



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

I Timothy 4:15

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THE IMAGE OF GOD

Before entering upon a search for the meaning and significance of the phrase, "Image of God," it may be helpful and appropriate to indicate at the outset what guidelines we shall be following. Much has been written and many words have been spoken on the subject — some of it helpful, some of it confusing and counterproductive, and some of it positively wrong. Our procedure in dealing with this subject has been to lay aside all writings of human production in order to concentrate on the question: "What does the Bible say?" We need to give our primary attention to the *norma normans* before proceeding to the *norma normata*. Nothing is gained by quoting the fathers, synodical catechisms, or even the confessions of the Church if we have not first dug deep into the gold mine of God's infallible Word. If we cannot find the answer there, then no word of man will bring the solution. Much precious time has been expended in exegizing what men have said and written, time which could have been spent more profitably in studying the Scripture itself (*nuda Scriptura*), which is clearer than any exposition thereof. The Church has always gotten itself into trouble when human authority or some outstanding mentor has taken the place of *sola Scriptura*. We can do no better than to follow the example of the Psalmist, who prayed: "Teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works" (Ps. 119:26-27).

The burden of this dissertation on "The Image of God," then, is simply and plainly to present what the Bible says on the subject — to say no more and to say no less than God Himself has set before us. Through His precepts we get understanding; for His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:104-105). What God wants us to know He has revealed to us, and what He wants us to understand will be opened to us by the enlightenment of the Spirit as surely as we do not close our eyes and hearts to His Word. Beyond this we dare not go.

 OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES

The study of our subject takes us to the book of Genesis, the first chapter, verses 26 and 27, where the expression, "Image of God," is used for the first time in Holy Scripture: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The only other reference to the phrase in the Old Testament is found in Gen. 9:6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

The term itself — image (TSELEM) — is used seventeen times in the Old Testament, and in all cases, with the exception of Dan. 3:19, Gen. 5:3, and the passages just cited, it is used of idol images, representations which men have made as objects of worship contrary to the Word and commandment of God. The other term — likeness (DEMUTH) — is used twenty-five times in the Old Testament and in most cases is used in the sense of "appearance," a favorite usage by the prophet Ezekiel especially in the first chapter. However, it is apparent that "likeness" (DEMUTH) is used in a special sense in connection with the creation of man. In Gen. 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image, after our likeness") it is used as a synonym of "image" and for emphasis. This is supported by Gen. 5:1 ("In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him") where only the one term, "likeness," is used to describe and delineate this creative act of God. Furthermore, here (Gen. 5:1) the preposition (BE) is used, the same preposition as was used with "image" (TSELEM) in Gen. 1:26. The preposition (KE) had been used with (DEMUTH) in Gen. 1:26. The Septuagint translates the DEMUTH of Gen. 5:1 with EIKON, which shows that in the very version which the apostles frequently used in citing the Old Testament the two terms, "image" and "likeness," are regarded as synonymous when used in connection with the creation of man. In Gen. 1:26 the LXX had used the terms EIKON and HOMOIOMA ("image" and "likeness"). There is, then, support and justification for joining the two terms "image" and "likeness" in this study of "The Image of God."

These passages of the Old Testament, then, are before us in this study: Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 5:1; and Gen. 9:6.

NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES The New Testament *Koine* uses EIKON as the Greek word corresponding to the Hebrew TSELEM ('image'). EIKON is used twenty-three times in the New Testament. Of these passages only six have reference to "the image of God," namely Rom. 8:29, I Cor. 11:7, II Cor. 3:18, II Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15, and Col. 3:10. In their context we here cite them as follows:

Rom. 8:29 - "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

I Cor. 11:7 - "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God."

II Cor. 3:18 - "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

II Cor. 4:3-4 - "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Col. 1:12-17 - "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Col. 3:8-11 - "But now ye also put off all these:

anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deed; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all."

We do not here cite Hebrews 1:3 because the word translated "image" in our King James version is not EIKON but CHARACTER, a *hapax legomenon* meaning "representation." While we find no passage in the New Testament with a phrase corresponding to "likeness of God," we may find it helpful to refer to such passages as Rom. 6:5, Rom. 8:3, and Phil. 2:7. Here we have the word HOMOIOMA, which corresponds to the Hebrew DEMUTH.

In these passages, then, we have God's Word to us on the subject, "Image of God." We shall be dividing our study into three parts: I. The creation of man in the image of God; II. The image of God lost; III. The image of God regained.

I. THE CREATION OF MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

"In six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that in them is" (Ex. 20:11). By His creative Word of power and might God called into being the earth and all that it contains. The animals which walk and creep and move upon the face of the earth, the winged fowl that fly above the earth, and the fish that swim in the sea — all received life and being at the Word of the omnipotent Creator. God blessed them all and gave them the power of reproduction, each after his kind. In each case "God saw that it was good." Without reservation this is repeatedly stated, from which we may conclude that there was nothing within the species or among the species to bring conflict, hostility, or pain. Everything was perfectly attuned to a peaceful and harmonious existence as it came into being through the creative Word of God.

When we come now to the creation of man something new is added. In the case of man the act of creation is preceded by a specific consultation and decision on the

part of the Triune God which contains an ingredient not found in connection with the creation of the other living things. God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). The carrying out of this decision is immediately recorded: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). It is impressed upon us by repetition and synonym that man, distinct from all other creatures, was created in "the image of God, after his likeness." This pertained to Adam, who was created from the dust of the earth, as well as to Eve, who was created out of Adam's rib. That it was God's intention that their offspring should also possess His image is made clear from the sacred text where we are told in the immediate context: "And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28a). The image of God was not to be restricted to the first man and the first woman but was to be transmitted to their children, male and female alike, by the propagation of their kind under the blessing of God. In perfect unity and harmony man who bore the image of God was to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moved upon the earth. In this uncorrupted state there was no hostility, no conflict, no disunity, no disease nor death.

Now what answer do we find in Holy Scripture to the question: "Wherein did the image of God consist?" Here we need to be careful that we do not go beyond what Scripture reveals to us. We could so easily start off by citing the familiar dogmatic formulations and from there proceed to search for supporting Bible passages. Rather than doing this we shall be searching the passages which deal with the subject under discussion and let the matter rest there. Beyond the simple use of the phrase, "image of God," in Gen. 1:26-27 and in Gen. 9:6 we find no description or delineation of it except through the use of the synonym "after his likeness," which phrase stands by itself in Gen. 5:1. At this point, then, all we can say is that man was made like God, not indeed His equal, not

of the same essence, not indeed possessing the divine attributes. Thus we can well understand why God refused, for instance, to have images made of Him for the purpose of worshipping them. He rejected the golden calf at Mt. Sinai as well as all graven images and likenesses. While He did arrange for types and figures (the brazen serpent, the scape-goat, the paschal lamb) in connection with the Old Testament rites, these were not presented as objects of worship, but merely to prefigure the one and only true God Who was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It can also be said at this point that the image of God did not consist in any kind of physical resemblance, for God is a spirit. The fact that the Son later became incarnate does not change this. Jesus Himself said to the Samaritan woman at the well: "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Furthermore, it can be said that the image of God did not consist in the breath of life, for also the animals were living beings with the breath of life, although they did not have the image of God. Thus God, in speaking to Noah, designated those who died in the flood as follows: "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died" (Gen. 7:22). That man at the creation was set apart from the other creatures by the possession of the image of God is clearly evident. This is also reflected in God's Word to Noah after the flood: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). This does not say that man still possessed the image of God at that time, but it states that he was made in the image of God. Since by virtue of that original creation he had been set apart from all other creatures, the taking of his life after the fall was to be regarded as on a different plane from the slaying of other creatures.

But wherein, then, does the image of God consist? The answer to this question is opened to us in the New Testament. Thus in Col. 3:10 we read: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after (KATA) the image of him that created him." Without dealing at this point with the loss and the restoration of the image of God, we note here that knowledge is joined to the expression, "image of God." This is not just a superficial-

al or general knowledge, but it is a deep and full knowledge (EPIGNOSIS). It is effective knowledge, a knowledge of God which joined man to Him. Thus Adam and Eve as they came from the creative hand of God, made in His image after His likeness, had such knowledge which united them with their Creator. When they heard the voice of their God in the garden and communed with Him, they were filled with joy much as the child when it hears the voice of the loving father or mother. There was a oneness there, a unity, a communion, which was present by virtue of the fact that Adam and Eve had a full and complete knowledge (EPIGNOSIS) without the blemish of sin and guilt. They knew God as their Creator and as the Holy One who desired their eternal bliss and to that end had made the tree of life to grow in the midst of Eden. In this effective knowledge they had complete confidence and trust in God as their heavenly Father. Basically, then, the image of God consisted in such full and complete knowledge of God. We may well be satisfied to leave it there without further expansion at this stage of our discussion. We will be coming back to the tremendous meaning of the true knowledge of God in connection with the loss of the image of God and its restoration.

II. THE IMAGE OF GOD LOST.

Unfortunately for Adam and Eve and for the whole human race, the image of God was completely lost through the fall into sin. While there is no passage that says specifically that the image of God was lost at the fall, nevertheless Scripture clearly teaches it. That full and effective knowledge (EPIGNOSIS) of God as the benevolent heavenly Father was lost. The unity, the communion, the oneness by virtue of that knowledge was broken and gone. Indeed, Adam and Eve still knew of the existence of God (commonly called the natural knowledge of God), but they no longer knew Him as the One who desired their eternal bliss and happiness. After the fall we are told: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was

naked; and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:8-10). The original knowledge of God was gone and the curse and death with all its ramifications had taken its place. The New Testament puts it this way: "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." In contrast to the creation of man in the image of God, we read of Adam after the fall that "he begat a son in his own image after his likeness" (Gen. 5:3). In the New Testament we read: "By the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom. 5:18). As men began to multiply on the face of the earth we are told: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:5-7). Certainly there was in natural man no vestige or trace of the original image of God — that true, full, and effective knowledge (EPIGNOSIS) of God with its faith and confidence in the love and benevolence of the Creator who had made all things good. The image of God had been lost to man, walking in his sin and corruption. If this had been the end for man, the history of mankind would present only a picture of despair, death, and judgment.

III. THE IMAGE OF GOD REGAINED.

Our Savior-God did not leave Adam and Eve under the curse of judgment and death but proclaimed to them the Protevangel in the promise of the Seed of the woman Who would restore to them what they had lost. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Through this promise our first parents regained that true and effective knowledge of God which had been lost. They saw Him now and knew Him as the Savior-God, benevolent and good, not one to be feared but to be loved and trusted with full confidence of His grace and mercy. This knowledge is display-

ed in Eve at the birth of her first son, Cain; for on this occasion she said: "I have gotten a man, the Lord." Here we accept as an accurate translation the rendition of Luther, "*Ich habe den Mann, den Herrn.*" Mistaken as she was about the identity of her son, her words display her eagerness and the overwhelming desire of the fulfillment of the promise of the Seed through which the salvation of all mankind would be assured. The true knowledge of God which had been lost in the fall had indeed been restored. The image of God had been regained. Through the centuries this knowledge brightened the days of the people of God as they, in joyous expectation, awaited the fulfillment of the promise made in Eden to our first parents.

Typical of all the believers down through the years is the example of Abraham, of whom we read: "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). This example is cited for the comfort and joy not only of those of the circumcision (i.e., the Jews) but also of those of the uncircumcision (i.e., the Gentiles), for we are told specifically: "How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Rom. 4:10-11). Thus all those who place their faith and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ possess the image of God. The true knowledge of God is their most prized possession. The evidence for this is most abundantly provided in the Scriptures of the New Testament as well as of the Old Testament.

The apostle Paul made mention of this restored knowledge in his prayers for the Ephesian Christians: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his

calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:15-22).

In these graphic words Paul describes the effectual knowledge (i.e., the image of God), what it involves, and what the restoration has wrought through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His session at the right hand of power. In this the Church rejoices and in this it finds its power and strength. Writing to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ in Colosse, Paul lifted up his heart in thanksgiving ("For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Col. 1:5-10). Later in the epistle Paul speaks of the Christians as those who "have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Addressing his co-worker, Timothy, in the first epistle, Paul said: "God our Savior will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Simon Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, writing to the diaspora greeted them with these words: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according to his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,

through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (I Peter 1:2-3).

While indeed there is nothing imperfect or incomplete in the image of God which has been restored to the Christian, we are continually reminded that while we are present in this vale of tears our old Adam and our flesh create a tension within our person which is life-long. Because of the opposition of the flesh there is continual need to receive admonition and instruction to put on the virtues pleasing to God, as Paul also instructed the Colossians: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12-14). Further instructing them on what truly good works are in the various stations of life, Paul continued by specifying as follows: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:17-24). Because of the flesh saints at Colosse were in danger of engaging in self-chosen works, thinking thereby to be serving the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of instruction were not only needed, therefore, but were welcomed by the faithful. It should be noted that the apostle does not here engage in useless argumentation of what part of man was being instructed, the new man who doesn't need it, or the old man who won't receive it. He simply addresses the Christians as they are — possessing indeed the image of God but in this life always in tension with the flesh.

Not until we enter the heavenly mansions will we possess the image of God without the tension and conflict with the flesh. The contrast is pictured to us in these words: "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known" (I Cor. 13:12). That great and glorious day which we all await is thus described in the book of Revelation: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:1-5).

At the fall Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden lest they should put forth their hands and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Now in the heavenly Jerusalem, the tree of life is again in their midst that they might receive of it and live forever in eternal bliss, living with the image of God free of all the tensions of the flesh and Old Adam. That we might all be gathered thus before the throne of God and of the Lamb - to this end preserve us, Heavenly Father.

C. M. Gullerud



KEEPING THE BOOK OF CONCORD ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF OUR PEOPLE

During 1980 Lutherans were literally overwhelmed with a veritable flood of books, pamphlets, and articles on the subject of the Augsburg Confession and the Book of Concord. We, too, as members of the CLC, celebrated in various ways that anniversary year. The president of our church body reminded us: "This year 1980 is a festival year in the Lutheran Church, for it is the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and the 400th anniversary of the Book of Concord. As heirs of the Reformation and subscribers to the Lutheran Confessions, we thank and praise the Lord for the precious heritage that is ours."

Our CLC convention during 1980 observed the anniversary by hearing three special essays on two different aspects of the Book of Concord — as a gift of God's grace, and on the doctrinal aspects and practical significance of the Lutheran ministry as set forth in the Book of Concord. Elsewhere in the CLC, specifically in two of its publications, the *Lutheran Spokesman* and the *Journal of Theology*, many words were published in commemoration of the special year. Festival observances were held in our congregations, with special sermons and/or speakers. In some congregations posters and banners appeared in the churches and schools, making the anniversary more striking and meaningful to the members.

Now that the anniversary year is over and the feverish activity of commemoration is past, it is time to consider how we may keep the Book of Concord alive in the hearts of our members in an on-going, steady way. First, then, let us consider some general comments on what was done during the anniversary year; and then let us consider some suggestions for a continuing emphasis as a regular activity.

It seems apparent that most of the articles and es-

says that appeared during the past year emphasized the historical background of the Lutheran Confessions. They made the reader very aware of the historical necessity of the confessions, for they were written and adopted by Christians in order to provide Scriptural answers to the questions propounded by false prophets of the time. Certainly we appreciate and value these historical concerns, for they help us to understand the setting and sequence of thought in the presentation of doctrine. It helps us to understand the necessity of a confessional statement on a particular matter when we also know the previous false statements or positions promulgated by false leaders in a monolithic church structure, or by various smaller groups and sects gathered around a single false notion.

Yet such an emphasis on the historical approach may lead us to consider the confessions as important only historically. I believe it was the late Bishop Pike of the Protestant Episcopal Church who waxed well-nigh ecstatic over the sonorous beauty of the confessional writings in the Book of Common Prayer (including the ecumenical creeds) and rejoiced in their well-chosen words and elegant diction and appreciated them for their historical value — but believed that they had no real relevance to religious issues of the present day! It is certainly to be hoped than an over-appreciation of our Book of Concord in its historical setting will not result in its being considered by our members and students as a valuable historical document important for that reason only.

The various articles and essays that were published throughout the past year have also emphasized the doctrinal and theological content of the Lutheran Confessions. For example, the series of articles published in the *Journal of Theology* dealt with the following subjects: "Our Subscription to the Book of Concord," "The Book of Concord and Verbal Inspiration," "The Book of Concord and Gospel Reductionism," "The Book of Concord and Ecumenism," "The Book of Concord and the Doctrine of Church and Ministry," and "The Book of Concord and the Doctrine of Church and Ministry — Historical Overview." With the exception of the first of these, the essential approach was to examine what light the Book of Concord sheds upon the various doctrinal and theological problems which have

surfaced and become increasingly important in our day. It is indeed hoped that such emphasis may not have caused our fellow members in pew and school desk to have thought of the Book of Concord as a theological textbook to be found on the shelves of pastors, teachers, and theological professors, but having no genuine relevance to their lives as Christians!

Willard D. Allbeck, in his introduction to *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*, writes: "Although it is obvious that the Confessions devote much attention to doctrine, and therefore are theological, it is important to observe that this doctrine must be truly biblical and correct because it forms the substance of what is preached in the congregations. The discussion, instead of being abstract and academic, is always in the context of the pulpit and the church school." The Book of Concord is truly important historically and theologically, but most emphatically is this true when its Scriptural content is reflected in what goes from pulpit to pew and from lectern to school-desk. It is the relevance that the Scriptural content of the Confessions has in regard to what is preached and taught in our churches and classrooms that will keep the Book of Concord alive in the hearts and minds of our members. In consideration of this relevance, let us now examine some categories of practical activity.

"The Confessions are valuable to Lutherans in their contacts with non-Lutherans by being avowed declarations of belief" (Allbeck). The Book of Concord contains clear statements of what Lutherans believe on the basis of God's Word. They emphasize again and again the only true source of add doctrine and teaching. How important the key expression: *Sola Scriptura!* Because of this, Lutherans have convictions on matter which are not open to question. Since the final authority resides in the Scriptures, what we teach and believe is clear, in spite of scholars' disputes over texts, manuscripts, and interpretations. Also, to be clear, doctrinal statements contain antithetical statements. Practical applications of this use of the Book of Concord, which is certainly important as far as public testimony is concerned, should include analyses of various doctrinal statements in council meetings, Bible

study groups, classroom presentations, with discussion of pertinent sections from the Confessions. Suggestions should be given to students and members as to the relevance of a particular set of statements from the Confessions to a current issue or problem.

Next would come the opportunities for communicating our beliefs to non-Lutherans, to the world outside. Historically and theologically, the Book of Concord has for 400 years presented a truthful witness to the world concerning the teachings of God on the matters contained therein. It has been a mighty testimony. Now we are concerned that our members and students may also learn to appreciate its value for the same purpose. With that in mind, they will surely seek out opportunities in their daily lives of witnessing to bring the Confessions to bear where they are relevant. They will grow more and more to appreciate that relevance!

"The Confessions constitute the basis of Lutheran unity" (Allbeck). Really, of course, it is a Spirit-wrought faith and acceptance of the Gospel as presented in the Means of Grace that constitutes the basis of all unity; however, properly understood, Allbeck's statement can stand. The question for us is: How can we use the Book of Concord as an aid to show the basis of our unity in congregation and classroom? After all, that was the expressed intent of our Lutheran fathers, as they declared it in the Augsburg Confession: "... these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple faith and Christian concord, that for the future one pure and true religion may be embraced and maintained by us, that as we all are under one Christ and do battle under Him, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian Church."

Here, too, pastor and teacher, as it naturally develops in their work of preaching, proclaiming, indoctrinating, and instructing, should make use of the copious testimony of the Book of Concord — not to reinforce the Scriptures (as though that would or could be done!) but to show the reliance of the Confessions upon the Scriptures; to show the *quia* rather than the *quatenus* of our confession. How the Book of Concord so beautifully re-

flects the desire of the confessors to search out and express the pure teachings of God as He set them forth in His verbally inspired and infallible Word, the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments!

One obvious suggestion readily comes to mind. Confirmation classes in our congregations are already using one of the Confessions, Luther's Small Catechism, as a basis for instruction. Why not use the Large Catechism also? The Large Catechism is also a marvelous book to use in adult Bible study. But surely the pastor and teacher will know how to search fitting reference material in his Book of Concord, to show the unity of our confession on the basis of God's Word. The Catechism in a very convenient way brings the passages from Scriptures to bear on the doctrines under discussion; why not also demonstrate, in the same connection, what the Confessions declare? In that manner the Book of Concord will be kept alive as a relevant resource.

"... there is also importance in the twentieth century for the position Lutherans take in the ecumenical movement" (Allbeck). Someone has criticized the Book of Concord (peace) for its polemical tone. A fair criticism? So much in the Confessions is stated so positively and evangelically. But obviously, according to its context and considering the purpose for which much of the Book of Concord was written, a polemical tone is extremely appropriate. We need to know the truly ecumenical spirit of our Confessions — not ecumenical in the sense of the current movement of "agreeing to disagree agreeably" and "you go your way and I'll go mine, but really all roads lead to heaven" — but, rather, ecumenical in the true universality of the message of Law and Gospel: "All have sinned, but all have been redeemed!" (Cf. "The Book of Concord and Ecumenism," in the December, 1979, issue of the *Journal of Theology*.)

Sad to say, many Lutherans of our times do not act and teach in a manner consistent with the Lutheran Confessions in this matter of the so-called "ecumenical movement." Especially during certain church festivals we hear and read of sinfully unionistic worship gatherings at which Lutheran ministers and church leaders

share altar and pulpit even with Roman Catholic priests and prelates. On occasion one reads of Lutherans joining in public worship services with non-Christians, specifically Jews. The Book of Concord does not condone such unionism; rather, it condemns it as sinful.

Surely our members (children, too) are affected by the ecumenical movement in the world around us. In pulpit and classroom, then, let us find the opportunities to bring the testimony from our Lord that will bolster and fortify against this work of Satan. The Lutheran Confessions are a valuable instrument to use. Refer to its statements in class and sermon. Show its relevance to the issue. You will know how to use references and index in your study.

"Purity of doctrine, far from being merely an academic problem or doctrine for doctrine's sake, profoundly affects faith (believing), which received so much attention in evangelical churches. Here the concern for the laity comes into view. All that is taught and preached in the churches in accordance with the Lutheran Confessions has in view the experience of the individual Christian, his faith and repentance, his deeds and his hopes. Though this is especially clear in the catechisms, it is also close to the surface in the other documents (confessions), for all of them are concerned with a living religion evident in a fellowship of faith" (Allbeck). Surely, we of the CLC have dedicated our lives and our ministries to the joyful work of proclaiming God's Word truly. We know that if we speak, we are to speak as the oracles of God, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but in words which the Holy Ghost teaches! What is more relevant to the hearts and lives of our students and members than to hear the blessed teachings of our Lord proclaimed also in the Book of Concord?

"The fellowship of faith becomes objective in the fellowship of worship, the congregation in which the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered. At this point doctrine and practice are joined" (Allbeck). How do we worship God? Scripture tells us that God is pleased when we worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is He who has given us the Sacraments of Baptism and Lord's

Supper — not we who give them to Him. Here, again, we make use of the Book of Concord as an aid to worship as well as an aid in understanding our forms of worship. Luther discussed in the Smalcald Articles the doctrine of justification for Christ's sake through faith. Then he pointed to the abuses of the mass in the church of Rome, and in the comparison he demonstrated that the holy Sacrament is to be retained in its purity according to the institution of Christ and so that we may use it in faith, for the good of our souls and the strengthening of our trust in Him. In sermons and lessons on the Lord's Supper and Baptism, surely a diligent search in our Confessions will locate a wealth of material to be used with great profit.

Here, then, are five areas in which much thought can be given in seeking to keep the Book of Concord alive in the hearts and minds of our people: 1. In their contacts with non-Lutherans, bringing testimony to them; 2. In demonstrating the basis of our unity; 3. In the temptation to become involved in the unionistic ecumenical movement; 4. In showing the importance of purity of doctrine; and 5. In our forms of worship. No doubt, additional thinking would produce many more areas.

It seems to this writer that the main point is that we, as teachers and pastors, seek to make use of the Book of Concord ourselves, first of all. It should become as familiar a handbook to us as our lesson helps, our commentaries, our concordances, our dictionaries, our encyclopedias, our reference books. I do not say, "as our Bibles," for that is our dearest and most precious handbook — it is God's Word. But our Book of Concord should come to hand readily and easily, as we prepare our lessons and sermons. Reading and knowing it thoroughly and well for ourselves, it will fit into our thought patterns and guide our preparation. And it will do that well. May our gracious Lord guide us with His Spirit in our study and presentation of His precious truths. May He help us to make fuller use of the Book of Concord to bring not only it, but its glorious truths, to the hearts of our people.

John Lau

KEEPING SALVATION IN THE FOREFRONT

I.

"What our time lacks above all is knowledge of sin." One might think that this is a recently made statement. The evidence of lack of sin-consciousness, yea, of more and more brutal and effective searing of the conscience, is before us on all sides. The subject received treatment in a *Lutheran Spokesman* series (Vol. 14, Nos. 6-9; Dec. 1971 - March, 1972). The above-quoted statement appears on page 238 of the October, 1976 (Vol. 13, No. 4), issue of the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, in an article by Prof. August Pieper entitled "*Die eine grosse Sunde.*" And the statement is made with great emphasis.

Rightly is the matter of sin-consciousness of great concern to servants of the Gospel. For the proclamation of the Gospel is no proclamation of the Gospel except on the assumption of man's great sinfulness, utter helplessness, and enormous spiritual need. The very term Gospel has meaning only in relation to a prior appalling condition which would seem to be utterly beyond hope of remedy. Even if the right words and formulas are used in our teaching, salvation fades into the background if sin fades into the background. And as fervently as we desire above all else to be proclaimers of the Gospel, to open up for all to see the incomparable merits of Jesus Christ, so fervently do we seek also to be effective preachers of the Law and exposers of sin. Otherwise we are only putting our hearers to sleep and confirming them in that carnal security which stalks us all, particularly in an age of rampant and disgusting lukewarmness. One is vitiating proclamation of the Gospel by preaching the Law ineffectively. One is serving the Gospel by preaching the Law truly. The more forcefully the Law is preached, the more meaningful and welcome is the preaching of the Gospel.

Not that we desire to be preachers of the Law as an end in itself. Far from it! We would then be self-condemned! For even those whose eyes are blind in spiritu-

al things, whose hearts are totally dead, who shall spend eternity in the torments of eternal damnation, away from the presence of God, yes, those very pagans whom the devil leads about wherever he wishes — they can also be sharp in detecting and condemning sins against the Law. Even a rank heathen can shout and declaim about moral decay and the collapse of moral standards. No, we are not called to uphold moral standards, to inveigh against the rapidly spreading decay, to make people outwardly more decent and upright, to add our voices to the many already sounding forth with vigor and eloquence on these subjects. We are called to proclaim a message from heaven. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9-10). "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2). That we have been made heralds of this heavenly message concerning the reconciliation of God to the world through the atoning death of His Son, Jesus Christ — that calls forth rapturous heartfelt thanks in impulsive torrents. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (I Timothy 1:12).

Nevertheless, this also is true: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ... for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:12-13). "Yea, declare unto them their abominations" (Ezekiel 23:36). "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1). "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). Thus, when the preaching of sin begins to fail, the preaching of grace begins to fail in equal measure. A real knowledge of the way of salvation requires a personal, heartfelt experience of sin and guilt and their dreadful power, and not just an intellectual grasp of what sin is or an acquaintance with the ten

commandments or a feeble effort now and then to remember that we are sinners. That is what the Holy Spirit uses to prompt us to appreciate, unforgettably, what Jesus did for us. That is what triggers the action of seizing the kingdom of heaven with violence (Matthew 11:12).

The glory of God's holiness is so awesome, the weight and presence of it to us sinners so terrible, that we simply go to pieces before it, finding not a healthy spot the whole length and breadth of our heart and soul. Original sin! That is chiefly what we are discussing. Who can grasp it? The article quoted above also says: "With Luther, the Lutheran Church has grasped to some extent the corruption of original sin in its depths" (p. 237). The Scriptures express the sorrows of the one terrified by the arrows of the Almighty, overcome with disgust at the unrelieved rottenness of his entire nature, drowned in the overwhelming tide of his iniquities. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" (Psalm 38:1-6). "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies" (Psalm 6:6-7). And then: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping" (v. 8).

Wise Christians know that their love of the Gospel will quickly fade unless they are constantly led to see their crying need for a Savior. Let us therefore give heed to this, that we are keeping salvation in the forefront only when we effectively preach the Law and expose sin.

II.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman

that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Salvation is kept in the forefront when we give attention to the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, and when we continually sharpen our understanding of the true nature of Law and Gospel.

To be believed — that is, to have its proper impact — the Law must be unbelievable. Its claims are so awesome, its demands so high and unrealistic, its threats so far beyond human comprehension, that it transcendently crushes the sinner, overpowering him and causing him to throw up his hands in unbelief, horror, despair, and unspeakable terror. In vain do we search for resemblance to our human ideas of what is fair and appropriate. Behind the Law stands a Holiness which is too high for us. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20). "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:21-22). "Because the law worketh wrath" (Romans 4:15). "Is not my work like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). All escape is blocked. Cf. also Romans 7:7ff. To be properly believed, the Law must be unbelievable.

To be believed, the Gospel, too, must be unbelievable. For it is purely a proclamation of what God has already done in Christ to save the entire world from eternal damnation. There is absolutely nothing in it of demand or obligation laid upon the sinner. It is a giving, not an asking; a conferring, not a requesting. Who can

ever sufficiently declare and extol the self-sacrificing love of the Father, Who punished and slaughtered His own beloved Son, giving Him into the hands of the very vile sinners who had offended Him, and doing this when He knew very well that the world never had done, and never would do, never had been, and never would be, anything which could even begin to qualify for this. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). "For 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" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "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; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5-6). The sinner can only confess in amazed thankfulness: God, in Christ, has taken it all out of my hands, has asked nothing of me, has Himself accomplished the salvation, and now freely bestows upon me this unsurpassed gift. God "justifieth the ungodly" (Romans 4:5), a crime by human standards. He condemned the Righteous One in our place. Unbelievable! "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (I Corinthians 5:21). "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:12-13). Such is the Gospel: as it comes from heaven to awaken our amazement, it strikes us as being unbelievable. Yet it is true. It is sealed unto us by the Triune God. It is a faithful saying. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15). The very urgency of the invitations is intended to overcome our doubts that we could ever be so richly and unconditionally and freely blessed.

Now all human thought is a distortion of these truths. The net result of man's natural thinking invariably is to turn the Law into Gospel, and the Gospel into Law. This happens when the two distinctive messages of

Scripture are made believable.

The blind sinner ever desires to make the Law believable. He tones it down to a point where he believes its demands can be met. "All these things have I kept from my youth up" (Matthew 19:20). Thus he turns it into a "gospel," a means of promoting and advertising his own righteousness, a "way of salvation" which will surely lead him to eternal damnation! Likewise, the devil succeeds in having men turn the Gospel into Law. For men are ever inclined to tone down the Gospel to a point where it is not a full accomplishment of Christ, but something which still hinges in one way or another, be it ever so subtle, on a contribution of man. They inject something into it of demand. That's Law! How ceaselessly we must struggle, for example, against the thought that our faith contributes something to our salvation. But Christ was not half nailed to the cross. Nor did He die a 78% death, or undergo only a partial burial. His dying cry was not, "It is mostly finished." He is not at this moment still half dead. How dare we blasphemously call God a liar and presume that salvation is but a thing of probability or tentativeness. The pure Gospel is seen in the doctrine of election. All credit is taken from man. All glory is given to God. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Franz Pieper writes: "It has therefore been well said that in the doctrine of election a theologian takes his final examination. This Scripture doctrine sweeps the last remnants of Pelagianism and rationalism out of one's theology" (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 503). The Gospel truly reaffirms the verdict of the Law: man does nothing for his salvation. It is not a turning around again, a reversal, a giving of the credit back to man, as though in himself he were not so bad after all. The Holy Spirit's response to our natural self remains consistent: a gracious slap in the face, rather than a deceptive pat on the back. Our self is down and out, dead and buried. For heaven's sake (literally), don't resurrect such a carcass!

To be believed, both Law and Gospel must be unbelievable. If they are not unbelievable, then the Law has been turned into Gospel and the Gospel into Law. And salvation

has been lost. With these thoughts ever before us, salvation will be kept in the forefront. May God the Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake, ever grant us the wisdom and strength to keep salvation in the forefront in all our pastoral work.

R. E. Wehrwein

THE LONELINESS OF THE DEATH THAT GAVE US LIFE*

Our Passion Season devotion will be based upon the prophetic words recorded by Isaiah, chapter 63, verse 3, where the Messiah declares: "I have trodden the wine-press, I alone; and of the people no one was with me."

Loneliness is a terrible thing! Many of us have experienced some of the dreadful psychological responses to loneliness. The lonely infant crying for the soft warmth and security of mother; the lonely child afraid of the dark reaching out for the father's hand; the lonely freshman at Immanuel Lutheran College away from home for the first time, finding little comfort in the many faces about him; the loneliness of being confronted by our own error, failure, or misconduct, with a denial or a lie as the only convenient companion suggested by our flesh; the loneliness caused by the death of a loved one, a grandparent, a parent, someone close; the utter loneliness of a love not returned; the loneliness of graduation, of a Call to face a class or a congregation alone; the loneliness of old age; the loneliness of critical illness and the final loneliness of dying.

Loneliness, since the fall of mankind, is indeed a common affliction. Yet, it is no just cause for being despondent or depressed. Loneliness is the decaying fruit of a weak faith. For by faith we know that we are never alone, helpless, forsaken, left to struggle on our own. We know we have a dear Savior, an elder Brother, a

* A Chapel address at Immanuel Lutheran College.

constant Companion, an ever present Help in every time of need.

Our experience with loneliness, however, shrinks into insignificance when we ponder the Passion of Jesus, who on our behalf suffered the loneliness of the death that gave us life. Listen once more to our Savior as He speaks of His loneliness in the Messianic words of our text: "I have trodden ..." How comforting to us when we hear that His suffering to save us is an accomplished fact! "I have (successfully) trodden (once and for all) ..." What He trod was the winepress of God's anger over the sin of the world, God's just and holy wrath against all that is unholy, against all that is sin.

Into that vat of the world's sin (no one's sins were omitted) the Savior entered and there He labored, trod, suffered — alone, "I alone!" There was no one else to do the work, or assist Him in any way. He declares: "And from among (of) the people there was no one with me." Not even the very best of mankind among us could do more than enter a personal winepress to tread for his own sin, and to tread it for eternity.

God's holy Son was the only Man born among us who was without sin. He alone was sent by God's love to tread out the payment for the sin of the world — He alone. Recall the words of Isaiah 53:3-5:

He was despised and shunned by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering. And (men were) as hiding their faces from him. He was despised, and we thought nothing of him. Truly, he has lifted up upon himself our pains and has carried our sorrows. But we held him as one plagued, struck by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, was crushed for our sins. On him was the punishment for our peace, and by his wounds we ourselves are healed.

How "alone" was Jesus as our Substitute? Listen to His lonely cries of anguish as they echo about in the 22nd Psalm: "My God, My God, why did you forsake me! And why are you far from saving me, far from the words of

my roaring ... be not far away from me, for trouble is near and there is not a helper!"

Sin separates the sinner from the holy God. All our sins, put at the Savior's feet, separated Him from His God and Father. His Father's love-motivated Will was to redeem the world from sin, and to reconcile the world unto Himself through the vicarious labors of His only-begotten Son.

In perfect obedience to that Will, the Son trod, and trod, and trod until He could triumphantly cry: "It is finished!" And having finished all, He commended His lonely spirit into the hands of His dear Father. He arose victorious, no longer alone! He lives forever in the Father's Kingdom with all who believe on Him; they are joint-heirs with Him of the Kingdom; they reign with Him in the glory-life!

As we again ponder this great love-sacrifice for our sins, we sing out: All praise to Him who suffered the loneliness of the death which gave us life! Amen.

Who is this that comes from Edom,
All his raiment stained with blood,
To the captive speaking freedom,
Bringing and bestowing good,
Glorious in the garb he wears,
Glorious in the spoil he bears?

"Tis the Savior, now victorious,
Trav'ling onward in his might;
"Tis the Savior; oh, how glorious
To his people is the sight!
Satan conquered and the grave,
Jesus now is strong to save.

Mighty Victor, reign forever,
Wear the crown so dearly won;
Never shall Thy people, never,
Cease to sing what Thou hast done.
Thou hast fought Thy people's foes;
Thou hast healed Thy people's woes. (LH 209)

Gordon P. Radtke

==== PANORAMA =====

THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHARGES FALSE DOCTRINE: ARE WE GUILTY?

In the May-June issue of *The Concordia Lutheran*, the official publication of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, there appeared an article by P. R. Bloedel, pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington, entitled: "How False Doctrine on Church and Ministry (as taught by the WELS, CoLC, and in the ELS) Endangers Other Plain Doctrines of Scripture." The capitalized letters in the parenthesis stand for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Since this writing is a rather heavy-handed attack on what we in the Church of the Lutheran Confession believe and teach, the 1980 convention of the CLC resolved "that the President together with the Board of Doctrine prepare a critique of this article and print it in the *Journal of Theology*." This assignment brings about this effort.

There is some question as we proceed. The difference in the understanding and teaching of the doctrine of Church and Ministry is not something new. It showed itself already in the early years of this century in writings and discussions that went on between the Wisconsin and Missouri synods. Throughout this century much has been written expounding both views so that it now appears that little more can be said. Both sides know quite thoroughly what the other is saying. Positions have been polarized. To all appearances an impasse exists.

As mentioned, the controversy originated between the Wisconsin and Missouri synods, both members of the Synodical Conference. Other synods, with Synodical Conference background, which have come into existence in more recent times after the dissolution of the Synodical Conference, adopted one or the other of these teachings on Church and

Ministry. The Church of the Lutheran Confession holds to the so-called "Wisconsin" position. The Concordia Lutheran Conference continues in the so-called "Missouri" position. Because this matter was in dispute, the Church of the Lutheran Confession included a confessional statement, *Concerning Church and Ministry*, in the confessional article of its constitution.

Since the Concordia Lutheran Conference, in spite of the charges it makes, has expressed a desire to engage in doctrinal discussions with us on the matter in question, and since our 1980 resolution also states that "we, too, desire such doctrinal discussions as can lead to a truly God-pleasing union," we keep on testifying with the hope and prayer that the desired fruits will be forthcoming.

In connection with this, the *Lutheran Spokesman* editor, Pastor D. Lau, reviewed the matter in the October, 1980, issue. Of special interest at the moment is the note on page 7 which lists a number of more recent essays on the point in question for further study. There are other writings of such nature available. One of some length by Pastor A. T. Kretzmann is of special significance because the writer once held the "Missouri" position. After a thorough study of the passages involved, he now accepts the "Wisconsin" position.

A BASIC DEFINITION If all would agree — and it is difficult to see how there can be dissent — that the Church is present where the "marks," the Means of Grace, are in use, there should be no problem. The Gospel creates faith — those with faith are believers — believers are the Church. If we stay with this basic, Scriptural proposition, all troubles with the doctrine of the Church would disappear. This simply means that no matter in what combination believers get together, where there is faith, there is the Church. Faith does not stay home when we go to a synodical convention.

However, when we speak of this definition we are not overlooking the restrictions Scripture itself places upon believers in the exercise of the Keys. These things come into consideration: the call with its specific assign-

ment, fellowshiping and avoiding according to what is taught and done, the position of women, and decency and good order. None of these, however, changes the basic proposition.

The doctrine of the Church is established in such passages as Eph. 2:19-20 and Eph. 5:25-27. Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them," is also used by those on the "Wisconsin" side. This is strongly ridiculed by the Concordia Conference. We single it out for special attention. The Concordia Conference, however, does grant this much: "That this group under certain circumstances could be a local congregation and thus a church in the Scriptural sense is not questioned, but is altogether possible." Take note of the restriction, not included in the passage, that the group has to be "a local congregation."

Bloedel writes: "Reaching for straws, as it were, to defend their position, the heterodox Lutheran bodies (mentioned above) try to make a sedes for their doctrine out of Matt. 18:20." We would not quarrel with the exegesis that here Jesus is making a promise of His presence no matter how small the group, but we insist that it also can stand as a description of the Church without superimposing the "local congregation" concept into it.

Whenever the debate about Matt. 18:20 arises, much is made of the claim that only the third group, the "church," as distinct from the one or two or three, can excommunicate. Considering the context, the point of this section is not specifically to teach excommunication. That it perhaps can and has been done has to be conceded.

Jesus, in the previous verse, beginning with verse 12, is speaking of the effort to be made in finding a "sheep that has gone astray." In verse 15 He begins a practical illustration how one might go about regaining such a one, a brother who has "trespassed against thee." By adding others in numerical progression to the effort simply intensifies and broadens the admonition. Even though the "church" is brought into the picture, in verse

17, "... let him be unto thee (ἔστω σοι) ..." is singular and goes back to the individual of verse 15. The purpose of the entire passage is to describe what one does in an effort to win back another, and that in good conscience the effort can be brought to an end.

This Matthew passage has to do with the exercise of the Ministry of the Keys as expressed in verse 18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Let it not be forgotten that the Keys are in the possession of all involved — the one, the two or three, the church. The individual is not denied the power to absolve sin if he is heard. By the same token, the individual is not denied the power to bind sin ("... let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."). It is man-handling Scripture to grant to the individual the power to pronounce absolution but deny to him the power to bind. Where there is the power to loose, there is the power to bind. (Cf. John 20:21-23.)

A traditional mind-set can confuse us. Making a distinction in the use of the Keys because the term "church" is used for the final admonition cannot stand, and certainly does not set aside the truth that where the Means are in use, the Church is present.

EISEGESIS The Bloedel article is replete with Bible passages. From these passages it is concluded, among other things, that the Church is only present where a group "... gathers together, regularly, frequently, and consistently around the Word of God and Sacraments." What Scripture says that? If you want to speak of confusion, here it is. The essential nature of the Church is confused with its activity, its function. Obviously, this way of speaking is injected to support the local congregation concept.

Again, it is said: "The local, visible Christian congregation is thus set before us in Scripture as the only God-ordained functioning unit in the Church by which the full exercise of the Office of the Keys is to be carried out among men. It is this group only that has the promise of God that there are Christians in its midst be-

cause of the Marks of the Church which it possesses — because the constant watering with the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are carried on." Notice the words, "... the only God-ordained functioning unit ..." and "... is this group only that has the promise of God ..." Restrictions are injected which Scripture does not impose.

There is no debate that for the most part when Scripture speaks of the Church in the earthly sense, it pertains to local groups. It cannot be otherwise. Man is a finite being. He has to be at some place at any given time. But to conclude from the space limitation of man that we now have a God-ordained form of the Church is going beyond what Scripture says. We are confronted with obtuse literalism. It is here that the A. T. Kretzmann paper does us service. If we free ourselves from unwarranted presuppositions we will come to see, as he did, that the pertinent passages do not say what it is claimed they say.

This also applies to the passages which pertain to the public ministry. There is no question that Scripture speaks of the preaching of the Gospel being set in motion by believers here and there, in local situations. But even in apostolic days this ministry took on different forms. In Eph. 4:11 we read: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Even though today we may not know precisely what particular assignment each of these groups had, yet this is sufficient evidence from Scripture to show that there were variations in the public exercise of the Gospel ministry. The apostle Paul and others were not "local pastors" as one might think of it today, and yet they were public servants of the Gospel in the fullest sense of the word. In Titus 1:5 Paul is speaking of one of the manifestations of the public ministry mentioned in the Ephesians passage. In no way does it establish a specific or required "form" of the public ministry.

NON SEQUITURS

The theme of the Bloedel paper says that the WELS and CLC doctrine of the Church and Ministry "endangers other plain teachings of Scripture." In keeping with this aim the first sentence

of the essay reads: "One proper method of examining false teaching is to draw the false teaching out to its logical conclusions." Historical examples are cited from the Confessions. No one says that this should not be done. When we are dealing with error it is well to be aware of all its implications. The key words here are "logical conclusions."

The last part of the article speaks at some lengths of the supposed confusion to which the teaching of WELS and CLC leads. These are all *non sequiturs*. They are not logical conclusions. Without hesitation we maintain that neither in abstract theology nor in practical application need or do these things happen.

In this connection there is a discounting of the role brotherly love and regard for decency and good order play in the functioning of the Church. To this we would add the call which includes the assigned work that is to be done in the Gospel at a given place at a given time. To ignore this is a huge mistake. We don't set aside one Scripture when we deal with another. All elements play a decisive role in how we function.

Because of the flesh, no one claims perfection. Here on earth disorder and abuses arise. And not just in the area and activity of a synod. History reveals that hierarchical tendencies and tyranny show themselves also in the pastor-congregation relationship. Be that as it may, those who function under the "Wisconsin" Church and Ministry doctrine are keenly aware of the call and its included assignment, and of brotherly consideration and good order. Indeed, we would say of a Men's Club that if it is gathered together, not just for bowling, but to do something in the "Father's business," that it possesses and exercises the Keys. Why don't they then call a pastor; why don't they send out a missionary; why don't they excommunicate? Because these functions have been assigned to other groupings of believers. There is no need that they do these things. To take it upon themselves would be a violation of brotherly love and good order.

On the practical side, we suggest: "Examine the

history." Can it factually be demonstrated that the "Wisconsin" teaching on Church and Ministry "endangered other plain teachings of Scripture"? Can it be established that there were more abuses in the Wisconsin than in the Missouri synod? We have lived under this teaching in the public ministry and we still have to see that it caused the confusion and abuses that are claimed. It just isn't so!

We plead that the pertinent Scripture passages be studied with an open mind. Then the hoped for unity in doctrine can come to pass. It is in this way the Holy Spirit works.

Board of Doctrine

EDITOR'S NOTE: In connection with the reference to Matt. 18:17, it may be helpful for our readers to consider the following presentation which was based on Prof. John Schaller's *Pastorale Praxis*: "There is nothing in Matthew 18:17 to indicate that the church which is involved in church discipline must be organized in a specific manner. The presence of the church is determined by the fact that the means of grace are in use in the midst of a number of professed believers; that they are gathered in Jesus' name (Mt. 18:10), that is, in response to the gospel revelation to perform the functions which the Lord has assigned to them. Our Lord's concern is not to grant a special privilege to a group of Christians organized in a specific manner, but to make sure that a sinning brother is given every possible opportunity to be confronted with the seriousness of his sin. To read more into Matthew 18 than is there can lead to a restriction of the New Testament liberty and flexibility by the introduction of a ceremonial law, to hierarchical attitudes which consider an excommunication valid only if declared in the presence of a pastor and announced by him, or to an evasion of a duty of love when an offense occurs of which no one in the offender's congregation knows." (*The Shepherd under Christ*, by Armin Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, page 169.)

With regard to the claim that the pastoral office as it pertains to the local congregation is the only divinely instituted office of the public ministry, it is well to call to mind the presentation of our confession on this matter: "We affirm to the contrary, that apart from the general directive addressed to children of God urging them to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel we look in vain in Scripture for words that constitute a divine institution of a public office of the ministry in any specific form, aside from the Old Testament priesthood. The New Testament records the fact that certain forms of the public ministry were in use in apostolic times. Men were employed as gifts of God for certain phases of the work, and their several offices are given specific names appropriate to the duties thereof. We cannot be certain that the functions of any one of these corresponded in all respects to those prescribed in the Call of a present-day pastor in the Church, although certainly the work and responsibilities represented by such a call have been discharged by the Public Ministry of the New Testament Church since its inception.

"We cannot point to a formal institution even of the Apostolate. God did not command that there be Apostles in the Church; He simply created them when He needed them. And to this day the Lord Jesus Christ creates forms of office, old and new, in His Church, through the Church, supplying her with the needed gifts for the occasion. The Gospel, working in the hearts of those who believe it, leads them to the establishment of the public administration of the Means of Grace in their midst. Whether in any given instance this work is to be done by one man, whether he is to have the entire supervision and the entire complex of duties in his hands, or whether there shall be two or more among whom it is shared ... these matters lie in the freedom and discretion of the spiritual priests of God. Whatever they need, the Lord will supply; and they will use His gifts to the best advantage of the Church.

"We deplore and reject any doctrine of the Public Ministry which interprets Scripture as teaching a divine institution of outward form and thus infringes upon the dearly bought liberty of the sons of God. We hold that

in Christian liberty the Church may and does exercise the functions of the Public Ministry, when it calls qualified persons into the pastorate, into the work of Christian Day-school teaching, into a professorship at its High Schools and Colleges, or as elders and deacons who are to assist pastors and teachers in their ministry. We believe that each and all of these offices are administrations of the Public Ministry, that their duties as such are prescribed by the Lord for the Gospel ministry, and that their respective form is governed, not by divine decree but by the terms of the Call as issued by the Church." (*Concerning Church and Ministry*, pp. 34-36.)



REVIEWS

I Believe: A Study of the Three Universal or Ecumenical Creeds, 1976. 24 pp. \$1.25.

I Believe: A Study of the Formula of Concord, 1977. 24 pp. \$1.25.

I Believe: A Study of the Smalcald Articles, 1978. 24 pp. \$1.25.

I Believe: A Study of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, 1979. 29 pp. \$1.25.

I Believe: A Study of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, 1980. 80 pp. \$2.00.

The aforementioned booklets were published by the Lutheran Synod Book Company (Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota 56001) for the Board of Publications of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, in commemoration of the several anniversaries of the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. This explains what may otherwise appear to be an unusual order of publication, the booklet on the Formula of Concord, for example, appearing before that on the Augsburg Confession. Inasmuch as each succeeding booklet is built to an extent on the preceding, the reader may benefit from studying them in the order that they appeared in print, rather than in the historical order of the confessions themselves.

The author of all five booklets is Bjarne W. Teigen, a professor at Bethany Lutheran Seminary and president emeritus of Bethany Lutheran College. Prof. Teigen's interests and studies during a long career in teaching are evident in these publications. His style of writing is lucid and interesting; his grasp of the history surrounding the various confessions is manifest; and his acquaintance with Martin Luther's life, thought, and writings is commendable. It is evident that these booklets, comprising a total of close to 200 large pages, were not dashed

off in haste, but were the product of comprehensive research and careful preparation.

A word concerning the format of the booklets is in place. They are 8½X11 inches in size, and are punched for easy insertion in a ring binder. The type faces selected by the printer provide eye appeal and make for ease in reading. The first four booklets are divided into sections of modest length, appropriate for individual sessions of classes or study groups. The final booklet contains longer and more detailed chapters on the various doctrinal topics of the basic Lutheran symbol, the Augsburg Confession of 1530. In general, each section or chapter includes historical background, followed by a discussion and application of the doctrine involved. The many illustrations are interesting, and some of them, such as a series of pictures of Cranach's altar painting in the City Church of Wittenberg, are put to good pedagogical use.

The historical discussions, while not as detailed in every case as those of Bente in the *Concordia Triglotta*, are interesting, and in a number of places present facts which were not available sixty years ago when the *Triglotta* was published.

The author succeeded well in showing the relevance of the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran confessions for our own age. His repeated emphasis upon the formal and material principles of Christianity, Holy Scripture as the only source of doctrine and justification by faith in Christ as the only way of salvation, is of great value. In his application of doctrine to modern life he touches upon a wide range of subjects, such as the unchanging face of Roman Catholicism, the spiritual dangers of Reformed theology, the anti-Trinitarian errors of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, the millennialism of men like Hal Lindsay, the application of Luther's explanations of the Ten Commandments to the prevalent sins of our day, the historical-critical method, the charismatic movement, the ecumenical movement, modern-day humanism — and much more!

In view of the pope's recent attempt to woo the Lu-

theran regions of Germany, Prof. Teigen's reaffirmation of the Roman Catholic church as being the Antichrist of Scripture is appreciated. He shows clearly the irreconcilability of the Lutheran (Scriptural!) and Catholic positions on justification, affirming that "in the kingdom of God, where the Gospel of justification by faith alone saves and comforts us, there is an unbridgable gulf between us and the official teachings of the Roman Church" (booklet on Smalcald Articles, p. 9). In answer to those misguided Lutherans who believe that Catholics have moved closer to Scriptural theology in recent years, the author states that since the time of the Augsburg Confession their position "has deteriorated even more" (booklet on Augsburg Confession and Apology, p. 19).

There were a few places where the present reviewer found it necessary to question statements made by the author. A remark about "the sin of persistently and publicly teaching false doctrine" (booklet on Catechisms, p. 11) brought to mind the controversies among Lutherans during the 1950's, when some developed the false position that one may continue in fellowship with false teachers until he reaches the judgment that they are "persisting" in their errors in spite of patient admonition.

It was not clear to this reviewer what the full meaning of the author was in his discussion on the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, who are in heaven" (booklet on Catechisms, p. 18). It must, in any case, be recognized that the words, "Our Father," do not in themselves contain an injunction to pray "for all men," but they constitute rather a confession by each praying believer that he is part of a spiritual family whom the heavenly Father has created for Himself through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the passage from Malachi 2:10, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?", does not in its context refer to the physical creation of mankind and a divine fatherhood of all men, as some have contended, but to the gracious creation by God of a people for Himself during the Old Testament period.

Disturbing to this reviewer were contentions by the author that the bread and wine in the Sacrament are truly

the body and blood of Christ "when the pastor speaks the words of institution in the name and person of Jesus Christ over the elements" (booklet on Catechisms, p. 25), and again that "the Body and Blood of Christ are present before the actual distribution" (booklet on Augsburg Confession and Apology, p. 49). For these statements could imply a presence of the body and blood of Christ apart from the sacramental eating and drinking. In the articles on the Lord's Supper, however, the Lutheran confessions are careful not to specify a time when the body and blood come to be present. Moreover, they associate this real presence with the entire sacramental action, including not only the speaking of the words of institution, but also the distribution of the elements and their reception by the communicants.

In general, it must be recognized that these five publications can serve a useful purpose in the pastor's study, in Bible classes, in symbolics courses in Lutheran colleges and seminaries, and such like. The level of language is not highly technical (difficult terms are routinely explained within parentheses), and questions for discussion and further study are included at the end of each booklet. For those scholars who desire to pursue the study of the confessions further, bibliographical references are also provided.

C. Kuehne

Biblical Christology, by John Schaller. Northwestern Publishing House, 1981. 287 pp. \$10.95.

Some of our readers will recognize this book as a reproduction of a volume originally published in 1919 and extensively used as a seminary text book in the area of Christology. Unlike a previous publication by John Schaller, *Pastorale Praxis*, which was written in the German language, this volume was written in the English language and was especially welcome at a time when the English language was just coming into more general use among Lutherans in the United States. This, then, is not a translation but appears in the language in which the author

wrote it. In it Prof. Schaller demonstrated a remarkable command of the language, as well as a mastery of Scripture and its exegesis, which latter feature is, of course, its outstanding virtue. The presentation is marked by its conciseness and its Scripture-oriented approach. A special and much appreciated feature is the writing out of the Scripture passages in full. This takes into account a general weakness of passing over Scripture references without stopping to look them up.

The present volume is a reworking of the Schaller text in this respect that technical errors which had crept into the original are corrected and references are updated to conform to editions now in use. A welcome addition is the index of Greek words and phrases. As in the original, the Scripture references are indexed. Also a 43-page appendix is added, on "The nature, origin and effects of Saving Faith," which was an article written by Prof. Schaller and intended by him as the next section "of his intended English Dogmatics of which this 'Christology' was the first part." A full scale English Dogmatics had been planned but the Lord of the Church took His servant to the heavenly home (the goal of all Christian Dogmatics) before this work could be accomplished. But we are thankful that Prof. Schaller was spared for the Church long enough to permit him to write *Biblical Christology*, which we inherit and recommend to the attention and study of all our readers, both clergy and lay.

The importance of this branch of Christian Dogmatics is set forth so well in the author's own words in the Preface: "This book discusses the doctrinal aspect of the very core of the Christian faith. It is an attempt to set forth, as briefly as may be compatible with clearness, precision, and comprehensiveness, what the Scriptures say concerning the redemption of Jesus Christ. Because all Christian doctrines ultimately rest upon this fundamental revelation, they are necessarily touched upon in the course of the discussion. By the same token, as all errors of doctrine finally tend to destroy some vital feature of Christological truth, they insistently claim a share of our attention, serving as a foil which causes the truth to stand out the more clearly. It is a historical fact that the emergence of error in all its various

gradations of hideousness compelled the church of God to strive after a deeper and better understanding of the Word spoken by God." (p. 16)

Of interest to our students who have used Dr. Franz Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, is the following paragraph in the Preface: "The writer regrets that he was unable to insert a greater number of references to Dr. F. Pieper's excellent presentation of Christology in the first published volume of his *Christliche Dogmatik* (St. Louis, Mo., 1918). The book was not ready to hand when the manuscript for this present volume was being prepared for the press. Anyone, however, who will think it worthwhile to compare this modest effort with the greater work, will discover that the two are in fundamental agreement throughout." (p. 19) Those of our readers who used Dr. A. Hoenecke's *Dogmatik* in the classroom and later studies, will appreciate Prof. Schaller's reference to his predecessor: "Those who are familiar with Dr. Hoenecke's method of presentation will not fail to discover traces of its influence upon the present book, most distinctly perhaps in the general distribution of the material. 'Hoenecke's *Dogmatik*' will always hold a place of special distinction as being the first complete handbook of positive Lutheran dogmatics published in America, in the German language. Added to this, the fact that it handles the subject in a masterful manner entirely original to the author, is deemed sufficient reason for the frequent references to it contained in the present volume." (p. 18)

For the benefit of the younger CLC generation who do not know the connection, it may be well to mention that Prof. John Schaller was the father of Prof. Egbert Schaller, Mrs. Edmund Reim, and Ruth Schaller. The only surviving children are Ruth Schaller and a son, the Rev. Gilbert Schaller.

In closing this review, we can do no better than to repeat the closing words of John Schaller in the Preface: "But to all users of this book may grace and peace be multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

C. M. Gullerud

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