



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

I Timothy 4:15

Journal
of
Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

VOLUME 25

JUNE 1985

NUMBER 2

ISSN 0361-1906

THE JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 25

JUNE 1985

NUMBER 2

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The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions: \$5.00 per year, \$9.00 for two years, payable in advance. Issues are dated: March, June, September, and December.

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MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

How Can Christians Decide?

(Conclusion)

Having considered in an earlier article (*Journal of Theology* Sep. 1984: 15) the Christian basis for ethical judgments in contrast to the ethical principles of current non-Christian philosophies, we proceed to the question as to whether life support is always demanded by the fifth commandment.

In 1975 a certain Dr. Haemmerli of Zurich, Switzerland, was accused of murdering patients by starvation. The court ruled: "One cannot accuse a doctor of manslaughter if he decides to withhold nourishment from a patient whose human personality has been lost due to severe brain damage" (quoted by Barbara Culliton, "Is Passive Euthanasia Murder?" *Science*). Dr. Haemmerli argued that it was not his duty as a doctor to prolong the misery of a hopelessly ill patient. When such a situation arose, Dr. Haemmerli could see little distinction between pulling the plug on a respirator and withholding antibiotics or nutrients.

Such cases are becoming more and more common. A news report of February 5, 1984, mentioned a Milwaukee nurse accused of pulling the plug on a patient. Nurses as well as doctors are faced with very difficult decisions. *RN* magazine mentioned the case of a 78-year-old man, Mr. Barone, who wanted to die, while his family insisted that everything possible be done to preserve his life. As he was packed in ice water, he cried out: "Let me die! Stop this indignity!" The nurse did not know what she should do. But later Mr. Barone made a complete recovery (reported in *Human Life: Controversies and Concerns*, ed. Bruce Bohle [New York: Wilson, 1979]).

The ethical code of the American Medical Association does not contain specific enough language to answer all these questions. "The principal objective of the medical profession is to render service to humanity with full respect for the dignity of man. . . . Physicians

should observe all laws. . . . Drugs, remedies, or appliances may be dispensed or supplied by the physician provided it is in the best interest of the patient" (Vincent Barry, *Moral Aspects of Health Care* [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982] app. B). Such a code would seem to allow for mercy killing if it were not illegal.

HOW MEDICAL SCIENCE KEEPS PEOPLE ALIVE

Dr. Louis Shattuck Baer (*Let the Patient Decide* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978]) lists the following routine measures used by American doctors for the common serious illnesses of the elderly: 1) chemically balanced intravenous fluids; 2) powerful new antibiotics; 3) incredibly effective drugs and techniques to keep even the feeblest of hearts beating; 4) respiratory assistance measures of all types; 5) drugs to control fatal shock (very low blood pressure); 6) renal dialysis to substitute for failed kidneys; 7) mandatory attempts to resuscitate a patient if his heart or breathing ceases. Many doctors use all of these methods, he says, because they see death as the enemy that must be overcome at all costs as long as possible.

Dr. Baer says that many patients ask their doctors what their chances are of surviving certain operations or procedures. But he says that they should also ask their doctors what the chances are that the operation or procedure will leave them in a kind of limbo, existing biologically but with a permanently damaged mind. His conclusion is that "patients over sixty-five suffering from serious medical complications of chronic illnesses are apt to be done a great disservice by the aggressive and heroic treatment available in an intensive care unit."

Dr. Baer insists that many doctors are science-oriented rather than patient-oriented. It seems that in some units the main object is to utilize the machines rather than to help the people. The result, in his opinion, is that the dying of the elderly becomes harder, longer, and more expensive. Dr. Baer admits that in cases of aggressive treatment on older patients there are occasional brilliant successes, but more often the

worst possible results ensue. And he claims that these worst results are what the elderly dread above all else: years of senility and invalidism in a long-term care institution. In earlier times these persons would have died long before they reached this stage, through infections or pneumonia. But now they live on, says he, existing rather than living.

In his presentation of the horror stories of nursing home senility Dr. Baer suggests: "We need some restraint to forestall the automatic triggering of this modern version of the good Samaritan." Mention of the good Samaritan brings us face to face with Jesus' concluding words in this parable: "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). Our Lord says that we *should* imitate the good Samaritan, whereas Dr. Baer seems to say that we need laws to *prevent* people from imitating the good Samaritan.

The man left by the roadside half dead is, I suppose, the closest equivalent in Scripture to the suffering person brought to the trauma center of a modern hospital. Did not the good Samaritan do *all* he could for the dying man, sparing neither time nor expense nor the drugs (oil and wine) at his disposal? Is he not our example just because he went to such great lengths to preserve the man's life? Would it have been appropriate for the good Samaritan to ask questions like these: How old is the injured man? Will he be permanently damaged if I do all I can to help him? Is he perhaps deformed in some way so that his life is not worth saving? Does my own family need this money more than this dying man? The priest and Levite did not think the man's life worth preserving. They did not want to be inconvenienced in such an apparently hopeless case. But the good Samaritan went all the way in love, without asking any of these questions, because he had "compassion" on the wounded man.

Now I am not saying that the parallel is perfect between the half-dead man of Jesus' story and the elderly patients of today with severe chronic ailments. The question of how to show compassion is not always easy to answer. We understand Dr. Baer's point of view. But let us remember that Jesus does want us to imitate the

good Samaritan. Can we really say then, as some doctors suggest: "Don't ever resuscitate a quadriplegic (paraplegic)"? Or: "Nurses, don't call me if this man has problems; he's over 75 years old"? Or: "She's a mongoloid; she's demented; she's senile; her life's not worth saving"?

Dr. Baer refers to one other Bible example, the woman of Mark 5:26 who "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." He is suggesting that in many cases life support is worse than death, and that therefore doctors should let their patients decide whether they prefer death to life under less than ideal circumstances.

WHEN IS A PERSON REALLY DEAD?

Before dealing with the answers given to such questions as these, let us mention another predicament caused by modern medical technology, namely, how to determine whether a person is dead. Obviously there is no sin in withdrawing life support from someone who is already dead. The American Heart Association policy is that "if you do not know positively and absolutely that the patient's brain is permanently damaged beyond all hope, you must immediately institute vigorous and prolonged attempts at CPR" (Baer, ch. 7). But what sometimes then happens is that the person continues to exist for years and years with an incurably damaged brain.

The legal definition of death is unclear. Nowadays we don't seem to know when a person becomes alive and we don't know when he becomes dead. In spite of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on abortion it is fairly easy to determine from the Biblical record (Ps. 51:5) that human life begins at conception. But the Biblical definition of death as the time when body and soul are separated (Gen. 35:18) may not be very helpful medically. In former times if you stopped breathing and your heart stopped beating, you were dead. But now a flat electrocardiogram and a flat encephalogram are needed to determine whether a person is really dead, says Dr. Baer.

On the other hand, the bodily processes of breathing and heartbeat may continue while the brain is dead. Says Dr. John Fletcher: "When the brain is dead, other processes and systems of organization in the body may still be in motion, but most would be willing to agree that the person is dead" (*Should Doctors Play God?* ed. Claude A. Frazier [Nashville: Broadman, 1971]). A committee in 1968 defined death as having four criteria: unreceptivity and unresponsivity, lack of movement or breathing, lack of reflex action, and the absence of cerebral function as indicated by the encephalograph (*Moral Aspects of Health Care*).

A certain Jerry B. Wilson (*Moral Aspects of Health Care*) defines death in these different ways: 1) legal death--when there is no heartbeat or respiration; 2) clinical death--the loss of vital functions, which is sometimes reversible; 3) organic death--the death of all systems. He then says: "Brain death seems to be an appropriate basis for a legal as well as a medical definition of death," although that is not the case at the present time.

According to *Human Life: Controversies and Concerns* eighteen states recognize that death may be pronounced on the basis of irreversible cessation of brain function. *U.S. News & World Report* (vol. 85, no. 19) mentions a Uniform Brain Death Act in Tennessee and Montana that reads like this: "A human body with irreversible cessation of total brain function, as determined according to usual and customary standards of medical practice, is dead for all legal purposes" (quoted in *Human Life: Controversies and Concerns*).

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE TERMINOLOGY

We now present some of the terms that have been used in connection with life support--terms like ordinary, extraordinary, heroic, active, passive, positive, negative, voluntary, nonvoluntary, involuntary, and the distinctions that have been made between these terms, wisely or unwisely.

Moral Aspects of Health Care gives the following distinction between ordinary and extraordinary or heroic (sometimes also called aggressive) measures. By ordinary measures are meant all medicines, treatments, and procedures that benefit the patient without involving excessive pain, expense, or inconvenience. By extraordinary or heroic measures are meant very unusual, very difficult, very dangerous, and very expensive treatments and procedures, without any reasonable hope of benefit. It is generally agreed, also by most Christian groups, that patients, relatives, doctors, and nurses do not have a moral obligation to maintain hopeless cases through extraordinary means. And yet there may be cases where withholding heroic treatment would be tantamount to killing the patient. Perhaps we could say that the good Samaritan's treatment was heroic for its time. It is also true that what was once extraordinary becomes ordinary in the process of time through medical advances.

Let us then look at the three terms: voluntary, nonvoluntary, involuntary. Voluntary means that the patient requests or consents to the treatment, or voluntarily refuses treatment and thus possibly hastens his own demise. The Christian patient has to determine for himself whether refusing a certain procedure is in the direction of self-killing or not. We condemn Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing blood transfusions. We condemn followers of faith healers for refusing to make use of the medicine and medical treatment God has made available for our use. As patients we may have to face difficult decisions at times. We do not want to take our own lives. We do not want to live vegetative lives either if that can be prevented. We are not afraid to die as Christians, but we are also willing to live if God wants us to live.

A nonvoluntary decision is that made by others when the patient himself is unable to function. Such decisions may be made by the patient's relatives, the doctors, or the government. Obviously such decisions at times are very difficult.

An involuntary decision is one made contrary to the wishes of the patient, as, for example, in the case of

Mr. Barone, the man packed in ice water whom we mentioned earlier. Patients are not always in a position to make the best judgments because they may speak impulsively without realizing what they are saying. What a tragedy it would have been if Jesus had listened to Peter when he said: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

It is commonly argued that individuals have the right to make decisions about their own life and death. But this is true only up to a point. A person does not have the right to take his own life. He may want to die with dignity, as the saying goes, but the higher will of God must supersede all such personal desires. If living is more painful than death is perceived to be, a patient may prefer to die, but he still does not necessarily have the right to choose death. It is all-important that we should not let ourselves be talked into doing something that gives us a bad conscience.

Relatives may hate to see it, but certainly God knows how to take care of His own even if they are "comatose and betubed and sedated and aerated and glucosed and non compos mentis" (Eike-Henner W. Kluge, *The Practice of Death* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1975]). After all, there is nothing dignified about the body after death either. Corruption, dishonor, and weakness are the terms used by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:42-43). A Christian comes to the best decision he can under the circumstances and commits his life, body and soul, to the Lord who knows our hearts and forgives our sins.

Involuntary decisions can more easily get out of hand than voluntary decisions. Relatives may make their decisions in their own best interest, instead of in the interest of the patient. If government boards decide questions of treatment, the question of cost may become too important. Utilitarians can come up with all kinds of reasons for making the decisions to terminate life. For example, they say that no purpose is served by having certain persons live, also that there are not enough resources on this earth for all; therefore those who have no purposeful existence should be eliminated. Others argue that hemophiliacs and epileptics should be eliminated, lest their conditions be passed on to later

generations. Another argument is that those who burden society rather than benefit it would be better off gone. Would we want government boards or committees of doctors to be empowered to make such decisions? Life may become very cheap in their hands.

Let us also discuss the distinction between active and passive, or positive and negative. Active euthanasia is described as administering lethal drugs for the purpose of hastening death. It is illegal at the present time. Passive euthanasia is sometimes described as discontinuing treatment of an incurably sick person, but others do not think that this should be called euthanasia. Passive euthanasia is not generally considered illegal. It could also include the refusal to use life-prolonging treatment in the first place. *Health and Human Values* mentions that according to some theologians passive euthanasia is moral because it "accepts the inevitability of death as God's will," whereas active euthanasia is immoral because it "sinfully takes the initiative of causing death by man's own decision and thus violates God's plan." "Allowing to die is not killing," they say.

Jerry B. Wilson (*Moral Aspects of Health Care*) says in defense of passive euthanasia that "for the very elderly who are afflicted with advanced cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, or malignant diseases this support [life support] may not be justifiable, especially when suffering is involved." He also says that "it might on occasion be more merciful to terminate treatment for intercurrent infections such as pneumonia." Others argue that if the end result is the same, the death of the patient, the method used to attain that end should be the most humane method, causing the least amount of pain and suffering. In their view active euthanasia is often more humane than passive euthanasia. It is more painful to die by slow starvation than by fast-working injection. James Rachels (*Health and Human Values*) mentions as an example an infant with Down's syndrome where the decision has been made not to operate. Would not an injection be better in such a case, he asks, than slow starvation? He asks us: "They think killing someone is morally worse than letting someone die. But is

it?" Indeed we have to remember the priest and the Levite and what the Bible teaches about sins of commission and sins of omission. The American Medical Association makes a clear distinction between active and passive, also the Roman Catholic hierarchy. But not everyone agrees that the distinction is valid.

One reason that some people use for maintaining a clear distinction between active and passive is that allowing active euthanasia would quickly lead to abuses. Once mercy killing is allowed, a firm line cannot be drawn. Tom Beauchamp in *Health and Human Values* says: "If rules permitting active killing were introduced, it is not implausible to suppose that destroying defective newborns would become an accepted and common practice." The legalization of active euthanasia "could lead to reduction of respect for human life."

HOW DO OTHERS RESOLVE THESE QUESTIONS?

Let us now present some of the conclusions that others have reached on the matters under discussion. We start with the conclusions of euthanasia promoters, then move on to the Roman Catholic position and the position of Paul Ramsey, and conclude with some statements made by Lutheran pastors.

The promoters of euthanasia are gaining influence in our country. They are working for the legalization of active euthanasia and figure that its acceptance is inevitable in time. Olive Ruth Russell in *Freedom to Die* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1975) says: "The time will come when euthanasia in certain circumstances will be accepted practice." In response to arguments that the fifth commandment makes killing immoral, she presents Jesus' beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful" (Matt. 5:7) and the statement in Ecclesiastes 3:3 that there is a "time to kill." In response to the argument that only God has the right to determine when life shall end, she says that doctors prolong life and hasten death all the time by their actions or neglect. If birth

control is permitted, why should not death control be permitted? In response to the argument that human life is sacred, she replies that the person is sacred, but not his or her life. She argues: "Because human life is sacred, a person should not be degraded by being required to endure prolonged, useless suffering or humiliating deterioration of mind and body while waiting for physiological death." She claims that the strongest argument against euthanasia is the fear that it will be abused, the so-called wedge argument. But she argues that any law can be abused.

Together with many other promoters of euthanasia Olive Russell argues that "the dividing line between active and passive euthanasia is often less real than is generally supposed or admitted." She quotes a Dr. John Freeman as saying: "It is time that society and medicine stopped perpetuating the fiction that withholding treatment is ethically different from terminating life." She says that it is just plain common sense and compassion that a person should not be required to endure useless suffering and that every person has a right to die with dignity. She claims that highly regarded theologians defend euthanasia, and that it is only the Catholic hierarchy and certain fundamentalist groups that oppose it.

Others do not go so far as to advocate the legalization of active euthanasia, but they do promote the right of the patient to determine whether life support should be used in his or her situation. Dr. Louis Baer, whom we mentioned earlier, advises elderly persons to have a copy of a so-called living will available at all times. This living will would say something like this: "I demand that I be allowed to die and not be kept alive by artificial means or heroic measures. . . . I ask that drugs be mercifully administered to me for terminal suffering even if they hasten the moment of death." In Dr. Baer's own living will he requests that no more than two minutes of standard resuscitation measures be used on him. His slogan is Better Dead Than Demented. One authority (*Human Life: Controversies and Concerns*) claims that three million copies of "Living Will" were distributed in 1978.

On October 1, 1976, Governor Brown of California signed into law a natural death act. This bill was supported by many Protestant churches, but it was opposed by the Pro-Life Council on the grounds that the bill took a giant step towards the legalization of mercy killing. The Roman Catholic Church was at first opposed to the bill but later withdrew its opposition.

In his 1978 book *Ethics at the Edges of Life* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978) Paul Ramsey indicates his support of the California law. He believes that "our moral abhorrence of voluntary and involuntary euthanasia" is weakening, and that "carefully drawn legislation may be the last, best chance we have to stem the tide that on its crest is bearing present-day society toward the general practice of involuntary euthanasia. . . . Opponents of euthanasia have good reason to support the California law. . . . Legislation is our last resort if I am correct in believing that the common law's ancient protection of life is eroding."

Among the provisions of the California law is this that nothing in the statute "shall be construed to condone, authorize, or approve mercy killing, or to permit any affirmative or deliberate act or omission to end life other than to permit the natural processes of dying." Notice that any deliberate omission to end life is specifically forbidden.

What then is legally permitted in California? That a person may sign his name to a document that says: "If at any time I should have an incurable injury, disease, or illness certified to be a terminal condition by two physicians, and where the application of life-sustaining procedures would serve only to artificially prolong the moment of my death, and where my physician determines that my death is imminent whether or not life-sustaining procedures are utilized, I direct that such procedures be withheld or withdrawn, and that I be permitted to die naturally."

Of special interest to us is that the words "and an unreasonable emotional and financial hardship on the patient's family" were removed before the bill was passed. The passage of these words would have been a victory for utilitarians.

The policy of the Massachusetts General Hospital (quoted in *Human Life: Controversies and Concerns*) is to divide patients into four classes:

- A - maximum therapeutic effort without reservation;
- B - maximum therapeutic effort with daily evaluation because the probability of survival is questionable;
- C - selective limitation of therapeutic measures;
- D - all therapy can be discontinued.

This policy apparently gives little attention to the wishes of the patient and his family. A hospital committee determines the classification of each patient.

The Roman Catholic Church condemns mercy killing. Nevertheless, the pope has said that it is morally justifiable to withhold heroic measures from the dying. This is essentially in agreement with the position of the American Medical Association. The pope declared in 1980 that all normal treatments should be used, but he allowed the withholding of life-prolonging measures on considerations of suffering, burdensomeness, or financial cost for family or community. "It is not euthanasia to give a dying person sedatives and analgesics for the alleviation of pain, when necessary, even if such would deprive the patient of reason or shorten life" (*Health and Human Values*, ch. 3).

The Rev. Paul Marx (Roman Catholic) in *Death without Dignity* argues that so-called passive or negative euthanasia is not mercy killing at all. Although he is strongly opposed to the modern utilitarian views on life and death, he says that removing supportive equipment or drug treatment when the patient has irrevocably entered the process of dying is moral, legal, and ethical. It is part of every good doctor's concern for his patient. In fact it is standard procedure and should not be labeled as killing of any kind. On the other hand, the Rev. Marx claims that at times being passive and doing nothing may be murder. "Where lethal motivation is present, physical 'passivity' cannot be justified as 'letting nature take its course'!"

How important it is then that we pray with the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way

in me" (Ps. 139:23-24). The key consideration is motivation. If we are removing supportive equipment or drug treatment for the purpose of hastening death rather than for the purpose of relieving the suffering of the dying, we may be guilty of murder in God's eyes even though no one on earth would be able to charge us with such a crime. We could easily defend our actions on the grounds of mercy and compassion and only God would know our real reason for pulling the plug. *Health and Human Values* claims that "no American physician has been prosecuted successfully for terminating the treatment of a dying patient."

Other church bodies have come up with statements of their policies on matters of life and death. A compilation of these policies is available from Concern for Dying, 250 W. 57th St., New York. The United Methodist Church, for example, has published a statement that says in part: "We assert the right of every person to die in dignity, without effort to prolong terminal illness merely because the technology is available to do so. . . . We do not believe simply the continuance of mere physical existence is either morally defensible or socially desirable or is God's will" (quoted in *Health and Human Values*). Apparently the majority of the people agree with this approach. *Human Life: Controversies and Concerns* calls attention to a survey that indicates that "71% of Americans believe a terminal patient has the right to direct his doctor to cease use of life-sustaining machines when there is no cure in sight."

Earlier we discussed the difference between active and passive euthanasia. Paul Ramsey (*Ethics at the Edges of Life*) argues forcefully that letting a terminally ill patient die without taking extraordinary measures to preserve his life should not be called euthanasia, either active or passive. "Death's cause is not advanced by acts of omission or by abstention. Death's cause is advanced by the disease itself, and beyond some point it is useless to continue to fight it." This is not negative or passive euthanasia. This is not choosing death. This is simply a matter of recognizing that the time has come for ceasing to attempt the rescue of the perishing and for concentrating on caring for the

dying. He advocates the use of hospices that specialize in care for the dying rather than intensive care units that specialize in extraordinary means of life support.

Perhaps here is the place to insert a thought-provoking comment by C. S. Lewis. "Addiction to life is no more respectable than addiction to drugs" (quoted in *Man, Medicine, and Morality*, by A. E. Clark-Kennedy [Hamden: Archon, 1969]).

We turn now to conclusions drawn by conservative Lutherans. The Lutheran Church of Australia Commission on Social Questions published a statement on euthanasia in the *Lutheran* of November 3, 1980. After discussing some of the definitions and terms the statement warns: "The term 'passive' or 'negative' euthanasia is particularly dangerous because it sounds like the acceptable medical practice of 'allowing a patient to die.' The term 'euthanasia' must never be used in the context of dying because euthanasia, with or without a qualifying adjective, always means killing."

With this understanding the statement continues: "The Church rejects the practice of mercy killing or euthanasia in all its forms, because such killing is contrary to the Word and Law of God. The Church's opposition to past, present, and future proposals for euthanasia legislation is based, above all, on ethical considerations concerning the life and death of human beings. The 'right to life' of every person must be protected by law. The 'right to die' concept is completely foreign to sound biblical ethical principles."

On the matter of care for the dying the statement says:

The Church is aware of the great advances made in medical technology, and therefore of the possibilities of "prolonging" life beyond the scope of "ordinary" means of medical treatment. The Church is mindful of the difficulty of making clear distinctions between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" means of medical treatment in the light of current advanced medical technology. The Church supports the following criteria for the responsible care of terminally ill or dying patients:

1) The physician should at all times respect the life of his patients and use all "ordinary" means available to him to preserve their lives.

2) The physician should as often as practicable inform his patients of the purpose of using "extraordinary" means and respect the wish of his patients that he stop all heroic and extraordinary efforts to prevent their death, in case there is in his expressed professional judgment no real hope of recovery.

3) The physician should never yield to any pressures exerted by civil or medical authorities, patients or their relatives, or any other individual or group to apply any form of mercy killing to his patients.

4) The physician should always ensure that his patients' demand for proper spiritual care be met with respect, understanding, and good-will, and do what is in his power to provide opportunities for spiritual care.

5) The physician should never hesitate to alleviate pain and physical distress. However, he should be mindful of the fact that the dimensions of pain and distress often go beyond the merely physical.

6) The physician should remember that the Church is called to help both physician and patient in the process of decision-making and that the Church in pastoral wisdom will continue to remind the medical profession of its responsibilities, obligations, and privileges.

The Church calls upon its pastors to be diligent in their ministry of Word and Sacrament to the sick and dying, and encourages its members to be comforting and supporting brothers and sisters to those whose earthly pilgrimage is made more difficult through suffering, sickness, or fear of death.

I see no reason for expressing any disagreement with the six points listed above. There is a problem, as the statement itself indicates, in determining what is "ordinary" and "extraordinary" and in resolving the

question as to whether or not it is necessary in a specific case to use "extraordinary" means in preserving the life of a patient. I also recognize that the Australians' definition of euthanasia as killing is not accepted by all.

I am in possession of three papers written by pastors of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod on the topic under discussion: "The Fifth Commandment," presented by Martin Janke on November 1, 1973; "A Look at the New Movement--The Right to Die," presented by Louis Meyer Jr. on May 1 and 2, 1973; and "The Use and Non-Use of Life Support Systems and/or Treatment Termination--When? Ever? Under What Circumstances?" presented by Robert D. Bushaw on February 8 and 9, 1982.

Pastor Janke makes the following points, many of them based on a *Northwestern Lutheran* article (18 Jan. 1970) by Professor Armin Schuetze: "The Fifth Commandment prohibits us from causing anyone's death. We are not to be the cause of shortening anyone's time of grace. The Lord gives life; the Lord will end life. The Fifth Commandment, however, is not only transgressed through what we do, but also by what we fail to do. There are sins of omission as well as of commission. In the parable of the Good Samaritan the failure of the priest and Levite to administer help was sin. . . . Medical skill is a gift of God to be used. . . . The problem arises when it is not a question of restoring someone to health, of prolonging his time of grace in the true sense. Must every effort be made to prolong the life of the person who is evidently going to die in another few hours, in another day? Must the operation be performed, must an expensive medical program be pursued that can at best delay death? . . . Scripture does not speak of death as the one great evil that must be avoided at all costs. The Apostle Paul looked forward to the time of his death (Phil. 1:23). . . . Isn't there such a thing as letting death, letting deliverance through death, come normally? . . . May there not be times when following certain medical procedures may become unjustifiable 'devouring of widows' houses' (Matt. 23:14) because of the costs involved?" His conclusion: "On the one hand, we should seek to prolong our

time of grace on earth through the means God has made available to us. On the other hand, artificially to force a Christian who is longing for his eternal home to linger on at great expense to his family seems to go beyond what the Scripture calls for." But "there are no final, decisive, pat answers to all" of these questions. "These are not simple decisions, not for doctors, nor for loved ones. They will not be made lightly, but in the fear of God, asking His guidance and direction."

I find no reason to disagree with anything presented in this paper.

Pastor Meyer's paper covers some of the same ground as the previous paper and uses the same argumentation. But there are a number of other valid points that he makes. For example: "If a person has built his hope on the money and things he could gather, if such a person must then spend almost all that which he wrongly set his heart on, to keep a loved one alive, it might be God tapping him on the shoulder and showing him what his true values in life should have been. Shall we interfere with God's chastisement or correction and order the person dead so he does not use up all the money?"

On the matter of the definition of death Pastor Meyer says: "I suggest that we stay with the older definition of death which says that death occurs when the heart stops beating or the person stops breathing."

Some of Pastor Meyer's conclusions: "2) Doctors ought always seek to preserve life." "3) Stopping life-sustaining procedures is generally not justified." "4) We should not take issue with those Christian families who in the fear of God feel there are some exceptions to . . . number 3. Let us not discipline those Christian families who in love and Christian faith have allowed someone to die peacefully, and who do not believe that life must be sustained at all costs by machines and tubes when the body has lost its natural ability to sustain its own life." "5) Positively inducing death, whether that be in killing the unborn, the aged, the mentally retarded, etc., is absolutely displeasing to God."

Pastor Bushaw differs with Pastor Meyer on the question of brain death. He says: "A flat electroen-

cephalograph is regarded as an indication of brain death, the brain has stopped functioning. Were the artificial means suspended or interrupted, then the heart would stop beating and the individual would stop breathing." Therefore he regards brain death as death.

As far as termination of treatment is concerned, Pastor Bushaw proposes only one criterion: "when there is no hope of recovery, death is imminent." How is it to be done? "The obvious is to refuse any heroic or life support systems to be initiated at the onset, using, rather, only standard medical practice to treat the patient." This type of treatment would make unnecessary any decision to pull the plug or discontinue life support systems. He does not feel comfortable with pulling the plug except in cases of brain death.

Pastor Bushaw proposes a practice called "benevolent crisis acquiescence" which includes the following points as listed in Thomas Oden's book *Should Treatment Be Terminated?* (New York: Harper, 1976):

1) Benevolent crisis acquiescence continues to supply food, pain killing medicine, and all possible forms of comfort to the moribund patient during his final struggle, rather than abruptly terminating life.

2) Benevolent crisis acquiescence does not in any way hasten death or attempt to prolong life by means of treatments other than those already instituted. By means of a benevolent passivity amid new crises or emergent complications, it simply acquiesces to incipient death . . . without the withdrawal or withholding of treatment or life support previously provided.

3) If the patient is in an irreversible condition and if all reasonable hope of recovery is gone, and if death is a near-term probability, then the length of time of irreversible suffering is likely to be short in any event. This is a crucial point since the argument for direct disconnection usually centers on the advantage of shortening the length of time of irreversible suffering.

4) Whereas disconnection of life support arguably is a cause of death, benevolent crisis acquiescence does not do anything to hasten death or take any direct, active intervention which could arguably be viewed as the cause of death.

5) Although it may take longer for death to ensue, it is less subject to widespread abuse than is the more arbitrary act of "pulling the plug."

6) It proceeds under a more organic understanding of medical care (and I add, reliance on God) than does the mechanical disconnection of electrical equipment as the final ignominious event in the person's life.

Pastor Bushaw "is of the firm conviction that there is a definite distinction between prolonging life and prolonging death. The irresponsible use of life support systems and the implementation of treatment at any cost more often prolongs death than does it prolong life."

Pastor Bushaw's conclusions are as follows:

1) God is the Originator and Giver of life. He alone gives life and He alone is the rightful ender of it.

2) There are many moral dilemmas involved with the use and non-use of life support systems and/or treatment termination which dare not be taken lightly.

3) No individual has the right of absolute self-determination over his own life, less the life of another. Christians in general and physicians in particular ought always seek to preserve life.

4) Positively inducing death by murder or suicide is absolutely displeasing to God and never justified.

5) An individual may refuse heroic efforts--life support systems--for himself or another when there is no hope of recovery, death is imminent.

6) Discontinuing life support systems and/or treatment termination already in use is generally unjustified. Where there is no hope of recovery

and death is imminent or where brain death has occurred a family may feel differently about this.

7) Benevolent crisis acquiescence proceeds under a more organic understanding of medical care and places the final moment of death in the hands of God rather than in the hands of one who would "pull the plug."

8) A Christian family in the fear of God may take exception to what has been listed as conclusion number 6. For a terminally ill patient who has lost consciousness and for whom there is no hope of recovery, a law of love and mercy ought also to be considered. Let us therefore, as pastors, not take issue with or discipline these Christians who in love and Christian faith have allowed someone to die peacefully. We do not believe that life must be sustained at all and any costs by machines and tubes when the body has lost its natural ability to sustain its own life.

Pastor Bushaw in conclusion quotes Romans 14:7-9: "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (NKJV).

Having had very limited experience in these matters in my own pastoral ministry, I feel that no purpose is served in trying to present any conclusions of my own. The above conclusions of those who have the same basic understanding of these things as ourselves are presented for our consideration. Is life support always demanded by the fifth commandment? I think that we could answer this by saying: No, but probably more often than is commonly believed. We should not generally try to find fault with hard decisions made by our members in these areas of life; only if the evidence indicates real mercy killing should we think of rebuke and discipline.

I cannot recommend Helmut Thielicke as a trustworthy teacher in all matters of theology or ethics. Nevertheless, he does make a valid point when he empha-

sizes that in the ethical conflicts that confront us we live under grace and not under Law. What this means to me in the present subject matter is that I am not saved by making the right decision concerning life support. Salvation is already mine through Jesus Christ; I do not attain it by making flawless decisions. (Cf. Thieliicke, *Theological Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979].)

D. Lau

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS 1

(Conclusion)

In the preceding verses of this chapter (cf. *Journal of Theology* Mar. 1985: 22-35) the Apostle Paul has held before our eyes the surpassing magnificence of Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church, in all things preeminent. In Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell; and through Him God has reconciled to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

21 - ALSO YOU (WHO WERE ONCE ESTRANGED AND HOSTILE IN MIND WITH EVIL WORKS)

Since Christ brought the reconciliation of all things, this includes even you--you who were once estranged, not only aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, but, more important, estranged from God--enemies at heart. The adjective ἐχθρός derives from τὸ ἔχθος (hatred) and pictures no "loyal opposition" or good-natured debate. As a substantive, ὁ ἐχθρός is used with

reference to the devil (Matt. 13:39, "the enemy that sowed them is the devil"), death (1 Cor 15:26, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed"), and the world (Jas. 4:4, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God").

These are, of course, all enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18) and footstool material (Matt. 22:44). This is the kind of company with which the Colossians were identified when God found them. Such could also be said of every one of us, and our flesh continues to bear witness to it. What could sound more distasteful or boring to our corrupted human nature, more confining, than to "serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15) for all eternity?

This shows the hostility in the mind (*διανοία*), and Paul himself admits to the Ephesians that he too once shared in this: "All of us also lived among them [transgressions and sins] at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts (*διανοιῶν*)" (Eph. 2:3, NIV).

Among the heathen (Gentiles) especially, this hostility of the mind showed itself in connection with evil deeds, suppressing the truth by their wickedness (cf. Rom. 1:18). These were not simply evil works that they happened to fall into now and then, but works which took some effort. This appears not only from the *ἔργους* (works), but also from *πονηροῦς* (evil). Both receive emphasis with the repetition of the article. Coming from *πενέω* (to work hard), *πονηρός* also came to carry a sense of futility (useless, good for nothing, worthless). Consider the thought and intellect (mind) that still go into the feverish pursuit of happiness in our day--a pursuit that pushes God and man aside to rasp: "Please me! Please me!" Consider how worthless it all is. So it was also in Colossae, with various cults promising power and security, and others suggesting: "Christ is fine, but you can have more!"

This is where you were, Paul says. He does not say "such were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:11) but paints the picture in general tones that apply to all. You who are tempted to abandon Christ for something more flashy, more glamorous, or pleasing to the ego, remember what you were without Christ. Remember what it was like once

upon a time (ποτε) and remember that it was an on-going situation (ὄντας, present participle). We can still see it going on today.

22 - BUT NOW HE RECONCILED (YOU) IN THE BODY OF HIS FLESH THROUGH DEATH, TO PRESENT YOU BEFORE HIM(SELF) HOLY AND BLAMELESS AND WITHOUT REPROACH.

The reconciliation is in the past but it reaches to the "now" and beyond. It is God who has done this reconciling, the same one who reconciled all things unto Himself (1:20). He accomplished that reconciliation through the blood of Christ's cross, and this reconciliation is a part of that one. Here Paul mentions not the blood, but the body. The effect, however, is the same. Through the shedding of Christ's blood, the death of His physical body, God accomplished what no human efforts or rituals could ever do: reconcile to Himself those miserable sinners who were alienated from Him in thought, in words, and in deeds. God accomplishes this peace, this change back to harmony, not by lowering His standards, but by elevating His creatures.

Just as the cleansed lepers presented themselves to the priests (Luke 17), so also are cleansed sinners to be presented before the throne of God--presented as holy, blameless, and irreproachable. Etymologically ἅγιος was, first of all, that which was devoted to the gods. Such a person or thing, of course, had to be pure and holy. Hence the second meaning, even in early times. But this holiness is not an end in itself. Its purpose is that the holy ones might be *His* saints (1:26)--sacred, devoted to God, at His service. When people have trouble finding fault with a leader, they usually then turn to finding fault with his followers. Thus were the disciples of Jesus watched closely by the Pharisees. But these saints devoted to God are found blameless, unable to be faulted even before the throne of the all-knowing, all-seeing God!

With ἀνέγκλητος (irreproachable) we are taken to the courtroom or judgment scene. Once, when a black-mailer and extortionist suggested that the judge's fines

were just a legalized form of blackmail themselves, the judge replied: "When I pass sentence on a convicted criminal in my court, it is not to extort something he doesn't owe. It is a bill coming due." ἐγκαλέω originally signified "calling in a debt," then "to bring a claim or charge against someone," to accuse. But as Paul wrote to the Romans: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Rom. 8:33-34, NIV).

Now we are reconciled to God Himself in connection with Christ's physical sufferings and death. Now we are irreproachable, not just in a human court, but right before the face of God (κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ)! What a great reconciliation He has brought about!

These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
Among the heart-strings of a friend.

And yet we are presented blameless, without reproach before Him!

23 - IF INDEED YOU REMAIN FOUNDED AND STEADFAST UPON THE FAITH, AND NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL OF WHICH YOU HEARD, WHICH HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED TO EVERY CREATURE UNDER HEAVEN, OF WHICH I, PAUL, AM A SERVANT.

While the enclitic γε usually lends emphasis to the word to which it is appended, here it also serves the word following. IF you REMAIN. It is not hard to imagine the Colossian people being tempted to desert their faith. It happens today, doesn't it? Highly intelligent people are seduced by vain philosophies, or a new set of "steps to Christ" that makes one "feel so good" as he toes the line, or asceticism that mimics

self-control together with the mysticism that often accompanies it.

Already on his first missionary journey Paul began the practice of returning again to congregations, "strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith" (Acts 14:22, NIV). Having pictured so vividly the greatness of Christ and the reconciliation which is the Christian's possession already through His death, Paul is nevertheless well aware of the danger of apostasy. Our human nature simply does not value the treasures of Christ. Thus Paul urges: Remain founded on the faith. Let the whole structure of your life be built on this foundation so that all the decisions and activities and responses to temptation and stimulation grow up from this "basic stone." And when the rains descend and the floods come and the winds blow, when panic and despair sweep through Colossae and the Middle East, reconciliation with God will still be yours--the kingdom yours remaineth.

As Paul piled up the terms of our justification in verse 22 (holy, blameless, irreproachable), so also here the terms pile up and show his fervor. Not only grounded should they be, but also firm (ἕδραῖος) upon the faith. As a tradesman remains seated at his business or a horseman must above all maintain his seat, so the Colossians must not be lured from their post, must not be thrown from the saddle.

So Paul, who exhorted the Corinthians to be "unmoveable" (1 Cor. 15:58), also urges the Colossians not to be moving from place to place (trying this and that?), moving away from the Gospel hope. That hope will never desert them, even if the hills be removed (Isa. 54:10). May they never desert the hope.

The Gospel hope, which looks forward on the basis of good news, is theirs for the hearing, but don't let that cheapen it for you. This is precisely how it has come to all creatures under heaven--the whole human race without distinction. You heard it because it was preached. I, Paul, am a servant to spread this message, a servant of the Gospel. The δαίμονος does not simply follow orders like a slave but also promotes, as he can,

that which he serves. (Thus Paul asked the Galatians if Christ had become the ἁμαρτίας δαίμονος [servant of sin, Gal. 2:17].)

"Faith . . . hearing . . . preaching"--this outline of ministry is not new in Paul, is it? For isn't this the same pattern that we find in Romans 10:14? "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Here in Colossians Paul affirms: I, Paul, have become a servant of this Gospel. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15) Therefore . . .

24 - NOW I REJOICE IN SUFFERINGS FOR YOU, AND I SUPPLY THE NEEDED AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST IN MY FLESH FOR HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE CHURCH,

Just as Paul found it necessary to explain his bonds to the Philippians (1:12ff.), lest they think it a failure of the Gospel, so also here. Actually his Lord had explained it long before: "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. . . . If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!" (Matt. 10:24, NIV) Paul, too, had previously explained that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

But not only are the sufferings inevitable, necessary. Paul even rejoices in them, reckons them not worth comparing to the glory which shall be revealed, and sees them as serving to benefit the body of Christ--this time not the physical body, but the Church. Paul is willing to supply (ἀνταναπληρώω) or balance any needed affliction and consider it taking part in the sufferings of Christ. This is not to say that the redemptive sufferings of Christ are somehow deficient or lacking. Paul has already indicated that the reconciliation is theirs. But he also wrote to the Romans: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17; cf. also 1 Pet. 4:13, 2 Cor. 4:10-11).

Writing to the Corinthians concerning the collection for the saints, Paul rejoiced "because the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs (προσαναπληροῦσα τὰ ὑστερήματα) of the saints, but also multiplying over and over through many thanksgivings to God" (2 Cor. 9:12). It is in this way that we take ὑστερήματα in this verse also. The Gospel is free, but it cost plenty. The reconciliation was accomplished with the Savior's suffering and death, but the message is received no better than the Savior was. It still comes in humble human form (language) which can be rejected. Jesus still suffers, not the payment for sin, but the opposition of men. This is *Christian* suffering. It is the opposition to Christ that is taken out on those who bring Christ, and the preaching of the Gospel (by pastor and congregation alike) still calls for sacrificial dedication, yes, affliction and suffering. And it is the affliction and suffering of Christ.

Paul never forgot what he heard at Damascus: "And he fell down on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute *me*?" (Acts 9:4)

Know, though at God's right hand I live,
I feel each wound ye reckless give
To the least saint below.

I in your care My brethren left,
Not willing ye should be bereft
Of waiting on your Lord.

He in the day of feeble flesh
Poured out His cries and tears
And, though exalted, feels afresh
What every member bears.

(Quoted in William Dallmann, *Paul* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1929] 43)

25 - OF WHICH I AM A SERVANT, ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDSHIP GOD HAS GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU, TO COMPLETE THE WORD OF GOD, 26 - THE MYSTERY

HIDDEN FROM THE AGES AND FROM THE GENERATIONS, BUT NOW MADE MANIFEST TO HIS SAINTS

Paul has already declared himself a servant of the Gospel. But it is by the Gospel that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. So for Paul, serving the Gospel is also serving Christ's body, which is the Church. This was something prized by Paul.

But this position, servant of the Church, did not come by Paul's own choice or self-exaltation. He became a servant of the Church according to the "management of the household" of God, the stewardship being given him by God Himself. The οἰκονομία (stewardship) reminds us of Joseph in Potiphar's house: "And Joseph found grace in the presence of his lord, and was well-pleasing to him. And he set him over his house (ἐπὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ), and all that he had he gave into the hand of Joseph" (Gen. 39:4, LXX). Here it is not the οἰκονομία of Potiphar, of course, to which Paul refers, but the οἰκονομία of God. It is His household, His grace (Eph. 3:2), and His work (1 Tim. 1:4) which has been given into Paul's hand.

But stewardship not only gives authority. It also gives limitations. Just as Joseph's οἰκονομία, extensive as it was, did not extend to Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:9), so also Paul speaks to the Colossians according to the οἰκονομία which was given to him *for them* (εἰς ὑμᾶς). It was not an unlimited call, and yet that very point should attract their attention in the cacophony competing for their ear. This word was especially for their benefit!

The work which Paul had been given to do he describes as "to complete the Word of God." πληρῶω, to fill, to fulfill, could be used of fulfilling prophecy. This is how Matthew used it in his gospel. But Paul has not here alluded to prophecy as such. He *has* spoken of supplying the sufferings of Christ that are needed. The reconciliation accomplished by Christ needs to be preached so that all may hear, believe, and call upon their heavenly Father in Jesus' name. In this way the

preaching of the Word represents the completing of the chain, and the thoughts are similar to those of Ephesians 3:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--Surely you have heard about the administration (οἰκονομίαν) of God's grace that was given to me for you . . . Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain (φωτίσαι) to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things" (vv. 1-2, 8-9, NIV).

(Some other translations of πληρώω in Colossians 1:25: "It is the task of *fully proclaiming* his message" (TEV); "to *present* to you the word of God *in its fulness*" (NIV); "to *make* the word of God *fully known*" (RSV); "to *deliver* his message *in full*" (NEB); "*delivering* God's message to you" (Jerusalem); "that I might *fully declare* God's Word" (Phillips); "to *tell* his secret plan to you Gentiles (Living Bible). Bengel notes the same verb in the perfect infinitive in Romans 15:19, πεπληρωμέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, most often translated "to have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.")

Why did it need to be fully proclaimed? Why did it need "completion"? Because it was a mystery. It needed to be made manifest because it was not obvious. It was hidden from the beginning (eternity) and from the generations all down the line. But *now* (note also 1:24) after all the ages, after all those generations--*now* it was manifested, made famous, openly shown to His saints. *Now* the mystery is presented to the faithful in Christ, not in parables or dark sayings that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand. *Now* the revelation is "audio-visual" for the saints. The mystery is made famous among them.

27 - TO WHOM GOD DESIRED TO MAKE KNOWN WHAT IS THE WEALTH OF THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY AMONG

THE GENTILES, WHO IS CHRIST AMONG YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY,

If the Colossians heard a lot of talk about mysteries and secret rites from the cults around them, God had something better for them. God desired to make something known (γνωρίζω) to them. He carried out this desire by manifesting (φανερῶ) the mystery, putting it on the stage. What He desires to make known among the Gentiles is the wealth of the glory of this mystery. τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης (the wealth of the glory) is an expression that flows from the pen of Paul. To the Ephesians he wrote of "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints (ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ)" and prayed "that out of his glorious riches (κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ) he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (1:18, 3:16, NIV). Paul assured the Philippians that God would meet all their needs "according to his glorious riches (κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ) in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19, NIV). He reminded the Christians of Rome how God "bore with great patience the objects of his wrath . . . to make the riches of his glory known (ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ) to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory" (Rom. 9:22-23, NIV).

Compared to the "neon lights" and excitement of the charismatic cults around them, the Colossian Christians might feel very poor indeed. They might well envy the zeal and enthusiasm of others, who at times even used the name of Christ, while their own Pastor Epaphras' apostle was being humiliated by incarceration in Rome.

But through the manifestation of the mystery God would let his saints know how abundant is the glory of this mystery! It is not just the glory of His people Israel, but it is also a light to "lighten" the Gentiles (εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν)" (Luke 2:32). It has been prepared (and manifested) before the face of all people, also among you. This richly glorious mystery is none other than Christ Himself among you. He is the hope of glory among you.

Although translations here are almost unanimous in rendering this passage "Christ in you," I do not see here the mystery as consisting of "the indwelling of the exalted Christ" (cf. Bornkamm in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1974] 4: 820). Because of the parallel expression in the same verse, "among the Gentiles (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν)," I read ἐν ὑμῖν as "among you."

Paul does indeed pray elsewhere "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17). He agonizes "until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). But the mystery spoken of here, the foundation of the hope of glory, is not the indwelling of Christ, is not "Christ in you!" (thus Phillips)--but *Christ!* (Nestle-Aland, Textus Receptus, and Majority Text here read ὅς ἐστιν.) Compare Paul's words just four verses later: "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (2:2, NIV). (Nestle-Aland: εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ.) When Peter spoke of a "new birth into a living hope," it was *not* a hope of glory which came from "the indwelling of the exalted Christ," but "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3, NIV). This is the hope of a glorious inheritance reserved for us, who may now for a time have to suffer. It is a Gospel hope, rooted in the good news of Christ rather than in the good experiences of Christ (which God also gives, as we are able to handle them).

28 - (HIM) WE PROCLAIM, ADMONISHING EVERY MAN AND TEACHING EVERY MAN IN ALL WISDOM, THAT WE PRESENT EVERY MAN COMPLETE IN CHRIST; 29 - FOR WHICH ALSO I WORK HARD, STRUGGLING BY HIS ENERGY (WHICH IS) POWERFULLY ENERGIZING ME.

Paul, who is content to be a fool for Christ, who is determined to know nothing except Christ crucified, has been expounding the magnificence of Jesus Christ since verse 13. Nor does he apologize to the Colossians

for his dwelling on it. It is Christ that we (Paul, Epaphras, Timothy, and all the apostles) proclaim. It is of Christ that we would put you in mind (νουθετέω). It is Christ "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). So it is Christ whom we teach to everyone. In verse 9 Paul *prayed* that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of his will "in all wisdom." Here, twenty verses later, he speaks of *teaching* "in all wisdom." When the heart is fervently praying for something, the hands will not easily miss an opportunity to pitch in.

Paul describes his proclamation of Christ in terms of counseling and teaching, but the words that especially catch our eye are the repeated πάντα ἄνθρωπον . . . πάντα ἄνθρωπον (every man). Without exception Christ is the answer for mankind, no matter how brilliant, no matter how fearful, no matter how insecure, no matter how different they may otherwise be. As army doctors are able to treat enemy soldiers in the field because their anatomy and physical needs are the same as those of friendly soldiers, so Paul is able to present everyone (and anyone) τέλειον (complete) in connection with Him who from the cross declared: τετέλεσται--"It is finished!" (John 19:30) Paul knew what it meant to be presented before emperors (Acts 27:24), and now he strives to present everyone before God complete in Christ, reconciled in the body of His flesh, holy, blameless, and without reproach.

To this end, then, Paul works to weariness (κοπιᾶω). He strives like an Olympic athlete (ἀγωνίζομαι) that his team might stand together when their national anthem is played: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Paul knows how much toil he has undergone, but, far from boasting or even demurely saying, "It was a team effort," he says it was all *God's* energy energizing him in connection with power. He himself is, after all, a servant of "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The struggle took place in Laodicea (2:1). It continues even in prison--according to God's glorious might! And so also continues the song: "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 7:12)

Paul Schaller

A NEW PERICOPIC SYSTEM

(Continuation)

The Epiphany series presents the King in His glory as the incarnate God who came as priest and prophet to establish His Kingdom that would bring the blessing of rescue and security from sin and its curse of guilt and death. The texts are taken from the law, the prophets, and the Kingdom evangelist--Matthew.

Epiphany: The traditional Gospel pericope is used because it presents the newborn King of the Jews worshiped by Gentiles, as foretold by the prophets (e.g., Isa. 60:1-6). Gentiles were to be incorporated into the originally Jewish Kingdom in the form of the Church made up of both Jew and Gentile. Dispensationalists allege that the Church does not come into view in prophecy but is a "mystery" revealed especially to Paul but also to the other apostles. They think of the Church, made up of Jew and Gentile, as having been necessitated by the Jewish rejection of the Kingdom offered to them by Jesus. The Kingdom is believed to be a strictly Jewish institution and thus the sole object of prophecy. They reject the truth that the Kingdom in its Old Testament Jewish nationalistic form was according to the plan of the Lord God revealed in prophecy to evolve into the New

Testament Kingdom whose members are "Jews" of any nationality who embrace the faith of father Abraham. Thus members of the Church are citizens of the Kingdom. The Church of the Old Testament was predominantly Jewish, without, however, the exclusion of Gentiles. The Church of the New Testament began as Jewish but with the wholesale inclusion of Gentiles became predominantly Gentile, without, however, losing its roots as the olive tree of Israel. In both the Old and New Testament forms of the Kingdom members of the Church were and are citizens of the Kingdom. The Old Testament form of the Kingdom was Jewish and thus nationalistic; the New Testament form became Gentile, identified with one nation after another and ultimately with no particular nation. The coming of the wise men to worship the King of the Jews was prophetic of this development.

First after Epiphany: The King first appeared as Prophet of Galilee. The coming of the Kingdom is pictured in terms of a rising light, according to the Prophet Isaiah. The Kingdom was not presented as future but as "at hand." Its coming was to be effected by the call to repentance and the simple proclamation of the Kingdom. The dawning of light through the preaching of repentance and the Kingdom reveals the true nature of the Kingdom. It deals with sin and forgiveness, peace, hope, life.

Second after Epiphany: The King elaborated upon the spiritual qualifications of subjects of His Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. As the rising Light He declared and empowered the subjects of His Kingdom to be lights. He urged them to shine forth as lights to the glory of His Father. Again the spiritual nature of the Kingdom is evident.

Third after Epiphany: The King is "from of old, from everlasting." Micah saw His mother in labor and as having given birth. We have but recently celebrated the season of His birth, but the King lived from eternity and was active in His Kingdom work during the entire Old Testament era, appearing as the "Angel of the Lord." We behold the glory of His person as the eternal King.

Fourth after Epiphany: Kings were to deliver their people from their enemies, even as David, not Saul,

delivered Israel from the Philistines. The promised King, however, was to deliver His people not by the sword but as priest. This peculiar feature of His kingship was dramatized when Moses frantically ordered Aaron to take a censer, put fire from the altar in it, and run quickly to the congregation to stop the plague from consuming the people. So the future King would take His stand between the people and the plague of sin and death and save them.

Fifth after Epiphany: How the coming King would save His people from their sins was dramatically demonstrated in the wilderness when the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole for the salvation of all those bitten by the poisonous snakes. Centuries later the significance of that act was revealed to Nicodemus by the King Himself. But neither Nicodemus nor the Jews before him, who had converted the bronze serpent into the idol Nehushtan (2 Kings 18:4), understood. The fleshly hope of a kingdom bringing glory in the here and now blinded the Jews to the glory of the cross, as it also blinded the Kingdom members until the King sent His Spirit to open their eyes.

Sixth after Epiphany (Transfiguration): The transfiguration revealed the glory of the King. Balaam's prophecy revealed the glory of the coming Kingdom which would bring judgment upon all its enemies and salvation for all its citizens.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

7. Epiphany

Text: Matthew 2:1-11

THE NEWBORN KING OF THE JEWS: REJECTED BY THE
JEWS; WORSHIPED BY THE GENTILES!

I. So it had been foretold.

II. So it came to pass.

Lectio: OT - Isaiah 60:1-6

Epistle - Romans 15:7-13

Gospel - John 12:20-26

8. First Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Matthew 4:12-17

LIGHT ALWAYS DAWNS--

I. Through the call to repentance!

II. Through the proclamation of the Kingdom!

Lections: OT - Isaiah 9:1-7

Epistle - Romans 10:1-12

Gospel - Matthew 9:1-8

9. Second Sunday after Epiphany (25th Anniversary Sunday)

Text: Matthew 5:14-16

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!"

I. "You are the light of the world!"

II. "Let your light shine!"

Lections: OT - Isaiah 42:1-9

Epistle - Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel - John 9:1-11

10. Third Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Micah 5:2-3a

SHE WHO IS IN LABOR GAVE BIRTH--

I. To the Ruler over Israel in Bethlehem,

II. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Lections: OT - Psalm 110

Epistle - Romans 1:1-6

Gospel - Mark 4:35-41

11. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Septuagesima)

Text: Numbers 16:41-50

THE HIGH PRIEST--MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE SINNING PEOPLE AND THEIR HOLY GOD!

I. Aaron stood between the dead and living with the censer.

II. Jesus entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood.

Lections: OT - Numbers 14:11-20

Epistle - Hebrews 9:11-15

Gospel - John 17:20-26

12. Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (Sexagesima)

Text: Numbers 21:4-9

THE BRONZE SERPENT--A TYPE OF CHRIST!

- I. Christ was made in the likeness of sinful man--yet without sin.
- II. Christ was hanged on the cursed tree of the cross.
- III. Christ saves those who look upon Him in faith.

Lections: OT - Leviticus 16:5a, 7-10, 15, 20b-22

Epistle - Hebrews 9:16-28

Gospel - John 3:1-21

13. Sixth Sunday after Epiphany (Quinquagesima-Transfiguration)

Text: Numbers 24:15-24

THE KING OF GLORY HAS ESTABLISHED HIS KINGDOM--

- I. As foretold by Balaam.
- II. In lowliness with glory coming.
- III. For judgment upon His enemies but salvation for His saints.

Lections: OT - Isaiah 11:1-5

Epistle - Revelation 19:11-16

Gospel - Matthew 17:1-13

The Lenten series shows the coming King as the Suffering Servant of the Lord who would save His subjects by suffering and dying for them with the promise of rising again. Five of the texts are taken from Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The Jews were confused by this chapter, for they could not conceive of the Suffering Servant of the Lord as being the same person pictured in prophecy as the King of glory. The dispensationalists have the same problem. The Jews solved their problem by inventing a second messiah, one who suffered as distinct from one who reigned in glory. The dispensationalists deny that the King established His Kingdom by suffering and dying; they look forward to a future establishing of the Kingdom in glory after the alleged rapture of the Church.

The Palm Sunday text is the traditional prophecy of Zechariah. The King shall not impose peace during an

alleged future millennium through a rod of iron, as the Romans did in their day and as the Russians do in eastern Europe, but He proclaims peace. Peace comes, as does the Kingdom, through the proclamation of the kingship of the King who is peace.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SERIES: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

14. The First Sunday in Lent (Invocavit)

Text: Isaiah 52:13-15

THE RECURRING CONTRASTING REACTION TO THE
SERVANT OF THE LORD: SOME ASTONISHED, SOME
AWESTRUCK!

I. Many were astonished at His almost sub-
human appearance.

II. Kings were awestruck by the blessing
that came from that lowliness--
SPRINKLING!

Lections: OT - Psalm 22:1-11

Epistle - 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Gospel - John 10:7-21

15. The Second Sunday in Lent (Reminiscere)

Text: Isaiah 53:1-3

"WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

I. He was so lowly.

II. He appeared so contrary to expectations.

Lections: OT - Isaiah 11:1-2

Epistle - Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel - John 12:37-41

16. The Third Sunday in Lent (Oculi)

Text: Isaiah 53:4-6

REALITY MUST BE DISTINGUISHED FROM APPEAR-
ANCE!

I. What appeared to be was this: The Ser-
vant of the Lord had to suffer for His
own sins!

II. What really was was this: The Servant of
the Lord suffered for our sin that we
might have peace and healing.

Lections: OT - Leviticus 4:1-6
 Epistle - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
 Gospel - Matthew 20:20-28

17. The Fourth Sunday in Lent (Laetare)

Text: Isaiah 53:7-10

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!"

- I. Silent--in His voluntary suffering!
- II. Misunderstood--by His own generation!
- III. Honored--in death because of His innocence!

Lections: OT - Exodus 12:1-20
 Epistle - 1 Peter 2:18-25
 Gospel - John 1:29-34

18. The Fifth Sunday in Lent (Judica)

Text: Isaiah 53:10-12

WHAT WAS HIS REWARD?

- I. He shall see His seed and prolong His days.
- II. He shall be satisfied to justify many.
- III. He shall receive the man, the strong, as His spoil.

Lections: OT - Psalm 22:22-31
 Epistle - Romans 10:14-21
 Gospel - Matthew 27:45-56

19. The Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday)

Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

"BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING FOR YOU!"

- I. Therefore, shout for joy, citizens of all ages!
- II. The King for you is just, saved, lowly!
- III. His Kingdom does not impose but proclaims peace in all the world!

Lections: OT - Zechariah 9:1-8
 Epistle - 1 Timothy 6:11-16
 Gospel - Matthew 21:1-11

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(To Be Continued)



JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY
CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION
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