or even one of their own number who might enter while under some ceremonial defilement. Our readers would find it interesting and profitable to read in Josephus about the role of the priests during the fall of Jerusalem.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

In the New Testament we turn especially to the Epistle to the Hebrews for guidance in this matter of a priesthood. Here we learn that Jesus Christ took upon Himself, in the fullest sense of the word, the of-

fice of High Priest. "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:26-27). So, all of the sacrifices offered up in the Old Testament were a picture of the one great sacrifice which Christ would offer up, when He sacrificed Himself on the cross. This one great sacrifice of the blood of the Son of God for sin made all further sacrifices for sin unnecessary. Since no more sacrifices were needed, there was no longer need for the priestly office. Peter who, according to errant Roman Catholic dogma, was the first pope, nevertheless writes to Christians in general: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light " (I Peter 2:9). John echoes the same thought: "Jesus Christ ... hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6). Paul speaks of the kind of sacrifices which we as priests are now to offer up: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). Just as the priests of the Old Testament were consecrated to draw near unto God's presence, the holy writer now says of us: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22). We have been washed and sprinkled in a much better way than were the sons of Aaron. In short, since the coming of Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross, we no longer need an office of the priesthood.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

The Roman Catholic Church does not agree that Christ's one sacrifice of Himself on the cross was sufficient to atone for all the sins of all

people. Therefore it also does not agree that a priesthood is unnecessary in the New Testament Church. They believe that sacrifices for sin are still necessary, and therefore priests are still necessary to offer them up. Hence their clergy are called "priests," and Ordination to the priesthood is one of their seven sacraments. They refer to the celebration of the Lord's Supper as the "Sacrifice of the Mass," in which the priest offers up an unbloody sacrifice for sin. The Council of Trent declared in 1563:

If anyone says that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood, or that there is no power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord and of forgiving and retaining sins, but only the office and bare ministry of preaching the Gospel; or that those who do not preach are not priests at all, let him be anathema.¹

Thus the pope condemns the Bible doctrine that the office of the ministry is a service of proclaiming the Gospel. He makes his priests to be the source of all grace, and commits great blasphemy when he teaches people to trust in the work of man, and not in God's work in Christ Jesus.

It is evident that Vatican Council II reaffirmed the ancient errors of the Roman Catholic Church in this regard. It stated:

It is clear by the means of imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His Person.²

Thus the Roman Catholic priest acts as an essential mediator between the people and God. As such, he becomes the indispensable link between the individual and his God. The Roman Church admits that a person may in extraordinary situations address himself to God directly with-

out the help of a priest, but the ordinary practice of his Christian faith is impossible apart from the mediating priest. Yet Scripture states so plainly that there is only "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5-6). Realizing that some explanation was called for, in calling their priests "mediators," Bishop Fulton J. Sheen offers the following explanation:

After all, was the Truth He taught to be limited to His time, and His generation? Was His power to be confined to those who saw His hands? Was His sanctification to be narrowed to those who climbed Calvary? That men of His time might have no advantage over us, He gave to this new Body, or *ecclesia*, His Truth, His Power, and His Sanctification. The Apostles, we said, were the nucleus of this new *ecclesia* or body. Through them and their successors He would still continue to teach, to govern, and to sanctify.

In the days of His earthly life, Christ's life and love and power were manifested under the limited and localized form of lips, hands and feet; now, after His resurrection and ascension, they are manifested through other human natures, whom He has compacted and united to Himself in His New Body, or *ecclesia*.

Whenever, therefore, you confess your sins to a priest and hear the words: "I absolve you from your sins," you may rightly protest: "How can man forgive sins? the answer is: "Man cannot forgive sins, but God can forgive sins through man." The Priest, notice the capital letter, is not only the representative of God, He is also the representative of the *ecclesia*, the Community, through which God's pardon is communicated to man.

If every contact you would have had with Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth would have been through His human nature, you may not expect now to have another contact with Him except through other human natures who represent His *ecclesia*.³

Another writer speaks of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, whereby the priest is set apart from ordinary people and is dedicated to the service of the church, as follows:

The principal effect of this symbol is a permanent share in the priesthood of Christ, which the Church expresses by the words: indelible mark. This mark makes him, in the strict sense of the word, a priest. That which was begun in baptism and confirmation is now completed: his permanent dedication to Christ has developed into a participation in His priestly power, in His power as Mediator between God and man, in His priestly task in general. Christ continues to exercise His mediation visibly through him.⁴

While Vatican Council II did speak of the priesthood of all believers, it gave to the ordained clergy a separate and distinct status within the Church:

The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. ... Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.⁵

We note this claim that there is an essential difference between the laity and the ordained clergy, both in the person and priestly power or office. By receiving Holy Orders, the clergy-priests are said to exercise a ministerial power and office not shared by the believer-priests. Therefore the laity cannot perform the priestly functions apart from the ordained clergy:

Though all the faithful can be baptized, the priest alone can complete the building up of the Body of Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.⁶

Luther effectively refuted the Roman dogma of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and showed how it undermined

the cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion: justification by faith in the atoning work of Christ. The repudiation of ordination as a sacrament demolished the caste system of clericalism, and provided a sound basis for the priesthood of all believers, since, according to Luther, ordination is simply a rite of the Church by which a minister is installed to discharge a particular office. He receives no indelible character, is not exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts, and is not empowered by ordination to perform the other sacraments. At this point, what the priest does any Christian may do, if called by the congregation, because all Christians are priests.

Our *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* puts it very well:

The adversaries understand priesthood not of the ministry of the Word, and administering the Sacraments to others, but they understand it as referring to sacrifice; as though in the New Testament there ought to be a priesthood like the Levitical, to sacrifice for the people, and merit the remission of sins for others. We teach that the sacrifice of Christ dying on the cross has been sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and that there is no need, besides, of other sacrifices, as though this were not sufficient for our sins. Men, accordingly, are justified not because of any other sacrifices, but because of this one sacrifice of Christ, if they believe that they have been redeemed by this sacrifice. They are accordingly called priests, not in order to make any sacrifices for the people as in the Law, so that by these they may merit remission of sins for the people; but they are called to teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments to the people. Nor do we have another priesthood like the Levitical, as the Epistle to the Hebrews sufficiently shows.⁷

How very thankful we are, that we in the Church of the New Testament have been rescued from the Roman dogma of "priesthood," and all that results from it. By the blessing of God, we cherish in our midst the Scriptural

doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, with all that this comprehends. How wonderful that we no longer need the services of a priest to offer sacrifices for our sins, but find full satisfaction for sin in our Savior's sacrifice on the cross. How wonderful that we are no longer compelled to confess our sins to a priest and hear from him what we must do to atone for those sins, for we may now in our innermost hearts confess our sins to the Savior Himself, being assured: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). With John, we sing praises "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:5-6). Yes, we even look forward to the day when we can join in with all the inhabitants of heaven in singing the new song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

A. Schulz

FOOTNOTES

1. *Canons & Decrees of the Council of Trent*, (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), pp. 162f., Session 23, Canon 1.
2. *Decree on the Church*, par. 21.
3. Sheen, Bishop Fulton, *Preface to Religion*, (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1962), pp. 85-89.
4. Greenwood, Rev. John, *A Handbook of the Catholic Faith*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Co., Inc.), p. 322.
5. *Decree on the Church*, par. 10.
6. *Ibid.*, par. 13.
7. *Concordia Triglotta, Apology of Augsburg Confession*, Art. XII, p. 311.

A SERMON FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE

TEXT: Matthew 21:28-32

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

OF THE TWO RESPONSES:

The quick one may be superficial, hypocritical.
The belated one may be solid, lasting.

WHICH SUGGESTS TO US:

Not so much a host of resolutions for the new year,
As a heart of repentance for the old year.

Fellow-redeemed in Christ:

The approach of a new year is a signal for many people to formulate a host of New Year's resolutions. That is perhaps not such a bad idea, if the resolutions are good resolutions. But if they are good resolutions, why should one wait until the new year to make them? Shouldn't one constantly strive to put into practice that which he knows to be right? Shouldn't there be steady, long-range effort in this, rather than the impetuous, on-the-surface, flash-in-the-pan burst of zeal and resolution we often see at this time?

Our text sheds light on this whole matter of resolutions and of the spirit in which we approach the new year as Christians. Thus Scripture again fulfills our

expectations of supplying an appropriate message and divine guidance for every occasion of this life, not excluding the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one. The text first pictures to us two responses: a quick and hasty one which was correct, but was not carried out; an incorrect one which was followed belatedly by correct action.

First, let us consider the setting of our text. The chief priests and elders had just asked Jesus where He got His authority. Jesus responded by asking them whether the baptism of John was of heaven or of men. By that He meant to ask: Was John the Baptist a man sent by God, a man carrying out a divine commission, a man with divine authority behind him? Or was he merely a self-server, a crusader with his own program to carry out, a man who pushed himself forward but who had no divine authority behind him? By asking this question, Jesus touched the consciences of these spiritual leaders of Israel. The chief priests and elders were stumped. They had rejected the ministry and baptism of John. But they were afraid to say that his authority was of men only, since all the people regarded him as a great prophet. If they said John's authority was from heaven, they would be condemning themselves out of their own mouth. For that reason, they answered Jesus and said: "We cannot tell."

I.

Then came the response of Jesus: "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons." The man here is God. The two sons represent the totality of the Jewish people: the publicans and sinners, on the one hand, and the scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders, on the other hand. The request of the man that his sons work in his vineyard is the invitation of God to the people of Israel to receive the salvation prepared for them: to repent of their sins, believe in Jesus, and thus enter into the kingdom of God. That really was the call of God to Israel all through their history, all through the Old Testament Scriptures. Put away your idols. Put away your trust in man. Come and worship Me alone as God. Come and serve Me with hearts purified by faith in My forgiveness. Give your lives to Me. Come, and work in My vineyard.

According to God's ordinance at that time, this meant, first of all, that the people were to give heed to the preaching of John the Baptist. For he was a messenger of God, with nothing less than divine authority for his preaching and for his baptism. God did send him with the preaching of repentance to prepare the way for Jesus. He also equipped John with a baptism, a saving baptism that washed away sins, as those whose hearts were touched by John's preaching came forward, confessing their sins, to receive that baptism.

The father came to the first son with the request: "Son," (he addresses him affectionately, and makes this earnest request and call) "go work today in my vineyard." The answer is abrupt and rude, not graced by any sign of respect or politeness. "I will not."

By this answer, the first son represents the publicans and sinners among the Jews. They lived obviously sinful lives in rejection of the outstretched hand and earnest appeal of their heavenly Father. Their conduct and life was a rude rejection of the fatherly call: "Son, go work today in my vineyard." They made no bones about it; they made no attempt to conceal their contempt. We would rather have our sins, comes their rough reply, than God's grace. We have no desire to be part of the Father's kingdom. Away with this; don't insult me in such a way. It was the typical response of a proud, rebellious, young man: the perfect picture of unashamed sinners' reaction against their God's call to serve.

But our text says: "But afterward he repented and went." This still refers to the despised tax-collectors, harlots, adulterers. They had a change of heart. This is explained farther on in our text: "But the publicans and harlots believed him" — they believed John the Baptist. Just as the son, thinking it over and repenting, told himself that he must still go and obey the request of his father, so also many of the great sinners among the Jews, coming to John the Baptist, said: "What shall we do?" We read of this in Luke 3:12: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?" And John told them. They came, confessing their sins, and were baptized by John. Thereby they were now, at length, following the plan and call of

their God. Luke 7:29: "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John."

And the second son? The father came to him with the same call. There is a sharp contrast expressed between the answer of this second son and the answer of the first. This one responds most politely, and with an immediate promise. We can almost see him going already to the vineyard. "I go, sir."

This son represents the scribes and Pharisees, in general the spiritual leaders of Israel. They were ready with immediate and loud declarations of commitment to their God. They were happy, apparently, to fulfill their roles as leaders of the people, quick to do their duty as priests, teachers, students of the Old Testament. They were ready to give tithes of all that they had, ready to fast, ready to pray. They were almost insane, we would say, in their dedication to the outward form of the law of Moses, even adding to that law countless minute, man-made regulations and ordinances of all kinds. What dedication, we are tempted to say, what zeal, what incredible willingness to serve God! What self-denial! And they were looking also for their Messiah. Was this not all totally in tune with the Father's will? So it would seem.

"And went not!" All the seeming willingness and zeal of this second son are thereby immediately shown to be the sheerest hypocrisy. What further comment is needed?

That accurately describes the Jewish leaders, in spite of all their outward "I go, sir." It was empty display, outward show. It was backed up by exactly nothing. It was merely a concern for their own image among men. It was to win a name for themselves. When the Father's call into the vineyard of His kingdom was realized in the preaching of John the Baptist, the scribes and Pharisees "went not." They would not accept this heaven-sent messenger. They would not hearken unto his preaching. They rejected his baptism. Luke 7:30: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God

against themselves, being not baptized of him."

And thus we learn that, OF THE TWO RESPONSES, THE QUICK ONE MAY BE SUPERFICIAL, HYPOCRITICAL. THE BELATED ONE MAY BE SOLID, LASTING.

That is of widespread application in our spiritual lives. It is, of course, immediately seen that this applies to New Year's resolutions. The quick promise — starting now, I will begin doing this or that, improving in this way and that way — may be quite superficial. It may have nothing to back it up, no long-range resolve. It may be a sop tossed to the fashion of the times, a gesture to gain respectability and the reputation for a desire to improve oneself. In one way or another, many such resolutions closely resemble the quick and polite "I go, sir," of the second son in our text. And it is then no surprise that many of these same resolutions get no farther than the next three words of our text: "and went not."

But above all, we want to apply this to any and all spiritual responses and resolutions we might make. The quick response may be superficial. Christians, stirred up briefly in one way or another, are at times moved to make spiritual resolutions. I will read my Bible more regularly. I will pray regularly. I will make an effort to be more attentive during worship services. I will endeavor to testify to my faith in Jesus by how I live my daily life. I will improve my relations with others. I will be more diligent in teaching my children. I will play a more active role in church activities. Perhaps the classic example is the oft-repeated promise of temporarily shamed parishioners to their pastor that they will make it to church more regularly in the future. But little or nothing happens, which really ought to surprise no one, for the resolution is superficial.

I will do this; I will do that. But remember the sad example of the second son: "I go, sir," but he went not. In confirmation classes, there may be quick answers. There may be quick responses to a call for volunteers in various congregational projects. But for all that, some of it may be superficial at best, hypocritical

at worst. For the quick answer can be a way of putting on a display or of impressing others. Are our spiritual resolutions to be such?

On the other hand, the belated response may be the correct one, and long-lasting. It is more careful. It is more thoughtful. It is conditioned by recognition of one's weakness. The correct answer may be slower in coming, but after a shaky start, it arrives, and it is solid and sure and lasting. Results follow. Don't we see that often in our spiritual resolutions? The lasting ones are the ones that come the slowest. For they are born in sincerity, and are carefully nourished in honesty and prayer. Care is taken at the outset, lest superficiality and hypocrisy rear their ugly heads and win the day, thus robbing our resolutions of any lasting character and results.

What are we saying? The difference between the two types of resolutions is simply this: REPENTANCE. The first son recognized his sin and repented, and so it is with any spiritual resolutions. The groundwork is laid by repentance. We simply cannot expect to make an instantaneous resolution and carry it out forthwith. Such efforts are usually born of an inflated sense of what we can do; they spring full-blown from pride and are thus doomed to fail before they start. Hence the need of repentance, right from the start — a simple confession that we have failed, are failing, and will fail again and again; a recognition before God, Who knows this far better than we do, that we have no spiritual power automatically to set things right merely by a resolution; a recognition that such a quick and thoughtless response is almost bound to be badly infected with superficiality and hypocrisy, for such is simply the stuff out of which our sinful heart is made, and there is no changing it by our own efforts. Let repentance precede resolutions. Let us seek the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus. Let us carefully and deliberately ask His help in making and carrying out any spiritual resolutions for the new year or for any time. And let us take our time at it.

II.

That is what our text, then, suggests to us on New

Year's eve: NOT SO MUCH A HOST OF RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR, AS A HEART OF REPENTANCE FOR THE OLD YEAR. To carry out this thought properly, we need to refer to the last verses of our text, the divine follow-up and explanation.

Jesus asks the Jewish leaders: "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" They give the obvious answer: though the first son rudely refused at first, and though the second son politely and eagerly responded, yet it was the first son who ended up doing the will of the father. This Jesus now applies to the response of the people of Israel to the preaching of John the Baptist. The publicans and harlots, the despised element among the people, the obvious sinners, those whose lives were a loud "NO" to the father's call, they believed John the Baptist. They did afterward respond to the Father's call. But the elders, on the other hand, believed him not, though he came in the way of righteousness, with the approval of God. You spiritual leaders, Jesus says, are like the second son, who ended up not doing the father's will. Even after the elders had seen the repentance of the publicans and harlots, they still did not repent and believe. Thus their guilt was redoubled. The conclusion is plain: "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Now, our text is unmerciful toward hypocrisy. It exposes the emptiness of the quick answer of the second son. It condemns the pharisee in all of us for giving the quick, hypocritical answer to impress others. Furthermore, it aims a second gun of condemnation at the elders for not repenting, even after seeing the repentance of the publicans. But the text's emphasis is on the supreme importance of repentance for our sins, and this also brings us redoubled comfort.

We have the comfort from this text of seeing the change of heart in the first son, representing all sinners who first say "no" to God. Repenting of their previous course of action, they now do the Father's will, follow His gracious call, and believe the Gospel. That is a word of God to bring us to the same repentance for our past sinful refusals, the same acceptance of what

God brings us in the Gospel, and the same willingness to serve Him with the new heart which He has given us.

But Jesus does not end the matter here. He is not only dealing with this particular class of sinners who first offer outright refusal. He is also concerned about the priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees. He is concerned about that class of sinners who mistakenly come at first with the quick answer, and are thereby entrapped in superficiality and hypocrisy. For the Lord does not abandon them or us in such sins, either. He addresses yet another urgent call to these people in the form of a sharp rebuke: "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." The way is still open for you also to repent, He says. You have the example of these poor publicans and harlots to follow. They have fallen on their knees before Me with the weight of their sins; they have gotten up again with forgiveness, joy, and resolution from above, and with the willingness to serve Me with pure minds and hearts. That same course is open to you. Beware, Jesus says; your greatest sin is in not coming to repentance when so much opportunity is offered.

The leaders in Israel, in general, remained hardened in hypocrisy and impenitence. But let that not darken our hearts. The Lord still extends His invitation to us. He re-emphasizes the possibility of repentance afterward, also in the case of those who were caught giving the quick answer. We, too, are prone to give the quick answer. We, too, have our severe battles with hypocrisy. That is why we want to think this evening, not so much of a host of resolutions for the new year, as, first of all, of a heart of repentance for the old year. Such is the course we follow also, in approaching the Lord's table, awaiting the Word of forgiveness imparted with the body and blood of our Savior. Then the new resolutions will follow — not hasty or man-centered, but solid and lasting, built in the strength of God's grace in Christ. May God grant us hearts of repentance for our sins; may He add a year of spiritual growth through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

R. E. Wehrwein

CHAPEL ADDRESS AT IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE

(Text: Matt. 24:15-18)

Fellow-redeemed in Christ:

A prominent historian once made the observation: "There is one thing that you can learn from history, and that is that people do not learn from history." This is a clever saying, but more than that, it is true! Think of the children of Israel during the days of the judges. If the people had learned from history, the book of Judges would have been a rather short book. But they did not learn, and the same cycle — prosperity, unbelief, troubles, repentance, deliverance — repeated itself over and over again. For as another observant man once put it, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!"

Our text speaks of an event in the past, the destruction of Jerusalem by the invading armies of the Roman general Titus in the year 70 A.D. So terrible and complete a destruction did the Romans inflict upon the rebellious Jews, upon their city and their temple, that the Old Testament Scripture and Christ in our text refer to these invaders as "the abomination of desolation," the detestable thing causing utter devastation!

This history of which our text speaks is much more than a piece of information about the past. It is a fact from which our God would have us learn several important truths. One such truth is that THE LORD CHRIST IS EVEN NOW REIGNING OVER HEAVEN AND EARTH. The verses surrounding our text make it abundantly clear that the destruction of Jerusalem was a sign from God that the Son of man is now exalted to heavenly glory and is ruling over all that is. When we look back in history to that event of 70 A.D., let us be reminded of the fact that

The Head that once was crowned with thorns
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow.

There is a second truth which we can learn from that horrible history of which our text speaks: THE PROPHECIES OF CHRIST NEVER FAIL. During the last part of His earthly ministry Christ told the unbelieving Jews that they, together with their temple and city, would be utterly destroyed. He even gave details concerning the devastation which would take place. No doubt the Jews who heard this prophecy scoffed at it and thought that it would never happen. But 40 years later Christ's every word came into complete fulfilment!

Christ has prophesied, now, concerning the great Judgment coming at the end of the world, and He has given us many details concerning that day of terror. But once again people scoff at the very idea of a final Judgment. But let us learn from the history of Jerusalem's destruction that Christ's prophecies never fail. Why, that very event so many years ago stands in Scripture as a type and picture of Judgment Day itself. You may be certain of this:

The day is surely drawing near
When God's Son, the Anointed,
Shall with great majesty appear
As Judge of all appointed.

But there is a third, and very comforting, truth which we can learn from the history before us: WHOEVER TRUSTS CHRIST'S WORD IS SAVED FROM DEATH. In our text Christ was speaking to His believers. He told them: "When you see the abomination of desolation, the destructive hordes of the enemy, entering into the holy land, then flee from Jerusalem and Judea into the mountains as fast as you can. Don't run back to get your jacket or stop to pick up something from your home, but run for your very lives!" The Christians in Jerusalem remembered these words of Christ and put their confidence in them. And so, 40 years later, not one believer remained in the city and countryside to fall prey to the siege and sword of the enemy. They trusted in Christ's Word, and were saved by that Word from death!

May it be the same with us. Christ reigns in heaven and Judgment Day indeed lies before us, but we need

not be afraid of these facts. For Christ has given us His Word: "Let not your heart be troubled ... I am the resurrection and the life ... Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1; 11:25-26; 14:3) You and I, like those Christians 1900 years ago, have put our trust in these words of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. And therefore we can look forward to Judgment Day, not with fear, but with eager anticipation, as the Lord Himself encourages us: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

"There is one thing that you can learn from history, and that is that people don't learn from history." By God's grace we have become an exception to that rule. For from Scripture, which tells us about the destruction of Jerusalem, we have learned these vital truths for our lives today: 1) The Lord Christ is even now reigning over heaven and earth; 2) The prophecies of Christ never fail; and, most glorious of all, 3) Whoever trusts Christ's Word is saved from death! May God preserve us in such knowledge and faith! Amen.

C. Kuehne



P A N O R A M A

ONE MAN'S VIEW, OR HOW THE WELS SEES US?

Part of the program presented at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WELS) Pastors' Institute in the fall of 1975 consisted of five lectures by Professor Edward C. Fredrich on the subject of "Wisconsin's Interchurch Relations." These lectures have been published in sequence in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (an official theological journal of the WELS), beginning in the April, 1976, issue and concluding in the July, 1977, issue.

A reference was made earlier (Cf. *Journal of Theology*, June, 1977, pp. 18-19) to the fourth lecture in Prof. Fredrich's series. In a review of Prof. Fredrich's Reformation Lectures given at Bethany College, Mankato, Minnesota, October 28-29, 1976, entitled "The Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America," we observed that when the lecturer traced the demise of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod as a true, confessional church body, he omitted any mention of the historical fact that at the same time that the WELS and ELS were considering separation from the LCMS, separations were also taking place within the WELS and ELS, resulting in large part in the formation of the CLC. Prof. Fredrich also failed to give consideration to the CLC as he speculated in his Bethany lectures, wondering where finders of a true Lutheran identity may be found in the future, although he thought that "a most likely place to look for them is the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod." In passing, we noted that in his fourth Mequon lecture, on "The Great Debate with Missouri," Prof. Fredrich had similarly omitted a consideration of the roles played in the controversy by individuals who subsequently formed the CLC.

Since writing our previous review, we have had opportunity to read the last in the series of lectures published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. It is titled "Interchurch Relations in Recent Years," and is found in the July, 1977, issue. The lecture is divided

into two parts: (1) Intersynodical Relations in this Country, and (2) Interchurch Relations in other Countries. We are chiefly interested in Wisconsin's interchurch relations in this country, specifically with the CLC.

Under the heading, "Relations with Former Wisconsin Brethren," Prof. Fredrich traces and summarizes the attempts made by WELS representatives (i.e., its president, the Rev. O. J. Naumann, and members of its Commission on Doctrinal Matters) to meet with representatives of the CLC with the objective of settling the differences between the two church bodies. He declares: "The major group to be considered is the Church of the Lutheran Confession, composed in the main of those who withdrew from Wisconsin because it continued its protesting fellowship with Missouri longer than they were willing to." From our standpoint, that is a casual dismissal of an agonizing, wrenching, heart-breaking act of separation from one's brethren. When the WELS acted in concert, in 1961, to suspend its fellowship relations with LCMS, its members had the comfort of large numbers; it did not have the weight on its members of individual responsibility before the Lord that was felt by the individuals who in earlier years believed that the Word of God compelled them, one by one, to withdraw from their former brethren. It would have been kinder on the part of Prof. Fredrich to have indicated some understanding of the fact that the withdrawers were acting as they believed God's Word instructed them. To put it in terms of their objecting because the majority still wanted to stay in fellowship longer than they wanted to seems to be an attempt to demean. If it were possible to obtain and review the letters of resignation that were submitted to the district presidents of the WELS during the years 1955 to 1959, we do not believe that even one of them would reveal a mere "no longer wanting to" as the cause for such resignation!

It is, no doubt, this failure to acknowledge that those who withdrew did so because of conviction, that explains the surprise evidently felt by Prof. Fredrich and others in the WELS when, after the WELS suspension from LCMS in 1961, the CLC did not immediately return

to the former fold. He puts it this way: "If there were hopes that the 1961 suspension of fellowship with Missouri would spell a speedy reunion of the CLC with its former body, these hopes very quickly proved unfounded. Our body's action in 1961 actually seemed to have the effect of engendering stronger language in CLC writing on the subject." The first official reaction to the WELS 1961 suspension is reported on page III of the Appendix to the minutes of the 2nd Annual Convention of the CLC, August 23-25, 1961. In the report of our committee we read such comments as: "... the recent convention of the Wisconsin Synod passed a resolution of suspension which gives rise to the hope that the membership of that Synod may be seeking to rectify a situation that has caused much grief and concern. Over this possibility we sincerely rejoice. ... We do feel constrained to point out, however, that this suspension of fellowship does not in itself remove the real issues that are involved in our relations with the Wisconsin Synod. ... In the meantime, all of us need to be on guard against a double danger. It would certainly be a mistake to close our minds against the hope referred to above. But it would be just as unwise to conclude that this action of Wisconsin automatically solves any of the issues lying between Wisconsin and ourselves." This report was accepted by the CLC convention, with the addition that we "mention the issues that lie between Wisconsin and ourselves, namely: deviations from the Scriptural doctrine of Church fellowship, and the doctrine of the Clarity and Authority of the Scriptures, as well as instances of violation of the sanctity of the call."

What Prof. Fredrich calls "stronger language" on the part of the CLC has an explanation. Actually, prior to 1961, while the WELS was still sinfully remaining in fellowship relationship with the LCMS, in spite of having already in 1955 unanimously come to the conclusion that the LCMS was causing divisions and offenses (Romans 16:17-18), there would have been little hope of fruitful discussion of the difference in doctrine between the WELS and those who had withdrawn from the WELS and ELS. However, after the WELS had suspended fellowship with the LCMS, and stated that it had done so on the basis of Romans 16:17-18, now such hope might exist. Now, there-

fore, was the time to speak distinctly and forcefully of those issues that lay between us and separated us.

Communication was received from the WELS praesidium asking for our reaction to its 1961 suspension resolutions. An exchange of correspondence between the presidents of the WELS and the CLC revealed an interest on the part of both sides to have full and frank discussions of the issues that lay between the two church bodies. The first meeting to test the waters was held on November 10, 1962. The reaction of the CLC was disappointment that the meeting "failed to reach the objective mutually set, namely a 'frank discussion of all the issues that lie between us.'" (Cf. *Proceedings* of the 4th Annual CLC Convention, Marquette, Michigan, August 8-13, 1963.) It was also reported that President Naumann of the WELS had subsequently complained that the CLC representatives were misrepresenting the WELS position on the matters in controversy. In later correspondence, President Naumann admitted to a careless use of the term "misrepresent," and acknowledged that he had meant to say, rather, that the CLC representatives had misunderstood the WELS position. After commenting on his having checked the word "misrepresent" in the dictionary, President Naumann wrote: "My intention had been to convey the thought that our 1961 Suspension Resolutions had been misunderstood [Emphasis added] and thus quite naturally and logically set forth in discussion and in writing in keeping with that misunderstanding. I had no intention whatever of impugning motives and I write this letter to place this fact on record." (Cf. *Proceedings*, 5th Annual CLC Convention, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, August 6-11, 1964, p. 12.)

Prof. Fredrich's comments on this episode in his lecture do not reveal the above discussion and correspondence, but merely speak of "... a formal discussion of the CLC's representation, or more accurately, misrepresentation, of our 1961 action at a November 10, 1962, meeting." It would seem wiser, in view of President Naumann's clarification, not to continue to accuse the CLC representatives of "misrepresentation" of the WELS position.

Instead, however, Prof. Fredrich adds another term of his own in describing the activity of the CLC during 1962 and 1963: namely, "distort" — a word which also seems to imply a deliberate act. He uses the term in describing the next meeting of WELS and CLC representatives, which took place January 2-3, 1964, at Grace Church, South St. Paul, Minnesota: "Early in 1964 the same Wisconsin leaders met with CLC representatives to discuss CLC writings that distorted our fellowship position." A careful reading of the official correspondence between the two presidents of the respective church bodies (Cf. 1964 CLC *Proceedings*) does not reveal such a purpose for this meeting on the part of the writers. If that was the purpose the WELS representatives had in mind, the correspondence does not indicate it. However, reference is made, in President Naumann's letter to President Paul G. Albrecht dated December 17, 1963, to the desire on both sides for "a frank discussion of the issues that lie between us." It was, consequently, the hope of the CLC representatives that such frank discussion would make it possible to refer to official pronouncements and resolutions of the WELS, also in the period from 1955 to 1961, in identifying the doctrinal position under discussion.

Prof. E. Schaller, chairman of the CLC Board of Doctrine, reported concerning the January, 1964, meeting: "We are happy to report that this latest effort was somewhat more productive. ... To some degree all of the issues involved were brought under scrutiny, with the result that they became more clearly defined in the minds of all concerned, and thus a better understanding for the proper method of dealing with them was assured." An article by Prof. E. Reim, entitled "Admonition and Romans 16," published in the December, 1962, issue of the *Journal of Theology*, was used in the meeting as the basis for discussion of the Scriptural doctrine of termination of church fellowship.

Prof. E. Schaller's report continues: "The Wisconsin representatives declared that they were, in their words, 'aware of nothing in its [Prof. Reim's article] exposition of Scriptural fellowship principles to which we would have to take exception.' They affirmed that

their church held to the principles expressed by the article." However, the Wisconsin representatives also maintained that the article by Prof. Reim ascribed to them a position on the doctrines involved which they wished to disavow. It was thereupon pointed out by the CLC representatives that the WELS position as outlined by Prof. Reim was taken from public pronouncements and resolutions made by the WELS, and that these official statements of the WELS regarding the principle of termination of church fellowship, made in the years 1955 through 1959, were in violation of the principle now apparently endorsed by the WELS representatives. The report, therefore, declares: "It became quite clear that, in order to come to grips with the issues effectively, it will be necessary to review with Wisconsin representatives the procedures and official doctrinal pronouncements of that body during the years from 1955 to 1961 in the light of what is now being set forth as the official doctrinal position of Wisconsin in the matter of termination of church fellowship." (For a complete reading of the CLC Board of Doctrine report cf. *Journal of Theology*, April, 1964, pp. 29-31.)

The WELS leaders seemed to feel the strongest reluctance to enter upon such a joint review of their own official pronouncements and resolutions of the 1955-1961 period together with representatives of the CLC. They insisted that such a review would not be beneficial until it had been clearly established that there was agreement on the principles involved. The CLC representatives, on the other hand, took the position that such a review was necessary in order to determine whether or not, in fact, agreement in principle was a reality. They believed that the WELS had given contradictory testimony when, on the one hand, it declared its agreement with the CLC position on termination of church fellowship, as published in *Concerning Church Fellowship* and in Prof. Reim's article previously mentioned — statements which clearly identify Wisconsin's false teaching in the controverted area; yet, on the other hand, maintained a defense of the very position declared by the CLC to be erroneous. It is as evident as the nose on one's face that what was needed was a joint review of the propositions in question. If, during a review of those former pronouncements,

Wisconsin would also disavow the errors contained in them, the road to resolution of the controversy would lie openly before all concerned.

In his lecture, Prof. Fredrich chose to dismiss the desires and hopes of the CLC in this proposed procedure in this way: "The CLC took this course, one must presume, because it felt the need to justify its continued separation and had not been able to do this by a discussion of principles. Hence it turned to practice in order to find there the substantive difference it insisted still existed." One does not need to read between the lines to recognize that in these words lies the accusation that the CLC is schismatic; that is, it is deliberately refusing the hand of fellowship when no scriptural cause for such refusal exists. It is a harsh accusation, and as long as it stands there between us, we find it difficult to place much stock in later words on the part of Prof. Fredrich in which he declares that he "will always be one who hopes that everything will be done that can be done in order to bring the CLC and WELS together again." If that is truly his hope, then it would be wiser for him not to impugn motives.

On April 6, 1965, President Naumann wrote a letter regarding further discussions between the two church bodies in which, among many other concerns, he, in behalf of the WELS Commission on Doctrinal Matters, requested the assurance from the CLC Board of Doctrine "... that your body acknowledges that in entering upon such discussions it is dealing with representatives of a church body which was and is willing to submit to the authority of the Word of God." In reply, President Paul Albrecht gave the assurance "... that by agreeing to engage in doctrinal discussions with representatives of your church body we have already indicated that we accept your profession of willingness 'to submit to the authority of the Word of God.' To proceed with such discussions on any other basis would be both unscriptural and fruitless. At the same time we do not consider it to be within our province to read or judge the hearts of the members of your church body. Only their words and actions are subject to our scrutiny in the light of the Word." (Cf. *Proceedings*, 6th Annual CLC Convention, Eau Claire, Wiscon-

sin, August 10-12, 1965, pp. 12-13.) If there is any hope of future fruitful discussion between our two church bodies, it will lie, humanly speaking, in a continuance of such a mutual confidence, rather than in statements that seek to judge motives, such as that of Prof. Fredrich.

It cannot be denied that, as the lecture describes it, an "agenda controversy" resulted from the discussions of January, 1964. Prof. Fredrich indicates that the controversy was caused by the CLC's attempt to find in Wisconsin's practice "the substantive difference it insisted still existed." We have indicated our conviction that the evidence of Wisconsin's past pronouncements cast doubt, at the very least, upon the clearness of that church body's declaration, through its representatives, that it accepted the CLC position. Subsequent events have revealed that when, on July 18-19, 1972, discussions were held in which Wisconsin finally agreed to permit references to its official pronouncements and resolutions made in the 1955-1961 time frame, the Wisconsin representatives also agreed that a difference in doctrine did, in fact, exist. We refer to the WELS resolution adopted in its 42nd Biennial Convention in 1973, which stated, in part: "Resolved, that we express regret over the failure at that meeting [July, 1972] to reach agreement on the doctrine under discussion."

It became evident to all parties concerned, then, that what the CLC representatives had feared was, in fact, true. Thorough discussions were held on topics such as (1) Termination of fellowship in the light of Scripture, (2) The context of admonition in dealing with an erring brother, (3) *In Statu Confessionis*, (4) The distinction between and definitions of "persistent errorists" and "weak brethren." The result of the meetings? It has become clear and accepted among us that there is no difference in the doctrine and practice of our two church bodies in applying the teachings of Scripture on termination of fellowship to individual errorists. The difference lies in the application of the principle to church bodies. As the resolution adopted by the CLC in 1974 declares: "The doctrinal difference is summarized by our president in his report to the con-

vention: 'Your Board of Doctrine presented the simple proposition that Scripture calls for a termination of fellowship with any church body that is teaching error. The representatives of the WELS offered the judgment that this could not always be done when a church body was infected with error, because of the concern that must be shown for those in that body who were not supporting its official position.'"

Wisconsin defends the maintaining of a fellowship relationship with a false-teaching church body with which it has been in fellowship for two purposes: (1) To offer opportunity to determine what the confessional position of a church really is, because of controversies existing within that false-teaching group itself; and (2) To offer opportunity to bring testimony to those individuals within the false-teaching group who do not themselves espouse the error(s). This WELS calls being *in statu confessionis* (in a state of confession). The CLC responds that admonition can better be brought outside of the framework of practicing fellowship, and that such admonition is certainly not eliminated by the application of Romans 16:17-18 ("Avoid them") to a false-teaching church body. While we, also, recognize the urging in Scripture to deal gently with the confused and weak and unlearned, and to make earnest efforts to preserve the bonds of fellowship between brethren, yet we find in these pleadings of the Holy Spirit no instruction that would allow us to disobey God's clear instruction in Romans 16. (For further amplification on this point, the reader is urged to read the article by Prof. C. M. Gullerud, entitled "WELS and CLC - Is There Still a Difference?", in the Panorama section of the *Journal of Theology*, December, 1972, pp. 36-39.)

Prof. Fredrich suggests that "the matter must rest there," but regrets that the difference between the WELS and the CLC has not diminished since 1961 "but has actually seemed to harden into an irreducible gap." He goes on to state: "We ought to do all in our power to help prevent that solidification in perpetuity." It is his feeling that the cleavage has been caused by the errors of the LCMS, not of the present members of either the CLC or WELS. This feeling bears out what had been stat-

ed some years earlier by President Naumann that the WELS to that point had not accused the CLC of supporting false doctrine. This was stated at the time when the WELS, by continuing to arrange discussions with the CLC, apparently did not honor the statement of one of its districts that the actions of the CLC "have caused outsiders to blaspheme the Gospel." (Cf. *Northwestern Lutheran*, October 18, 1964, p. 339.)

However, since the acknowledgment, now also on the part of the WELS, that a disagreement in doctrine does, in fact, exist, it is no longer helpful to suggest that neither of us is at fault, and why don't we make up! We would, rather, urge that now, with a clear understanding, on both sides, of the *status controversiae*, is the best time for a profitable study of God's Word in this matter — not to defend a position, but for guidance. We believe fervently that God has not given to us a clouded, dubious instruction on this doctrine, but that He, the faithful Shepherd, has given us plain and simple instruction to follow. The only key to a resolution, if it be possible, of the difference in doctrine that still exists between our church bodies, lies in a continued, on-going study of God's Word. It is our hope and prayer that we of the CLC and also our former brethren of the WELS and ELS will not give up in this matter, but will study Scripture and the Confessions for guidance. May God lead us in His wisdom to a point where we might have joint study together in free conferences.

John Lau



REVIEWS: NEW AIDS FOR STUDENTS OF THE GREEK TESTAMENT

Baker Book House has recently published two aids for students of the Greek New Testament. The author is Benjamin C. Chapman, who holds the Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees, and who is presently serving as associate professor of Greek at Grand Rapids Baptist College. Dr. Chapman has apparently taught Biblical Greek for a number of years, and a perusal of the helps which he has produced indicates that he is an imaginative and dedicated instructor.

New Testament-Greek Notebook, by Benjamin Chapman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977). 131 pp. \$9.95.

This notebook is published in loose-leaf format, the sheets being held in a three-ring binder measuring approximately 6"X8". In addition to the 131 pages of printed matter, it contains 46 sheets which are ruled and labeled on both sides for "current" exegetical notations, and an additional 16 blank sheets for supplementary notes.

The author states in the preface: "Our intention is to provide a practical and desirable loose-leaf notebook to be used as an aid to learning and reviewing New Testament Greek" (p. 5). He suggests that the notebook can serve as a supplement to the standard textbooks, and as a repository for personal exegetical notes and for additional information gleaned from other grammars, lexicons, and concordances — the loose-leaf feature permitting the orderly and systematic addition of such data. The notebook is not designed as a substitute for textbooks and grammars, but to serve rather in the organization of a wide variety of materials for greater ease and efficiency in study. Some knowledge of Greek is required for an effective use of the notebook, for the author employs many technical terms ("attributive position," "enclitic," "reduplication," etc.) without accompanying definitions.

Dr. Chapman displays a fine grasp of his subject, and includes along the way numerous suggestions to help

the readers become better students of the Greek language and of the New Testament in particular. His treatment of the important topic of tense is, for example, commendably precise and relatively complete. Many helpful suggestions are made for the accurate translation of Greek participles into idiomatic English. Useful information and advice is given on the subject of emphasis in Greek sentences — a topic which is seldom treated as a unit in Greek grammars. The section on synonyms will be of interest to any student of Greek. The author's extensive collection of principal parts includes all of the verbs commonly used in the New Testament, and many seldom used ones as well. And much more of a positive nature could be said about this notebook.

There are a few areas, however, which were somewhat disappointing to this reviewer. The author retains the older five-case system for nouns, even though such grammarians as Robertson have long ago demonstrated the linguistic correctness and educative wisdom of introducing Greek students to an eight-case system. As a further example one may point to Dr. Chapman's presentation of conditional sentences. His failure to discuss more fully the significance of the various modes in the protases of such sentences has reduced the value of this section.

There are instances also of imprecision or inaccuracy in statement. Under Moods the author writes that a Greek speaker uses the indicative to say "that something is in fact happening" (p. 71). It would be more precise to state that the indicative merely affirms something as true; the thing may in actual fact be either true or false. Under participles he states that "the present participle shows that the action takes place at the same time as that of the main verb," and that "the aorist participle, when it denotes time, shows the action of the participle as prior to that of the main verb" (p. 79). He should have said "generally shows" in both of these statements, and could well have eliminated the clause "when it denotes time" in the second of them. Several of the translations of illustrative examples from the Greek Testament, could, moreover, be improved.

How useful will the average pastor or student of

Greek find this notebook? It will probably serve best those scholars who have learned their Greek under the author in his classroom, for they will be fully familiar with his approach to grammar, syntax, and exegesis. But others, too, will surely profit from a selective use of the notebook. What is required in the reader is a desire to retain and improve his ability in Biblical Greek. Such a reader will appreciate the help and encouragement which Dr. Chapman offers him at so many points.

The notebook cannot, however, take the place of the standard exegetical grammars and lexicons in the library of a student or pastor. Mention should be made here of the fact that Baker Book House has recently reprinted Robertson's popular short grammar, as enlarged by Davis. (A. T. Robertson and W. H. Davis, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament*. 10th ed. Paperback, \$5.95.) Another relatively inexpensive but valuable volume, which is still available from Macmillan, is the grammar by Dana and Mantey (H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. Text edition, \$8.95.)

A Card-Guide to New Testament Exegesis, by Benjamin Chapman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977). 4pp. \$2.50.

This second study aid by Dr. Chapman consists of two 8½"x11" cards, printed on both sides and laminated with protective plastic, and provided with punching for insertion in a standard three-ring binder.

The cards contain the bulk of two of the seven sections in the notebook by Chapman, namely, the sections on syntax and exegesis. The size of type employed in the printing of these cards is rather small, and this may present a problem for any users with impaired vision. Whoever owns the notebook already will gain little by purchasing the cards in addition — unless he is attracted by the format of such a card-guide.

C. Kuehne



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