



"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 JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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# CHURCH -- STATE

## Social Issues

### INTRODUCTION

As we begin to discuss the subject of the relationship of church and state with special reference to social issues we invite the reader to review the following statement (*Statement of Faith and Purpose of the Church of the Lutheran Confession 3-4*):

It is our single purpose to be a Christian church which strives to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible, by which alone man can know the true God and the way to eternal life. This our purpose and commitment rests upon the following statements of the Bible:

*Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

*John 17:3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

*Acts 4:12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

We disavow the position that the church as a body is to promote social and political causes and opinions of men. The individual Christian will indeed show the fruits of faith by his concern for social and political causes wherever they present themselves. Our right of existence as a church, however, is limited by our readiness to say with

St. Paul that we are "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (I Corinthians 2:2)

*I Peter 2:9: But 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 marvelous light.*

*Matthew 5:13-16: Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

We believe that it is essential to review these Scriptural principles when we address the subject of this essay because the basic reasons for the confusion of the responsibilities of the church on the one hand and the state on the other are found in the lack of understanding or refusal to accept the basic Scriptural principles involved.

## THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Let it be said at the outset, the church is outside of its God-given realm of activity when it seeks affinity with the kingdoms of this world (John 17:14). Likewise, the kingdoms of men have no right to attempt to govern the church (Matt. 22:15ff.). The church is constrained by the power of the Spirit to give its ultimate allegiance to its Lord and Savior and be guided alone by His words in Holy Writ in all matters of faith and life. The church, therefore, is like a society within a society, like pilgrims in a foreign land. The kingdoms of

man, on the other hand, are governed by reason. Though it is the Lord's will that governments be established, yet it must be recognized that it is man who attempts to govern men with his reason. What complicates matters is that those who would speak on behalf of the church are often those who fail to recognize (1) the spiritually hostile nature of a fallen world around us; (2) the real purpose of the church as a society within a society, and (3) the power which the church alone possesses.

Firstly, the Apostle Paul characterized our struggle in the world when he wrote by inspiration: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil . . ." (Eph. 6:12). Satan is ever with us and the fallen world is ever around us.

Secondly, too often the fact is overlooked that the church exists to give all glory to God, proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus, and live in total commitment to Him. It is to shine as a light in a sin-darkened world but may never become subject to or seek affinity with the kingdoms of this fallen world.

Thirdly, the church alone possesses the one dynamic power which alone can bring about real absolute change in people for good, not only for now but for eternity. But if the church fails to use the "instruments" which God has given it and rather chooses the methods of the world, it has sacrificed its strength and its reason for existence. If "the salt of the earth . . . loses its saltiness . . . it is no longer good for anything . . ." (Matt. 5:13).

## A DESPERATE ATTEMPT FOR CHANGE

If you have noticed, particularly since the 1960s, those who have become self-appointed mouthpieces for the church have been trying to spearhead a movement for change. And we understand why. The violent social revolution of the 60s with the political assassinations as well as antiwar and civil-rights demands was coming right into our living rooms in living color. And while the coals of the 60s were still smoldering, the 70s

began to burst with all kinds of shocking revelations. As one man catalogs it:

The world woke up to staggering problems--mass starvation in Biafra, Bangladesh, North Africa; hunger in two-thirds of the world, over-abundance in the other third; revolutions in the Third World; skyrocketing energy costs punctuated by block-long gas lines; wholesale destruction of the environment; double-digit inflation; religious persecution in communist countries; a powder keg in the Middle East; local and international terrorists like the Baader-Meinhof Gang, the Irish Republican Army, Italy's Red Guard; skyjacking; and the menace of nuclear war.

America showed signs of collapse. Urban violent crimes doubled; the divorce rate reached fifty percent; abortion was made available to anyone who wanted it; porno shops and massage parlors sprang up like ragweed; population control groups distributed contraceptives to teens.

Simultaneously, "liberationists" began to demand their rights. Homosexuals and lesbians sought gay rights; feminists lobbied for the Equal Rights Amendment; blacks agitated for education and jobs; Hispanics, Native Americans, Orientals demanded their fair share; the poor and needy reached out for help; ban the bomb and no nuke movements began to call for disarmament; Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club, Project Jonah, and others worked to save the environment.

But the seventies have faded into a new era. Ronald Reagan is in, Jimmy Carter is out. Jerry Falwell has replaced Jerry Rubin in the media spotlight. Phyllis Schlafly is hot, Bella Abzug is not. A backlash against big government, moral decadence, military weakness, and soft political leadership is sweeping the country. There is a movement afoot to "get this country working again," a desire to "bring America back to its moral and religious greatness." (Robert E. Webber, *The Moral Majority: Right or Wrong* 11-12)

## THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

With this as a backdrop we recognize why those who believe they are speaking for the church feel an obligation to bring about some religious leadership. So what do we find? On the right we hear advocates of the Moral Majority and others proclaiming their solutions (all quotations from Webber 15):

"1. Biblical morality and freedom are central to God's plan for people and nations."

It is proposed that since godless communism and secular humanism have infiltrated society and are threatening to destroy the moral fiber of our country our nation must be moved to rise up in opposition by returning to sound moral principles as God directs.

"2. The free enterprise system and the political structure of capitalism are mandated by scripture and therefore related to biblical morality."

America is considered the messiah of the world by some and therefore must establish its leadership. It must do this, it is proposed, by returning to the free enterprise system, positive patriotism, the so-called religion of the founding fathers, and a strong military defense. Specifically, many of the religious leaders on the right believe that by political activity one may be able to produce a biblical morality in society by defeating the Equal Rights Amendment, opposing abortion, sexual permissiveness, contraceptives for teens, gay rights, etc.

"3. America is a country chosen by God to be an example of a nation built on the biblical teaching of a free enterprise system and Christian morality. Its role in the world is to preach the gospel and spread the values of freedom and morality."

Since some see America as a messiah they consider it to have been chosen by God for a special mission to the world. Events, especially in the 20th century, have negatively affected America's calling by God. Therefore, the secular forces which are eating away on the foundation of our country must be repudiated.

"4. The church and other moral people must rise up to save America by returning it to its original economic, political, and spiritual principles."

It is suggested that it is the church's responsibility to oppose big government and its increasing encroachment in the family, education, business as well as the church. Economically the church should fight to reduce federal spending, lower taxes, increase military spending, and restore American dignity around the world.

## THE RELIGIOUS LEFT

The thinking of the religious left as espoused by the World Council of Churches and, for that matter, main-line church leadership in general has been outlined in the following fashion (all quotations from Webber 17):

"1. Justice and concern for the poor is central to the biblical vision of life."

Those who would be spokesmen for the church on the left express their concern for those who are oppressed in the world by "economic exploitation, discrimination, and the perpetuation of injustices." They "charge American capitalism and the imperialistic policies of this 'oppressive and godless nation' as the major cause for these problems."

"2. The Marxist critique of capitalism as the major source of injustice is correct. Therefore, the overthrow of capitalism (sometimes through violence) is desirable as a means through which socialism (which is more true to biblical teaching) may be established."

Socialism and in some cases communism is heralded as the answer to the economic problems of the world. The church is urged to call for revolution in order to free the people from the oppression and discrimination of capitalism.

"3. America is an imperialistic nation which supports right-wing governments, uses an unfair amount of the world's resources, and is indifferent to the needs of the poor and the oppressed."



As God through Moses liberated the people of Israel from the oppression of Egypt so it is proposed that the church must find and support the movements which "intend to liberate people from economic, political, and social oppression."

"4. The church must take sides against the oppressor (capitalism) in support of all economic, political, and personal liberation movements."

It is common, therefore, to find the left in general support of liberal government welfare programs, the Equal Rights Amendment, governmental legislation which would grant equal rights for homosexuals, reduction in government spending for the military, and disarmament.

## NO THEOCRACIES

Now whether we agree or do not agree with some of the principles set forth by either the right or the left is not the issue here. The point is that such principles, either those on the right or those on the left, do not represent the approach of the people of God to the social problems of our society. For example, God's Word does not place the Lord's special divine approval upon any one form of government. There are no theocracies. As we have pointed out, government, though ordained by God, is functional only through reason. Therefore, the economic and political systems, whether they be capitalistic, socialistic, or communistic, are often controlled by the dominion of evil. The society of believers, the church, is "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God." And its purpose is to "declare the praises of him who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). But America is not now nor ever has been a chosen nation of God as those on the right proclaim. The leftists, on the other hand, find capitalism to be a promoter of a sinful society and think that our social utopia on earth is to be found by engineering politics in such a way as to replace capitalism with another form of government like socialism.

## THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER

Thus, those who are heard and often identified with the church have misrepresented the church and, furthermore, are spiritually impotent to address the social issues in any meaningful way. They have set aside the Word of God which is the power of God which alone can change the heart of man. They have favored, rather, an attempt to bring about social change by politics. But the truth that has ever stood stands yet today, namely, society is truly under the curse of sin and there is only one deliverance, one salvation. The church alone has been entrusted with it, namely, the simple message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again to destroy the devil, sin, death, and every evil. The responsibility of the church is to stand as a light in the midst of this sin-darkened world, for it has the only hope for life and light. It will not do to compromise with the radical right or the radical left but rather to continue to espouse, maintain, and declare what might be considered by many to be the simplistic center, Biblical Truth.

## A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Mankind's rebellion against God in the beginning has affected all of human society and every social involvement. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, came to rescue man from the bondage of sin and dominion of the devil by His living, dying, and arising from the dead. By faith in Him man is lifted out of the order of things controlled by evil and given a new birth of freedom to begin life with God in the kingdom of light and life. Only in Him and in His Word do we become and remain free--free from the shackles of prejudice, racism, discrimination, greed, etc. In Him and in Him alone do we learn the meaning of true love for God which spills over in our lives manifesting true love for our fellowman. At the same time it is to be remembered always that true love for God places Him and His Word always first in all matters of social import. The church is indeed a liberated society of God's purchased people in this world. Their spiritual liberation in

Christ causes them to realize that in practical matters of social life, also, as the Apostle Paul puts it:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

Therefore discrimination, racism, human rights, helping the poor, and all such, find their solution in the fact that God's people know that they are all by nature dead in sin and in Christ they all have become alive. Now, they all live with Him, for Him, and through Him. They all have come, by the power of the Spirit, into the melting pot of God's love and in Christ are brothers and sisters, God's family.

And so, God's people stand in the midst of a world of social abuse and injustice with the Gospel of God's love for mankind. God's people armed with the blessing of His Word which is filled with the power of the Spirit is that which alone can change the heart of man, causing him to love as he has been loved by God, to forgive as he has been forgiven by God. Indeed,

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 5:22-6:2)

## IN SUMMARY

Of course, God's people are not shining as brightly as they ought. By reason of sin they themselves too

often overlook or selfishly disregard those in need, those who are being ill treated by their fellowmen, those who are in poverty, those who have committed crimes against society and need to see that Jesus died for their sins too. These people have souls, right? Then the people of God have a responsibility to be involved in seeking "each one the other's well-being" (1 Cor. 10:24). We, as God's people, apart from any governmental involvement, need to be generally alert to opportunities which the Lord places before us, enabling us to exercise our faith in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation. For, after all, faith expresses itself through love (Gal. 5:6). We know that we have in our possession that which alone can make out of people new creatures in Christ. And "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17) All things become new as one's life is turned around to focus on Christ rather than on this world and the things of this world.

The civil religions promoted by the moralists of the WCC and the so-called Moral Majority must be recognized for what they are. They have left the Word of the Lord in their approach to this sin-laden world and would substitute politics for it. May God's people ever stand in the midst of this world as the salt of the earth, inviting all far and wide:

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;  
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without  
cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your  
labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and  
your soul will delight in the richest of fare.  
Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul  
may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my  
unfailing kindnesses promised to David. (Isa.  
55:1-3)

*L. D. Redlin*

## DISCERNING THE SPIRITUAL

God is spirit; literally, "Spirit--God" (John 4:24)! Man is dust (Gen. 2:7), living and breathing dust, but endowed with five senses and an intellect to assimilate knowledge and gain understanding. Immediately after creation God communicated His thoughts to man in words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Man was able to and did understand. There was no barrier, for man was spiritually in tune with God. Then came the fall into sin which immediately altered man's relationship to God and destroyed his ability to comprehend what God said. Trust in God was replaced with mistrust. Man shifted his trust from the invisible God to himself and that which was visible to his senses. Since God is spirit, His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). The things of God are spiritual. How does God who is spirit convey spiritual things to man who is natural (1 Cor. 2:14) and carnal (Rom. 7:14)--limited to his senses as vehicles of comprehending, yet spiritually incompetent to comprehend?

When we observe our Spirit-God's manner of communicating with us, we find that He often uses that which we can perceive through our senses to convey that which can be known only spiritually through the gracious working of His Spirit on our minds. Thus that which is objective to the senses becomes the vehicle to convey that which is objective spiritually and so eternal spiritual reality.

Consider the forgiveness of sins. That is a spiritual reality: Only God can and does forgive sins. But who of us has heard this word of forgiveness directly and personally from the lips of God? Who has sat in the heavenly courtroom and observed and recorded the trial of the sinner--the accusation against him, his unconditioned confession of guilt, and then his real pardon? Forgiveness is a very real divine spiritual reality. Yet it cannot be perceived or apprehended by the senses. But God must and does succeed in conveying that which is imperceptible to man's senses to man. How does God achieve this miracle? His ways are diverse, addressing

themselves to man's senses and imagination, yet always convincing.

## COLOR CHANGES

One of the most beloved of all evangelical texts is the message of the Prophet Isaiah to his rebellious people who had merited nothing more than their Lord's judgment in time and eternally. Forgiveness was something that they didn't even realize they needed and had no right to expect. Yet the Lord offered and conveyed the reality of that spiritual blessing through the visual device of contrasting colors:

"Come now, and let us reason together," says  
the LORD,  
"Though your sins are like scarlet,  
They shall be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They shall be as wool." (Isa. 1:18, NJKV)

Scarlet has become the color of sin, e.g., Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. White is the color of the holiness of our God and of purity among men, e.g., the bridal gown. Sins as scarlet turned into the whiteness of newly fallen snow! What a picture to the eye! So sharp! So clear! So visible! So expressive of our heavenly Father's invisible forgiveness!

## ANTIPODES

David, in the 103rd Psalm, used both vertical and horizontal antipodes to convey the absoluteness of divine forgiveness:

For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;  
As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.  
(Vv. 11-12, NJKV)

Science fiction writers write books entitled "Lost in Space"; because of the mercy of our God in Christ Jesus our sins are truly lost in space, "for as the

heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him." "O east is east, and west is west, And never the twain shall meet," wrote Kipling. So far has our God removed our transgression from us. "Azazel," the scapegoat laden with the sins of Israel, was driven but a short distance without the camp. Messiah the Prince, who was cut off without the camp, removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Incomprehensible distances, both vertical and horizontal, are used by our God to assure us of the reality of His forgiveness.

Micah put the point across with the use of the reverse vertical in his concluding panegyric of Israel's incomparable God:

Who is a God like You,  
 Pardoning iniquity,  
 And passing over the transgression of the remnant  
 of His Heritage?  
 He does not retain His anger forever,  
 Because He delights in mercy.  
 He will again have compassion on us,  
 And will subdue our iniquities.  
 You will cast all our sins  
 Into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7:18-19, NJKV)

As the waters once covered the primeval earth and destroyed all but saved Noah and his family by floating the ark, so the depths of the waters save by holding down with tremendous pressure all our sins. Through the cutting off of Messiah the Prince, our sins lie buried in the depth of the sea.

## BANKRUPTCY

When our Lord taught His disciples to pray, He used an image from the commercial world to picture the load-removing reality of forgiveness:

And forgive us our debts,  
 As we forgive our debtors. (Matt. 6:12)

Debts can be large or small, bearable or crushing. What our Lord had in mind became clear towards the end

of His ministry when He told the parable of the unfor-  
 giving servant (Matt. 18:21-35). One of the servants  
 owed his king ten thousand talents. Total confiscation  
 of his property and the sale of his family into slavery  
 would not begin to cover the debt. There was no way  
 out, no "Chapter 11" to plead! Thousands of individuals  
 have committed suicide in the face of unpayable debts.  
 The servant pleaded for patience with the impossible  
 promise to pay all; he received complete cancellation of  
 his debt. What a vivid and ever meaningful picture of  
 divine forgiveness; for who does not struggle, often  
 seemingly hopelessly, with mortgage payments, automobile  
 payments, medical and hospital bills, margin calls, or  
 whatever.

## CLEANSING

In the 51st Psalm David pleaded:

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
 Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
 Make me to hear joy and gladness,  
 That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.  
 Hide Your face from my sins,  
 And blot out all my iniquities. (Ps. 51:7-9, NJKV)

Here one vivid picture after another is flashed  
 before the mind's eye. The purging with hyssop recalls  
 the night of the departure from Egypt when the doorposts  
 and the lintel were painted in blood with a hyssop (Ex.  
 12:22), also the elaborate cleansing rites of the leper  
 (Lev. 14) when the hyssop was used to sprinkle the blood  
 of a bird seven times on a leper to symbolize his  
 cleansing. Next comes a repeated washing with the vivid  
 color impression of "whiter than snow." Then the hear-  
 ing of joy and gladness, followed by the healing of  
 broken bones. And then the hiding of the divine face  
 from my sins so that the face of the Lord can again  
 shine upon me, for the hiding of the face effects the  
 blotting out of "all my iniquities"--without a trace or  
 a stain remaining. Each line expresses a distinct pic-  
 ture which cumulatively reinforces the spiritual reality  
 from the base of the material and physical. Forgiveness



is for real, just as you can feel and see cleansing, hear the music of joy, experience the healing of broken bones, and see the indictment of the holy God erased before your very eyes.

One New Testament passage intensifies the picture of cleaning. It is the assurance of the beloved apostle, who heard from the lips of his teacher, the Baptizer, these words: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) The Apostle John converted that image of the Passover Lamb into the rite of cleaning: ". . . the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

## CLOTHING

Our God saves by taking away that which we have but must be rid of--our sins. He gives that without which we cannot stand before Him--righteousness. Scriptures use the common daily experience of putting on clothing to picture this blessing. The Prophet Isaiah wrote:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
 My soul shall be joyful in my God;  
 For He has clothed me with the garments of  
 salvation,  
 He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
 As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments,  
 And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
 (Isa. 61:10, NJKV)

An elaboration of this symbolic action is to be found in the vision that the Prophet Zechariah saw of Joshua the high priest:

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and

they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by. (Zech. 3:3-5, NJKV)

When was this clothing to take place? The following passage introduces "My Servant the BRANCH," through whom the Lord of hosts would accomplish that which He proclaimed: "And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (Zech. 3:9). That was the day the Servant of the Lord was wounded and died for the transgression of His people, the day Messiah the Prince was cut off--a day future from the time of Zechariah, but past from our point in time.

The New Testament complement of the clothing symbol is to be found in Paul's letter to the Galatians, in which he wrote:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (3:26-27, NJKV)

Isaiah's "garments of salvation" and Zechariah's "rich robes" and "clean turban" become Christ Himself, whom Jeremiah called "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 33:16).

Count Zinzendorf made this symbolic picture of clothing dear to the hearts of hosts of believers with his verses:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head. (*Lutheran  
Hymnal 371:1*)

## THE SEVENTY SEVENS

In response to Daniel's prayer for himself and his people that the Lord remember His covenant and turn away His anger and fury from Jerusalem and His holy mountain, Gabriel was commissioned to reveal unto Daniel the vision of the "Seventy Sevens." To Daniel was revealed the comforting assurance that within "seventy sevens" the covenant would be consummated. Daniel's prayer

revealed that his chief concern was the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple; Gabriel redirected his thinking to the final objective of the covenant, the problem of sin which had brought the Lord's indignation down upon His people. That solution, by which the Seed of Abraham would be a blessing for all the families of the earth, was announced in six infinitive phrases, three negative and three positive:

To finish (restrain) (the) transgression,  
 To make an end of (seal) sins,  
 To make reconciliation for (cover) iniquity,  
 To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
 To seal up vision and prophecy (prophet),  
 And to anoint the Most Holy. (Dan. 9:24)

In these six phrases the blessing brought by the Fulfiller of the covenant is pictured in terms taken from everyday life, official business, and the prescribed worship forms of the people.

1. *To finish (restrain) (the) transgression.* Just a glance at our Hebrew text reveals that problems lie in the path of the interpreter, for the critical notes suggest variant readings. The infinitive form before us in the text is the piel infinitive of אָלַץ, the variant the infinitive of אָלַץ, the latter being translated "finish," the former "restrain." The KJV translates "finish," NIV and NASB "finish" with "restrain" as an alternate reading, Beck "to hold back the crime," and Luther "so wird dem Uebertreten gewehret."

Philip Mauro (*The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* 44-47) makes a strong case for "finish" in the sense of "finish up" or complete, i.e., the guilt of Israel. It was Israel's guilt that brought on the "indignation" of the Babylonian captivity, but Israel had not yet finished the measure of her guilt. That was yet to come with the rejection and murder of her Messiah. Thus Jesus cried out to the Jews, "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt" (Matt. 23:32). In speaking of the opposition he encountered from the Jews in Thessalonica Paul spoke of their "filling up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to

the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16). The case is strong, for the Jews did, indeed, "finish up" their rebellion by killing their Messiah, but the question is whether this tragic historical progression of sin to its self-destructive consummation is what is here presented by Gabriel to Daniel in this first infinitive phrase. That would mean that Gabriel began his response to Daniel's prayer with a prophecy of continuing sin and inevitable judgment.

Dispensationalists apply "to finish transgression" to the nation of Israel in a current and futuristic sense. Walvoord (*Daniel—The Key to Prophetic Revelation* 221), for example, writes: "The expression *to finish* is derived from the piel form of the root *kala* meaning 'to finish' in the sense of bringing to an end. The most obvious meaning is that Israel's course of apostasy and sin and wandering over the face of the earth will be brought to completion within the seventy sevens." This interpretation is "obvious" only to those whose interpretation is dictated by theological presuppositions concerning God's alleged plan for the nation of Israel.

We also take the verb as the piel form of כָּלַךְ, but in an evangelical sense. The verb is used in its qal form for penning up the calves of the cows that were hitched to the cart that was to carry the ark of the covenant from Philistia back to Israel (1 Sam. 6:10). It is also used twice (Jer. 32:2-3) of the imprisonment of Jeremiah. To "shut up" in a pen or cell is "to restrain." David used the verb when he blessed Abigail for keeping or restraining him from shedding the blood of Nabal (1 Sam. 25:34). The psalmist cried out: "I have restrained my feet from every evil way" (Ps. 119:101). "God remembered Noah . . . and the rain from heaven was restrained" (Gen. 8:1-2).

In what way was "the transgression" penned up or imprisoned and so restrained? פֶּשַׁע is most commonly translated "transgression," also "rebellion, sin, and trespass." It is "transgression" in the sense of a breach of faith, a falling away. THE transgression is to be restrained, transgression being personalized.

Sin is pictured as a savage beast about to spring on its victim (Gen. 4:7). Sin stalked God's people in Old Testament times; it had gained the complete mastery over the heathen. Unrestrained sin brought on the judgment of the flood, the curse of Babel, and the Babylonian captivity to God's people. The Apostle Paul painted the picture of THE SIN entering the world, bringing death in its wake (Rom. 5:12). Paul told the Athenians that in former times God "overlooked" times of ignorance (Acts 17:30); the restraint had not yet come. The restraint was only symbolic, for in Old Testament times the Lord God commanded that blood sacrifices be made to counteract the all-pervasive power of sin in the world. But all the blood of animals could not contain or restrain the relentless march of sin with death in its wake, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). The Old Testament believers looked longingly ahead for the final containment or restraining of sin: "I have waited for your salvation, O LORD" (Jacob, Gen. 49:18). As the New Testament era opened Simeon was in the temple waiting for the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25). That consolation was effected "in one day" (Zech. 3:9)--the day the Servant of the Lord was "wounded for our transgressions" and made "His soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:5, 10), which was also the day the Messiah was "cut off" (Dan. 9:26). On the cross, followed by the empty tomb, sin--THE transgression--was contained, imprisoned, and so restrained or finished off, not in the sense that there is no longer sin and sinning in this world, followed by judgment in time and eternity, but in the sense that the final solution of the problem of sin has been effected. This prophecy was fulfilled when Messiah the Prince cried out from His cross before He was "cut off": "It is finished!" When that restraint is rejected, there can only follow headlong rush of sin unto death and everlasting torment.

2. *To make an end of (seal) sins.* The verb used is  $\text{סָלַם}$ , to seal, which is used again in the second member of the second triad. The vowel pointing, however, is that of the hiphil infinitive of  $\text{סָלַם}$ , to complete. To seal has

official connotations, as when Jezebel sealed her forged letters with Ahab's seal (1 Kings 21:8) and Mordecai wrote an official letter in behalf of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring (Esth. 8:8, 10). The seal both officially attests and secures, as the lions' den in which Daniel was to be executed was officially secured (Dan. 6:17).

What is the force of "to seal (up) sins"? In his confessional prayer Daniel had unburdened himself and his people thus: "We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments" (Dan. 9:5). Daniel used five words for sin in his confession; Gabriel responded by using three of those same words. Daniel traced the judgment that had befallen his people back to their sins. Gabriel announced that even as the transgression had been shut up, so sins would be officially sealed up. An official action would be forthcoming, within the time expanse of seventy sevens, whereby the matter of sins would be officially attended to. The case of sins would be officially brought to a conclusion. The death of Messiah the Prince was officially verified. Thereafter His tomb was officially sealed by the Romans with guards posted. Sins were thus officially sealed in the tomb.

The New Testament interpretation of this official action in regard to sins is recorded in the Apostle Paul's joyfully defiant responses to his own rhetorical questions: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34).

3. *To make reconciliation for (cover) iniquity.* In this instance there is no difficulty with the verb, which is the piel infinitive of כָּפַר. The verb occurs most frequently in the Pentateuch, especially in one chapter, the 16th of Leviticus, where it occurs 16 times. In the same chapter the nominal form, translated as "mercy seat," occurs 7 times. Leviticus 16 records the ritual on the Day of Atonement, the one day of the year on

which the high priest entered the holy of holies and sprinkled the blood of a goat on and before the mercy seat. The ark contained the tablets of the law with their curses and condemnation; the blood of the goat, sprinkled on the mercy seat, "covered" the sins of the people, thus hiding them from the eye of the holy God.

Within seventy sevens iniquity was to be covered! How and by whom? The youngest Sunday-School child should be able to give answer. The Apostle Paul made the connection between the "covering of iniquity" promised and foretold in this vision and the Coverer of iniquity when he wrote to the Romans:

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation [mercy seat] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:22b-25)

The mercy seat between the cherubim becomes Christ; the blood of the goat becomes Christ's blood, which once and for all times covers the guilt of sinners, thereby making reconciliation. (Cf. also Heb. 9:28; 10:12, 14.)

In the vision we have a climactic intensification of the promise that within seventy sevens the central concern of the covenant would be addressed officially, effectively, and permanently, for the transgression would be shut up, sins sealed up, and iniquity covered up. The "cover up" would not be a human device to hide sins from the eyes of man and so escape punishment; it would be a "covering up" of iniquity and guilt so that it is once and for all time hidden from the holy eye of the Holy One of Israel, thereby averting all punishment.

4. *To bring in everlasting righteousness.* God is righteous. His ways are righteous. His judgments are righteous. The standards that He has set for man are righteous. So Daniel had confessed in his prayer: "O Lord,

righteousness belongs to You"! But what of Daniel and his people? ". . . but to us shame of face," for "we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws . . ." (9:7, 10). What was the remedy? "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain . . ." (9:16). Righteousness was the basis for Daniel's plea, yet at the same time his and his people's greatest need. His prayer was that the righteous God would remain righteous and so provide righteousness for His people.

Daniel had in his hands the book of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2). There he read:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD,  
That I will raise to David  
a Branch of righteousness;  
A King shall reign and prosper,  
And execute judgment and righteousness in the  
earth.

In His days Judah will be saved,  
And Israel will dwell safely;  
Now this is His name by which He will be called:  
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer. 23:5-6)

In those days and at that time  
I will cause to grow up to David  
a Branch of righteousness;  
He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the  
earth.

In those days Judah will be saved,  
And Jerusalem will dwell safely.  
And this is the name by which she will be called:  
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer. 33:15-16)

Note that both prophecies speak of

1. A future time,
2. Marked by the advent of the Branch of David.
3. A King reigns, executing judgment and righteousness.
4. Judah is saved.
5. Israel and Jerusalem dwell safely.
6. The name of the King is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;



the name of Jerusalem is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

How does the New Testament respond to this? The gospel is described as the power of God, "for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17). Paul contrasted God's righteousness with man's righteousness and declared that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). To the Corinthians Paul wrote that "of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became . . . from God . . . righteousness . . ." (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul also declared that "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness . . ." (Rom. 14:17).

Gabriel assured Daniel that within seventy sevens "everlasting righteousness" would be brought in. It was in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnation of the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS who lived righteously and thus won righteousness for His people. He is the King who is even now at the right hand of God, executing judgment and righteousness. He has saved Judah, though most of the nation known as "Judah" rejected that salvation. "Israel and Jerusalem," the new Israel of God, do dwell safely, for He promised to be with them always. But in the same vision Gabriel also foretold that Jerusalem would once more be destroyed, for when the LORD THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS appealed unto them, they were not willing (Matt. 23:37) to receive Him as their righteousness.

5. *To seal up vision and prophecy (prophet).* Within seventy sevens vision and prophet, which were the Old Testament means for the Lord God's communicating with His people, are to be sealed, that is, brought to their official conclusion. In the second phrase of the first triad sin was to be sealed up; here vision and prophet or the vision of the prophet, which revealed the Lord God's solution of the problem of sin, is to be sealed up. The verb is used twice after the fourth and final vision has been completed. Daniel was instructed to "shut up the words, and seal the book" (12:4); thereafter he was dismissed, "for the words are closed up and sealed" (12:9).

What is the significance of this sealing of vision and prophet, the means of proclaiming the Kingdom under the old covenant? It marked the end of the time of prophecy and the beginning of the time of fulfillment. In the Sermon on the Mount, Messiah the Prince said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). On another occasion He said, "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt. 11:13). On Easter afternoon Messiah the Prince chided Cleopas and his companion for not understanding the recent events in the light of vision and prophet. Then "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Shortly before He ascended Messiah the Prince testified "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44). The writer to the Hebrews noted the end of one era and the beginning of another in the opening words of his letter: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (1:1). The Apostle Paul expressed the significance of the coming of the Messiah in these words: "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God" (2 Cor. 1:20). All vision and prophet have been fulfilled in and by Messiah the Prince either historically or potentially. What remains unfulfilled historically--His return in glory to convert faith into sight, His Kingdom under the cross to His Kingdom in glory--stands fulfilled in Christ but awaits its unfolding in the flow of time and events according to the eternal counsel of God.

6. *To anoint the Most Holy*, literally, "the holy of holies." The phrase is used both of things (e.g., of the altar, Ex. 29:37) and persons (of Aaron, 1 Chron. 23:13). In Messiah the Prince the holy objects, whether they be the altar, the holy place, or the holy of holies, merge with the Messiah, for all "the holy of holies" possessed holiness only in relation to the coming Messiah. In Zechariah's vision of the lampstand and

the two olive trees (Zech. 4:1-5), representing Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the civil leader, Messiah the Prince is anointed. What was visualized to Zechariah and foretold to Daniel was fulfilled in Messiah the Prince who was conceived of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), upon whom the Spirit of God descended at His baptism (Matt. 3:16), who began His ministry by claiming fulfillment of the Isaianic prophecy that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19), whom Peter called the One "whom You anointed" (Acts 4:27) and of whom Peter also testified, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38), and of whom the writer to the Hebrews testifies that He is the One who has been anointed with "the oil of gladness" (Ps. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9).

In summary: Within seventy sevens the transgression will be shut up, sins sealed up, and iniquity covered up. Everlasting righteousness will be brought in, vision and prophet sealed up and so replaced with fulfillment, and all "the holy of holies" under the old covenant replaced with the Messiah, the Anointed One, who promised and sent the Holy Spirit to indwell new-covenant believers and so make them "holy of holies." Every Kingdom promise is left swinging aimlessly without Messiah the Prince; all find their fulfillment, realization, and blessing in the same Messiah the Prince. He would be cut off; yet He would destroy the city and sanctuary of those who cut Him off. He would confirm the ancient Abrahamic covenant; the evidence of that confirmation would be His making an end to sacrifice and offering--of which the book of Hebrews is the divine commentary. The righteous Lord God would remain faithful to His covenant by sending Messiah the Prince to fulfill its terms and to come to His people as both Savior and King, but as for the temple and the people of Daniel--desolations are determined! The prophetic images are taken from the life and worship of the old-covenant people; the realities pictured are spiritual, but the spiritual is consistently presented under cover of the manifold forms of the material.

*Paul F. Nolting*

## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

*Thessalonians*, by David P. Kuske. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1984. 119 pages, paperback, \$4.95.

### IN GENERAL

This paperback volume of about 120 pages is one of two recently published Bible commentaries in the new Wisconsin Synod project called *The People's Bible*. The other volume is *Exodus* by Ernst H. Wendland, 290 pages, \$6.95. When it is completed, *The People's Bible* will number thirty-seven volumes on all of the books of the Old and New Testaments. The text of the New International Version will be printed out in full in each volume, and the comments on the text are intended to be written in plain English for the average reader. No doubt this series is intended to do what Kretzmann's four-volume *Popular Commentary* accomplished for the previous generation, and to do it better.

### I THESSALONIANS 4:3-8

In his comments on 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 Professor Kuske offers an improved translation of verse 4. He says that the NIV translation, "each of you should learn to control his body," should rather read: "Let each of you know how to obtain a marriage partner in a way that is holy and honorable." In verse 6 he emphasizes that the "matter" under discussion is the choosing of a marriage partner and therefore does not refer to business dealings in general, as some translations and explanations of this section imply. Thus the entire section, verses 3 to 8, is entitled "God's Will for Sex and Marriage." One can hardly think of any area of Christian ethics that is more necessary for contemporary Christians to study and put into practice in their daily lives.

Listen, therefore, to a portion of Professor Kuske's comments on this section:

Greek men often sought a wife as a sex object, or, as Paul puts it, "in passionate lust." . . .

This sounds familiar, doesn't it? Many popular love songs and love stories in movies and on TV today promote the same ideas in the matter of sex and marriage. You marry someone to have sex. If you can't wait, you have sex before you are married. Or, you have an affair while married or with someone who is married, simply because you are "in love" with that person.

God says all this is sin. It is a kind of sexual immorality from which Paul urges us to keep away. Instead the Lord wants us to go about finding and choosing our marriage partner "in a way that is holy and honorable." . . . With the Lord's help we will strive to follow his way, rather than the way of the world which can influence us so easily.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 5:10

The NIV translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:10 is as follows: "He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him." Professor Kuske argues that in this context, after Paul's words in verse 6 concerning spiritual alertness and spiritual sleep, the "awake" are the believers and the "asleep" are the unbelievers. He takes "us" in this verse to refer to us human beings rather than to us believers. He says: "Paul is saying that Jesus died for all people whether they look forward to his second coming or not."

Although I understand the reasons for Professor Kuske's interpretation, it does not ring true to me. The "us" in this section from verse 5 on refers to believers in contrast to unbelievers. "We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others . . . We belong to the day . . . God did not appoint us to suffer wrath . . . He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him."

Therefore, in spite of the ethical usage of waking and sleeping in verse 6, it seems preferable to me to

understand the "awake" and "asleep" as most commentators have understood them, as referring to the living Christians and the Christians who have already died. For example, the *Concordia Bible with Notes* says simply: "whether we wake or sleep, whether we are among the living or the dead at the coming of the day of the Lord." We are afraid that Professor Kuske's interpretation can easily lead to universalism, even though he expressly denies that false teaching. This is how the passage would read if worded according to Professor Kuske's explanation: "Jesus died for us human beings so that, whether we are believers or unbelievers, we may live together with him." Would this not seem to imply that all people will be saved?

## 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13

Paul says: "We ask you to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you." Since the apostle uses the plural, I question Professor Kuske's use of the singular in the sentence: "God wants every group of believers to have a faithful and qualified spiritual *leader*. He also wants believers to obey and follow the spiritual *leader* he gives them." (Emphasis added) Even though it is our usual custom to call one pastor or spiritual leader for our congregations, the apostle does not here or anywhere institute a one-man pastorate. A team ministry would be just as faithful to God's Word in 1 Thessalonians as a one-man ministry. Perhaps Professor Kuske was here applying Paul's words to our present situation rather than explaining them in terms of the apostle's situation. Certainly what he says about the pastor-flock relationship in this section is very worthwhile.

## THE QUESTION OF IDLENESS

Almost all those who have ever commented or preached on Thessalonians, including the pastors in the Church of the Lutheran Confession, have invariably explained the idleness of the Thessalonians as related to their belief concerning the second coming of Christ. In

other words, it has been stated as an obvious fact among us that the Thessalonians refused to work because they believed that Jesus' second coming was close at hand. Lenski, Kretzmann, Franzmann, Alford, the Expositor's Bible, Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown all explain their idleness in this way. Therefore it comes as a surprise to hear Professor Kuske say: "The suggestion is often made that these people were idle only because they had the mistaken notion that Christ's coming was imminent. And, consequently, they didn't need to do anything except wait for that day. There are a number of reasons why this suggestion is not compelling." Three reasons are then listed. What was the reason for their idleness? Professor Kuske answers: "The reason for their idleness was more likely the inclination of Greek men to avoid manual labor."

I think we can agree with Professor Kuske that the two letters to the Thessalonians do not anywhere clearly and unmistakably tie together the idleness of the Thessalonians with their beliefs about Christ's coming. This idea has been repeated so often that we take it for granted. But I don't think that it can definitely be proved. Professor Kuske's interpretation of this point is worthy of our consideration. The famous Roman orator Cicero once said that it was vulgar and unworthy to be an ordinary hired laborer or a mechanic or a retail merchant. If such views were commonly held at that time, one can understand why the Apostle Paul had to stress the importance of working for a living.

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-3:5

In this day when eschatological excitement is combined with ecumenism it is extremely rare to read a straightforward presentation of Paul's prophecy of the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2, together with carefully reasoned proof that this prophecy has been fulfilled and is in the process of being fulfilled by the Roman papacy. But Professor Kuske's words on this subject do not disappoint us. Already in his introduction to 2 Thessalonians he says: These verses "clearly establish the

Roman Catholic papacy as the historical fulfillment of this prophetic description."

There was a time many years ago, in the centuries following the Reformation, when Protestants the world over (not just a few conservative Lutherans) truly believed that the papacy was the promised Antichrist. Today almost all commentators and preachers and the general Christian public believe that the Antichrist is an individual who has not yet come. The idea that the pope is the Antichrist is regarded as hopelessly old-fashioned and bigoted. Even Franzmann in the *Concordia Bible with Notes* is willing to say only this: "The men of the Lutheran Reformation responded responsibly to that alert when they looked upon the papacy and saw there the marks of the man of lawlessness. A responsible church is called on to do in this our day what they did, with faith and fear, in theirs." This remark can be interpreted to mean that the papacy is still the Antichrist today, but it does not clearly say so. Professor Kuske is much more direct in his comments: "This prophecy is fulfilled in the line of men who have served and will serve in the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church."

After presenting the prophecy and the papacy as its fulfillment in sufficient detail Professor Kuske comes to the heart of the matter in these words worth repeating:

This is the most terrifying thing about the papacy. In the guise of godliness it teaches a way of wickedness. Almost all of the teachings which have been added to the Bible in Roman Catholicism in some way or other deny Christ's full and free redemption. They teach instead a form of self-righteousness. Roman Catholicism does indeed urge people to believe in Christ for their forgiveness; but then it also teaches people to do deeds of penance, to attend mass, to pray to God through Mary and the saints, to suffer in purgatory. The church imposes all these laws so that people add their own supposed good works to what Christ has done.



Scripture says that adding anything to what Christ has done separates completely from Christ and causes a complete loss of God's grace. "You who are trying to be justified by law," writes Paul in Galatians 5:4, "have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." This way of self-righteousness is the way of unrighteousness or wickedness. Our good works and good intentions are never sufficient, because they are always tainted with sin. Only Christ's perfect life can satisfy God who is perfect and demands perfection.

Self-righteousness, then, is the error which lies at the heart of the apostasy prophesied by Paul. This is the fatal error of the man of sin (the man who leads people to sin rather than to belief), the man of lawlessness (the man who opposes God's will rather than doing it), the anti-Christ. It is the error he uses to bring about the apostasy with Satan's help.

This prophecy was not just written by Paul for the Thessalonians. God led the apostle to record it for our instruction, too. Paul considered it an essential doctrine for every Christian, even for those new to the faith. So should we. It is an urgent warning to avoid the error of self-righteousness, which causes Christians to fall from their salvation.

The only difficulty I have with Professor Kuske's presentation of the Antichrist is his explanation of "what is holding him back" in 2 Thessalonians 2:6 and "the one who now holds it back" in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. He says that what is holding him back is the Word of God and the believers' love of that Word, as explained in verses 10-12. He says that the one who is holding him back, the one who is to be taken out of the way, is Jesus. The NIV translation "taken out of the way" is corrected to read "steps out of the way." In other words, the risen and reigning Jesus was restraining the Antichrist but as a judgment on the unbelief of the Christians He stepped out of the way or left the scene

at a time of His own choosing and permitted the Antichrist to flourish as he did during the Middle Ages.

I suppose this explanation is possible, but it seems to me that there is still something to be said for the view held by many of the early church fathers and reformers, namely, that the thing holding back the Antichrist was the Roman Empire and the one holding him back was the emperor. Henry Alford says in his commentary: "By τὸ κατέχον is understood (by the majority of the Reformers) the Roman Empire and by ὁ κατέχων the Roman Emperor,--and history is appealed to, to show that out of the ruins of that empire the papacy has grown up." Daniel's prophecy of the Antichrist in Daniel 7:8 and 7:20-21 indicates that the little horn with "a mouth speaking pompous words" (the Antichrist) was to come up only after the Roman Empire with its ten horns lost three horns. Kretzmann therefore says in *Popular Commentary*: "It is probable that Paul is referring to the fact that no bishop could attain to temporal power and honor as long as the Roman emperors could inaugurate persecutions."

## 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15

In verse 6 the apostle says: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us." The sin was idleness, which was directly contrary to the apostle's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:11: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands." The remedy prescribed for those who continued in idleness was that the Christians keep away from them.

In verses 14 and 15 the apostle says further: "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." Thus the "keeping away" of verse 6 is explained as "not associating," and the purpose is that the person in question may feel ashamed of his idleness and change his ways.

What are the problems of interpretation in this section? One question has to do with what is meant by keeping away and not associating with someone. The other question has to do with how one can warn someone as a brother at the same time that he keeps away from him. What is meant by the phrase "as a brother"?

Professor Kuske understands the situation among the Thessalonians as being impenitence. A certain number of members had been previously instructed that idleness is sin (1 Thess. 4:11). The apostle had previously instructed the Thessalonian Christians to warn these members against this idleness (1 Thess. 5:14). In this letter he again repeats his instruction and admonition. Those who still continue in idleness after all this instruction are plainly disobedient to God's Word. They are impenitent, and the congregation must act by "keeping away" from these impenitent ones. Professor Kuske thus understands the "keeping away" as making it plain to these one-time members that their sin excludes them from the family of God. This is excommunication, with its purpose of leading the unrepentant sinner to realize the seriousness of his sin so that he will repent and be saved. Thus the "keeping away" according to this view is the so-called third step in brotherly admonition described by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. Since he refuses to listen to the church, he should be considered a pagan.

In his remarks on 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 Professor Kuske continues with the same understanding. He says: "If anyone . . . still persisted in his sinful attitude about loafing, the congregation must take action. It was to serve notice to the lazy person that because he was unrepentant he could no longer be considered a Christian"--just as Jesus says in Matthew 18:

"All of the members of the congregation were to avoid any kind of association with him. . . . This went beyond excluding him from the Lord's Supper; it also meant not even eating with him," as explained in 1 Corinthians 5. "We cannot share the Lord's Supper with an impenitent sinner because Christ gives us his body and blood to assure us of forgiveness. But if a man is

unrepentant, he has no forgiveness. . . . His sin is serious and he is lost because of it."

Even socializing with an unrepentant sinner who wants to be considered a Christian is out of the question. "Every member of the congregation is to take care in any daily contact with a person under discipline that he does not undermine the congregation's purpose. Members dare not soften the church's law message to the unrepentant sinner." Moreover, this disassociation or denial of fellowship is to be "done not only when someone denies basic truths of our Christian faith, . . . but also when he denies our Savior's will in any way." "The disassociation is from a brother who knows Christ but whom Satan has gotten to deny Christ by continuing unrepentant in a sin."

How, then, does Professor Kuske explain Paul's last words on the subject in verse 15: "do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother"? He says that this is instruction with regard to "the frame of mind" the Thessalonians should have in dealing with their unrepentant brother. "They were not to have hostile feelings toward him." "The message to be conveyed was that Christ loved him and had died for his sins, but that this sin of idleness in which he persisted was a denial of that Savior's love. That denial would damn him." Thus even as we disassociate ourselves from an impenitent sinner, "this will be done in the frame of mind that we are dealing with a brother, not an enemy."

According to Professor Kuske's view 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 is not a parallel to passages like Romans 16:17-18 and 2 John 10-11 and Titus 3:10 that deal with doctrinal error, nor is it a parallel to Galatians 6:1 and other passages dealing with weak Christians, but it is a parallel to Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5, which instruct us how to deal with an impenitent sinner, namely, by excommunication.

Professor Kuske's view is that Paul is talking about the final step, but many of the fathers, because of the phrase "as a brother," understood Paul as recommending a preliminary action of disassociation *before* the final step. Perhaps it was because of this difference of opinion that the *Brief Statement* did not mention

this passage, nor did F. Pieper refer to it once in his three-volume *Christian Dogmatics*.

My first reaction on reading *Thessalonians* is that Professor Kuske, of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin, has done an excellent job in giving the background of these two letters of Paul and explaining the text in a simple style and applying the text to the contemporary scene. It should not be hard for the ordinary Christian reader to pick up this book and read it with understanding for spiritual benefit. The language is simple. Technical terms are not used. If there are references to the original Greek text on occasion, English terms are used so that the ordinary reader will not stumble. All in all, it seems to be a very good beginning to a worthwhile project.

D. Lau

*The Christian Legal Advisor*, by John Eidsmoe. Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1984. 578 pages, hardcover, \$21.95. (Also available at a lower price through membership in the Evangelical Book Club, 1000 E. Huron, Milford, MI 48042.)

I bought this book because I thought it would be useful as a reference tool. I did not expect it to be interesting. But it is interesting, because it deals with current controversial issues in a readable style, not in legal language that only lawyers can understand.

Among the topics treated at length in this book are the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, the influence of evolution and secular humanism in our society, prayer in public schools, the legal basis of private schools and home instruction, the abortion issue, disputes among Christians, laws that pertain to churches, copyright laws, marriage laws, and even clergy malpractice. It certainly is handy to have information on all these matters in one volume. The many quotations from Scripture and from court rulings and other legal and historical documents increase the value of this book.

The author does not pretend to be neutral in discussing the various issues listed above. He writes as a Bible-believing Christian, his own theology somewhere between Calvinism and Lutheranism. He is trained as both a pastor and as a lawyer, and is presently Professor of Law at the O. W. Coburn School of Law in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He takes a very strong position against abortion, evolution, and secular humanism on the basis of the Word of God and shows how Christians can use the laws of the land to fight against these enemies of Christian truth and thus reestablish their rights to the free exercise of religion as guaranteed by the First Amendment. He accepts the Bible's teaching on original sin, the inerrancy of Scripture, and the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. For example, he says in one place: "Man is powerless to save himself. He is saved by grace through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross" (186).

Unfortunately his interpretation of some Bible passages is marred by his adherence to dispensational premillennialism, which really should not be an option for anyone claiming to be Lutheran or Calvinist. Since his Lutheran seminary training was with the Lutheran Brethren, we are reminded how this group in its teaching concerning the last things has veered away from Scripture and the Lutheran confessions, while still claiming to accept both.

Most of us also would no doubt disagree with Eidsmoe's evaluation of *Engel v. Vitale*, the 1962 Supreme Court decision that declared unconstitutional the practice of formally organized school prayer in the public school system. We believe that such school prayer is indeed an establishment of religion contrary to the Constitution, whereas Eidsmoe believes that this Supreme Court ruling may actually be hindering Christians from the free exercise of their religion, which is also guaranteed by the First Amendment. There is some historical evidence in his favor, for example, the continuing support of chaplains in Congress from the beginning of our country's history.

Professor Eidsmoe argues that secular humanism has now become "established" as the religion of our country,

and that Christians who oppose humanism are being hindered by the government in the free exercise of their religion. This may be true. At least it is a viewpoint worth considering. However, Christians should not expect the world to be anything but worldly, and therefore the current world view, humanistic evolution, can be expected to prevail in the world's schools. How can we protect our children from such worldly influences other than to establish our own Christian schools? As long as the government lets us establish and support our Christian schools, there is little reason for us to complain that humanism is being taught in the public schools. What else can we expect? Even in earlier times, before humanism invaded the public school system, there was a form of religion taught in the public schools. And it was not true Christianity either, but rather a form of deism or theism or, at best, Calvinism. Even then, our fathers felt it necessary to establish Christian schools where God's Word could be taught in its truth and purity. The kind of morality promoted by public schools at their best can never be a substitute for true Christian teaching.

But in spite of some disagreements along the way, we must admit that the book abounds in sensible observations of the current scene from the Christian point of view. A few examples follow:

"One of the greatest dangers in America today is the establishment of the religion of secular humanism, particularly in the public schools. Unfortunately, our courts and legislatures have often mistaken secularism for neutrality" (115).

"Evangelical Christians generally do not object to their children being taught about sex. But they insist that it is wrong to teach about sex without also teaching morality, and that morality cannot be taught without Christianity" (195).

"Most public school textbooks treat evolution, not as theory, but as fact" (214).

"The proposition that God created the world in six days, and the proposition that the world developed (with or without God's help) over millions and billions of years, are mutually exclusive" (225).

"Humanistic and evolutionary thinking pervades the public schools" (247).

"Merely meeting in a church does not make education Christian. . . . Nor does having Christian teachers make a school Christian. . . . Christian schools involve more than firm discipline, clean language, and clean living. . . . Nor is Christian education that which involves a weekly or even daily chapel service, or Bible verses on the wall, or occasional Scripture-oriented illustrations in the classroom. . . . Christian education is education in which the entire curriculum is permeated by the Christian world view" (269).

"In many fields of study, schools are forced to compromise their standards and doctrinal positions in order to obtain accreditation" (302).

"Private schools should be very cautious about seeking or accepting public assistance. Government aid leads to government control" (306).

"A threat to one religion is a threat to all religions" (334).

"That which is truly obscene is outside the protection of the First Amendment" (347).

"The medical evidence largely supports the view that human life begins at conception" (360).

In conclusion, let me say that Christian pastors and teachers and church officials should find this book very useful. Why not obtain a copy for your church library, so that all members may have access to it?

*D. Lau*



*Findings*, by Martin Galstad. Winter Haven, FL: Haven Books, 1984. 175 pages, paperback, \$7.95 postpaid.

This volume with subtitle "Explorations in Christian Life and Learning" comprises 47 essays. After a foreword by Ronald Klug and a preface by the author, the body of the work follows with three divisions: 1. Establishing the Foundations. 2. Gladly Learning and Gladly Teaching. 3. Living with Quality. With the exception of two longer essays, all the chapters have previously appeared in *Journal of Theology*, *Lutheran Spokesman*, and *Lutheran Sentinel*. The two longer essays were delivered at professional conferences. These are entitled: "Temptations That Especially Confront the Orthodox" and "Existentialism and Theology." The book is available through the CLC Book House or from the following address: Haven Books, 1036 31st St. N.W., Winter Haven, FL 33881.

#### Reprints of Luther's writings:

Baker Book House is to be commended for producing reprint editions of two excellent sets of Luther's writings. The first, published in 1982, is the six-volume Philadelphia edition of *Works of Martin Luther*. This set provides a fine selection of Luther's writings for those English readers who do not wish to purchase the 54-volume American edition. The second set, published in 1983, is the eight-volume Lenker edition of *Sermons of Martin Luther*. These sermons, which cover the standard Gospel and Epistle readings for the Sundays and festivals of the church year, provide very worthwhile devotional reading. Only a few of the 175 sermons can be found in any other English edition of Luther's writings.

The list prices for the sets are \$87.50 and \$95.00, respectively, although sale prices are often available from the publisher or from book discount houses.



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