

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

1 Timothy 4:15

**Journal
of
Theology**

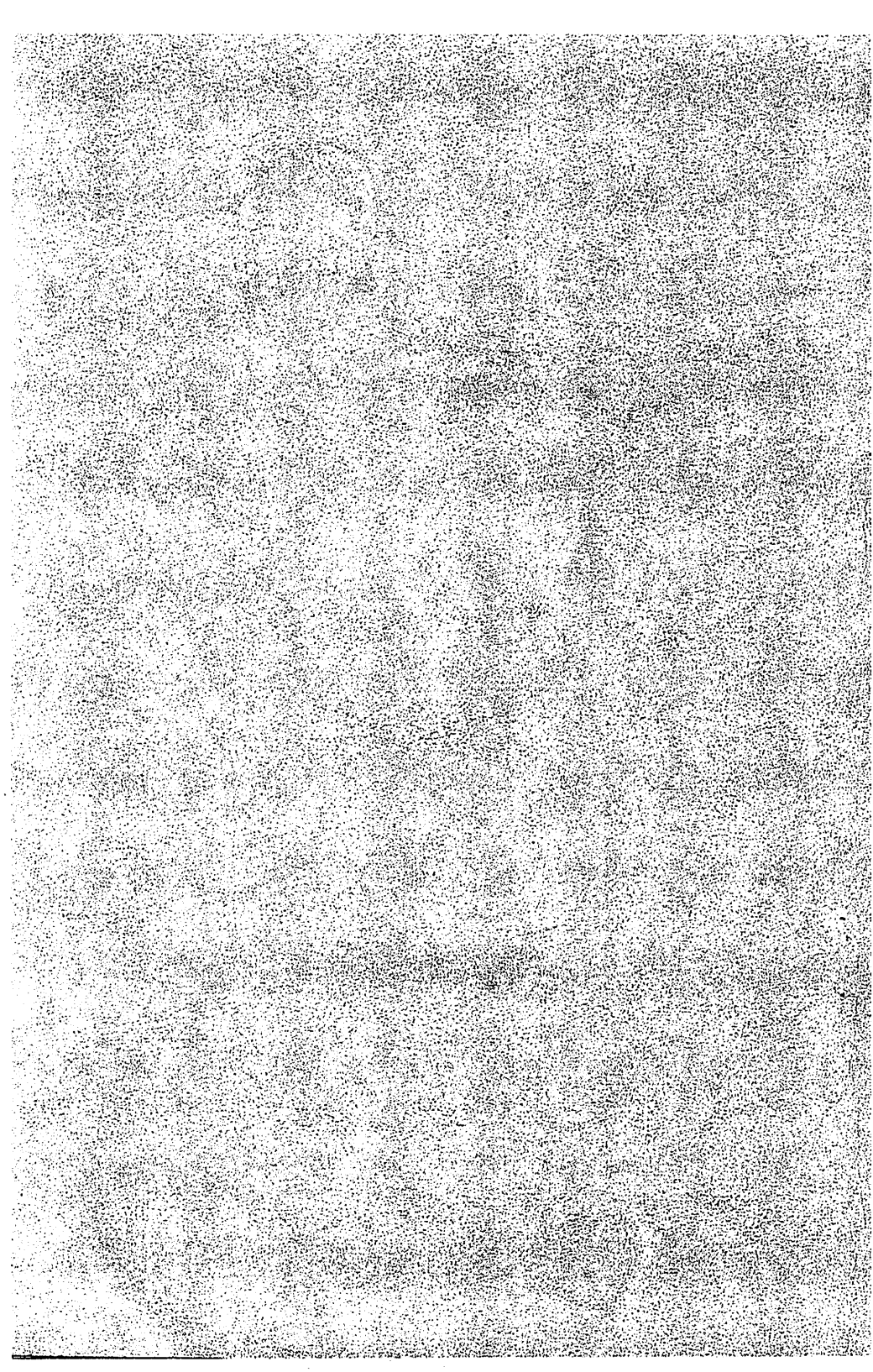
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"LEARN OF JESUS CHRIST TO PRAY"

A Sermon Study on Jesus' Sacerdotal (High-Priestly) Prayer in John 17

INTRODUCTORY

Any division of the petitions of the sacerdotal prayer into texts for sermon treatment will be rather arbitrary. Perhaps the most obvious division would be a three-part treatment as suggested, for example, in the three headings given in the New King James Version (the version used throughout this study): I. Jesus Prays for Himself (verses 1-5); II. Jesus Prays for His Disciples (verses 6-19); and III. Jesus Prays for All Believers (verses 20-26). This writer has determined, however, that for the sake of covering the six weeks of Lent and Holy Week the following divisions of the prayer are here offered:

I. Ash Wednesday, text: 17:1-5; theme: Jesus Prays for His Own Glorification.

II. Midweek Lent II, text: 17:6-8; theme: Jesus Prays for His Disciples Who Have Kept the Word.

III. Midweek Lent III, text: 17:9-11; theme: Jesus Prays for His Disciples Who Are Distinct from the World.

IV. Midweek Lent IV, text: 17:12-13; theme: Jesus Prays That His Joy Be Fulfilled in His Disciples.

V. Midweek Lent V, text: 17:14-16; theme: Jesus Prays That His Disciples Be Kept from the Evil One.

Editor's note: This series was obviously prepared for use in the Lenten season. It is, however, presented here as a series that can profitably be used at any time in the church year. The author is presently serving as editor in chief of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

VI. Midweek Lent VI, text: 17:17-19; theme: Jesus Prays for His Disciples' Sanctification.

VII. Good Friday, text: 17:20-23; theme: Jesus Prays for His Future Believers.

VIII. Easter Sunday, text: 17:24-26; theme: Jesus Prays for the Consummation of His Glory in Believers.

No sermon, no series of sermons, on the high-priestly prayer of our Lord, however well done, can or will exhaust the contents and thoughts of the bare words spoken by the Savior. For that reason it would be well that the prayer be read (prayed!) as part of the worship service. One suggestion is that the prayer be printed out in its entirety as a bulletin insert, perhaps dividing each verse for the sake of an antiphonal reading of it. The entire prayer might then be read antiphonally for at least the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (or Easter) services. For the other services, experience supports the suggestion that it is effective to invite the congregation to read the text for the service along with the pastor (from the printed sheet). If something like this is done, faithful worshippers will feel very well acquainted with this prayer of prayers by the close of the Lenten season. A fitting closing for each service in which this high-priestly prayer is treated would be the singing of the final stanza of hymn 159 in the *Lutheran Hymnal*. (Other hymn suggestions will be given in conjunction with the individual sermon studies.)

In this fervent and sincere prayer Jesus opens and pours out His soul to His heavenly Father. Our Lord uttered this prayer in the upper room after His institution of the Lord's Supper and just before He "went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron" (John 18:1) into the Garden of Gethsemane, where He would be betrayed by Judas and taken of His own free will by the soldiers. This prayer was dubbed the "sacerdotal" prayer of our Lord by David Chytraeus (1531-1600), who was a pupil of both Luther and Melancthon. The word "sacerdotal" means, literally, "to give as a priest." It is not difficult to see how Chytraeus appropriated this name for this prayer. The Lord stands on the very

threshold of His suffering as the true High Priest for those that are His. As the Lamb of God, He is prepared to offer Himself as a propitiation for the sins of the world. Since it was a function of the high priest to intercede for the people--as Jesus intercedes for His believers in this prayer--we have another obvious reason for calling it His sacerdotal or high-priestly prayer. In this prayer the Lord surveys the past, the present, and the future; and it includes intercessions by the Lord, our Mediator and Advocate, in behalf of His disciples of all times.

As simple and unadorned as is the language of this prayer (God is not concerned with fancy talk!), the content of the prayer is truly inexhaustible. Melancthon said: "There is no voice ever heard, either in heaven or on earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered by the Son of God Himself." And Luther remarked: "I fear that we cannot properly estimate and describe the power, the characteristic quality, and virtue of this prayer; for however simple and unadorned it is, nevertheless it is impossible to fathom its profound significance, its wealth and its compass." Other commentators have said of the high-priestly prayer: "There is nothing in the literature of any people that may be compared with this in profundity and comprehensiveness, in the majesty and artless simplicity of its terminology." And again: "Never has this portion of Scripture received recognition and honor in excess, however greatly its praise may have been sung."

May He who prayed this prayer graciously bestow His Holy Spirit that we may make a beginning at plumbing the depths of spiritual riches intended for us when He saw to it that this prayer was divinely recorded for the benefit of our holy, Christian faith.

SERMON STUDY #1: John 17:1-5

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

"as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

JESUS PRAYED! (PRAYS)

Often the record of our Lord's earthly sojourn tells us that He prayed. For example: "He departed to the mountain to pray" (Mark 6:46). As often as Jesus prayed, we usually are not told the content of His prayers. This suggests to us that prayer is a most intimate and personal thing between the suppliant and his God and is therefore often hidden behind a curtain of privacy. However, there are a few precious exceptions as far as Jesus' prayers are concerned. On a few occasions the content of His prayer is revealed. One of these times occurs right after our text, where we behold and hear Jesus' prayer of agony in the Garden. Another of those rare glimpses at the contents of Jesus' praying is the text before us!

Jesus *wanted* His disciples to hear this particular prayer, and so He spoke it aloud; and the Holy Spirit saw to its being recorded for us. Let us listen, then, listen reverently and sincerely. Jesus prays for Himself and for all of us--for you and for me. Jesus wanted His disciples to hear this prayer for their comfort and for their confidence, so that they would know that He was entering the closing days of His earthly life as a victor, not as a defeated victim!

"FATHER . . ."

Twice in the first five verses, and three more times in the prayer, Jesus addresses God as His Father.

Jesus uses that form of address for God in a way that you and I cannot use. On our part, God is our heavenly Father only for this reason that we are His children through faith in Christ. On the other hand, God is the Father of Jesus in a very special and unique way. God is the Father of Jesus because He was begotten of the Father from eternity and was chosen by the Father in eternity to be mankind's Redeemer. When He addresses God as His Father on this occasion, Jesus is indicating that He is ready to carry out to the very end the work of redemption for which He took on our human nature in the first place! As it comes off Jesus' lips, the word "Father" is then an indication of Jesus' utmost confidence that God will accept and receive the work which the Son had already undertaken, and was still to do, for sinners.

"THE HOUR HAS COME . . ."

Having caught the ear of His Father with that one word of address, Jesus continues: "The hour has come." This is *the hour* which God Himself had set before the great clock of time began to run off its hours and days and years and centuries. It is the most significant hour, barring none, in all the vast sweep of time. The eternal destiny of sinful mankind is about to be determined! On a number of occasions Jesus had indicated that His hour had "not yet come." But this is God's great hour! It is the supreme hour toward which the entire earthly ministry of the God-man had been pointing. Jesus is fully aware of the frightful suffering and terrible darkness which lay ahead for Him in this hour, but He shows here His complete willingness to submit to the events which this hour has in store for Him!

"GLORIFY YOUR SON . . ."
WHAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN

In the first, and then the fifth, verse Jesus prays: "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You . . . And now, O Father, glorify Me together with

Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." We must be careful to understand just what it is the Savior here prays for regarding Himself lest He be robbed of His deity through a false interpretation.

Some would say that Jesus is praying for a state of moral perfection to be granted unto Him. This is nothing short of blasphemy, for such an idea detracts from the sinless life of the Savior. Others would suggest that Jesus prays for an increased power of attraction and fame in the spiritual world--an idea which lowers Jesus to being a mere attention-seeker and crowd-pleaser. Still others would suggest that Jesus is here asking for a reward from God for the work that He is about to do for sinners, which is also an unworthy thought. And finally, there are still others who use these words as supposed proof that Jesus is subordinate to the Father. The teachers of this heresy are called Subordinationists or Docetists. It was against such that the same Apostle John, who recorded this prayer of Jesus, writes in his first epistle: "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2-3). What is conveniently overlooked or denied by all such enemies of Christianity is the fact that Jesus was both God and man in one person, and that when He prays for His own glorification, it is a request He utters due to His human nature only!

"GLORIFY YOUR SON . . ."
WHAT THIS DOES MEAN

What Jesus prays for regarding Himself has been expressed in this way: "He does not ask this that He might receive what He did not have, but that He might manifest what He already had." Let there be no mistake about Jesus' full and complete equality with God the Father according to His divine nature. John calls Jesus "the Word made flesh" and says that Jesus was "in the beginning with God" (John 1). In the text before us

Jesus refers to the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was." What a clear statement of Jesus' deity in that from eternity His glory was equal to the Father's!

But here now Jesus prays that also His *human nature* might be glorified--that also the man Jesus might be given the full use of all divine attributes. And that God the Father's will perfectly coincided with the Son's will in this respect is attested to elsewhere in the Scriptures. God "raised Him [Christ] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22). And again: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). Note carefully that, in each of these passages, it is the *human nature* of our Lord which was exalted at the Father's right hand!

"THAT HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE . . ."

Eternal life is the yearning of every human being. The Creator-God originally intended that man, the foremost of His creatures, would live forever. But then sin entered and, with it, its promised wages, death. Now, how can man, the sinner, ever hope to have the yearning of his heart, eternal life, restored to him? The Scriptures give an unequivocal answer: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

When he penned those holy words, the Apostle Paul very probably had in mind these words of our Savior's sacerdotal prayer: ". . . as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and

Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Eternal life is a gift of God, purely and simply an outright gift, without any strings attached! The Father gave His incarnate Son power over all flesh. He did this by accepting the Son's sacrificial death in behalf of all sinners. Through Christ, and through Him alone, the whole world stands reconciled unto God! The Son, in turn, gives eternal life to any and all who accept His holy death and resurrection as their own victory over sin, death, and hell!

These blessed Gospel truths cannot be stressed too forcefully. The moment any sinner turns to Christ in simple faith, eternal life is his immediate and complete possession. On the other hand, the moment any sinner turns away from the virtue and merit of Christ to his own supposed merit and virtue, at that moment the sinner places himself back under the curse and wrath of God from which Christ has freed him. To so reject Christ means one will receive eternal death as his just reward for unbelief. This is the only possible result. Any self-trust or supposed self-merit dishonors God the Father, makes the work of the God-man Christ of no avail to the sinner. In short, it glorifies man and thus detracts from the glory due to God alone and therefore can only result in eternal death.

Ever remember that eternal life, the yearning of your eternal soul, is purely and simply an outright gift of God through the redemptive work of Christ!

"THE ONLY TRUE GOD . . ."

The end and aim of Jesus' entire work of redemption was to bring mankind to know truly the only true and real God. Think of what this means! Everything that Jesus as the God-man did while on this earth was solely to and for the glory of God! From His holy birth, to His sinless life, to His innocent suffering and death, down to His last deep, expiring groan and then His resurrection--it was all done so that the Father, the only true God, might be glorified in the world! If we grasp what this means, then we shall understand how poisonous are any teachings which detract from the life,

work, and words of our Savior while He was on this earth. As nothing else can, Jesus' life, work, and words glorify God--the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, the goodness of God, the justice and judgment of God. And this is why one's relationship to Jesus Christ--faith in Him or the lack of it--determines a sinner's eternal future: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK . . ."

Our great High Priest then speaks of His work in our behalf as *already* accomplished--even as He speaks this prayer! He does so even though the last days of His Passion and the triumphant days of His resurrection and ascension still lie ahead for Him: "I *have* glorified You on the earth. I *have* finished the work which You have given Me to do." Jesus prays these words aloud, as a confident victor, so that His anxious disciples can hear them. Behold how our great High Priest looks upon His Passion for us sinners. *Not* as a burden, but as a *loving gift* from His Father: ". . . the work which You have given Me to do." The Father did not have to force the Son to complete our redemption. No! The Son views and executes His work of redeeming sinners with a willing spirit from the beginning to the end!

With our study of this first portion of Jesus' sacerdotal prayer completed, our hearts can only be stirred by Jesus' love for us, and by the Father's love as it is mirrored in Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for us. Let us thank the Father for glorifying Jesus according to His human nature. Let us pray that we might daily bow our knees and confess with our tongues Him whom the Father glorified by exalting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places! Only by so doing can we give God the Father the glory that is due Him on the earth.

OVERALL THEME: LEARN OF JESUS CHRIST TO PRAY

Theme for 17:1-5: "Jesus Prays for His Own Glorification."

- I. Jesus' prayer for His own glorification is a request uttered due to His human nature only.
- II. Jesus prays for His own glorification for the purpose that the Father might be glorified in the world.

Liturgical suggestions: Antiphonal reading: Psalm 110; hymns 140, 152, 220, 159:1.

SERMON STUDY #2: John 17:6-8

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word.

" Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

"For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me."

OUR HIGH PRIEST PRAYS FOR US

In the Gospel we hear the Savior assure Simon Peter: "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:32). This was right after the Lord had told Simon that Satan had desired to sift him as wheat. Self-confident Peter did not understand Jesus' great concern for him. He flatly denied that he would deny his Lord. But he did! Three times! Each time Peter got more vehement in his denials of Christ. He was caught in the snare of Satan; and had it not been for the penetrating, loving look of the Lord to recall Peter to repentance and faith, Peter would have become a child of Satan and hell. But he didn't! And for one reason only: Christ's prayer that Peter's faith would not fail. Christ's high-priestly prayer in his behalf!

So it goes also in our lives. If for a moment any one of us would be without our Lord's gracious pleading and praying for us, we would be easy prey for all manner

of sin and evil; and the unholy three of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh would destroy and swallow us up. As believers we remain safe *only* because of our Lord's intercession for us. This is something which we can too easily overlook. We quite readily, I think, accept the fact that our great High Priest offered His life as a sacrifice for our sins; but we can overlook that other necessary work of our great High Priest in our behalf, namely, His intercession for us. The Bible oft speaks of this. Jesus "ever lives to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25). Jesus "is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). And finally: "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Jesus is daily praying and pleading for us that, in spite of our sins and weakness, we might be preserved in the true faith.

In our previous study on the first five verses of John 17, we noted how Jesus prayed for His own glorification. Our text for this second study of Jesus' sacerdotal prayer begins that portion of the prayer in which the Savior prays not for Himself but for His disciples.

JESUS PRAYS FOR THE ELEVEN

Jesus prays to the Father for "the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me . . ." It is generally understood that Jesus here prays *not* for all those who believe on Him, but first of all for the eleven disciples gathered around Him. (Judas had gone out into the night.) This fact is supported by Jesus' words in the 20th verse: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." For this reason we say that Jesus here prays for the eleven disciples in the upper room, though surely we shall all find spiritual truths for our consideration and comfort in these words.

"WHOM YOU HAVE GIVEN ME"

Jesus here speaks of the relationship of the disciples to Himself. He speaks of them as certain men who were chosen and selected by God the Father for the purpose that the Father might give them to Jesus. This fact forms the basis for Jesus' profound love for these eleven men. He never forgot this fact throughout His earthly ministry with the disciples. We know how often they showed impatience, weakness, and lack of understanding--and yet, since they were special gifts to Him from the Father, Jesus patiently bore with them and instructed them. As the Good Shepherd He cared for them as His sheep, saying: "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29). Furthermore, Jesus' great love for His chosen disciples was prompted also by the fact that these chosen few were the ones who would first carry the Gospel message out into the world after Jesus returned to His glory in heaven.

"I HAVE MANIFESTED YOUR NAME . . ."

Since these men were so dear to Jesus, what does He say He did for them? He prays: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world." Jesus had revealed not just "God" but "God's name" unto them. When someone's name is manifested, this includes everything about the person. So here! Jesus did not just speak to His disciples in vague generalities about some "god out there." He did not teach His chosen few that so long as they believed in any god they would go to heaven. No! Jesus always spoke of God the Father in specific terms. He declared God as the Creator who planned mankind's redemption and sanctifies sinners through His Spirit. Jesus declared God as "the God who is there" and as such is always intimately concerned for and about the world, and man, and all He created. Jesus declared God's name by manifesting Him as the one who planned, worked out, and completed the work of redemption for sinful mankind. Jesus manifested God's name by teaching sinners to know

Himself as their great High Priest who was sent by the Father on a specific mission to this world.

"THEY HAVE KEPT YOUR WORD . . ."

This is the Word which Jesus had given to His apostles. And how did they respond? "And they have kept Your word," says Jesus. Now, to keep God's Word does not mean to store it away coldly somewhere. According to the original language, it refers to the fact that they guarded that Word, watched over it, and kept it thus in honest and good hearts. Though we are aware of weaknesses in understanding of the Word of God on the part of the disciples during Jesus' earthly ministry to them, yet it could be said of them that they jealously guarded that Word in their hearts. They prayed for a proper understanding of Jesus' teachings, often asking Him to explain the meaning. They daily grew, therefore, in their understanding of the words He spoke.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them at Pentecost, think of how their ears and hearts were opened to all the truths of God's Word. Think of Peter's fearless proclamation of God's Word in his Pentecost sermon and thereafter. He spoke of that Word as being "the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). Think of the Apostle John's fearless exposure of the Gnostic heresy which denied the incarnation of our Lord, His coming into human flesh. We know that all of the apostles with the exception of Judas became fearless witnesses to their Lord. They were ready to sacrifice life and limb in defending His cause and His Word. Indeed, the chosen apostles are among "the saints who from their labors rest," as hymn 463 (*Lutheran Hymnal*) states and expounds.

Jesus' prayer for the disciples was heard by the Father and blessed by Him. And we are the beneficiaries of the apostles' care at guarding and preserving God's Word. As members of Christ's Church, we have "been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

"AND THEY HAVE RECEIVED THEM . . ."

Jesus continues praying: "Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them." Let us ponder the words "and they have received them," considering the application to ourselves. There is an inseparable connection between those who would be disciples of the Lord Jesus and His Word. To be saved one must believe Christ. To know Christ one must know and believe the Word of God in the Bible, for there is no other source of information about Jesus Christ than the Holy Scriptures! This is why every concerned Christian down through the centuries has joined with the original apostles in guarding and watching over the Word of God jealously. The fact that this is done may well bring slander and accusations, such as "You worship a paper pope!" "Keepers" of the Word of God (in the sense we have explained) are often considered intellectual fools who insult the so-called intelligence of the world. But so be it! The Word of God was, is, and always shall be foolishness to the unbelieving.

It is because of our concern for the purity of the Word of God that our congregational constitutions state that we "accept and confess all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, verbally inspired . . ." The constitutions of some of our sister churches add the words "without reservation," adding: "And therefore as the sole and only infallible rule of doctrine and life." These are not, dare not be, mere words. These words clarify our stand in this day when the Bible is being maligned to a degree which the founding fathers of our congregations most likely did not foresee. But the confession of these words will be no more than ink on paper if we do not stand behind them in our preaching, in our doctrinal practice, and in our witnessing. Let us beware of the encroachment of human wisdom. Let us treasure the heritage of the Word of

God, being ready through the Spirit to sacrifice life and limb if called upon to do so. Let us do this zealously, for it is through the Word alone that we, our children, and our children's children are assured of having a beacon to guide us and a bastion to protect our way in this dark world! As Jesus says: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep [guard!] it" (Luke 11:28).

TWO BASIC FACTS ABOUT JESUS

At the close of this portion of His sacerdotal prayer, Jesus prays: "And [the disciples] have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me." What warmed the heart of the Savior here was the fact that His chosen few grasped two basic facts regarding Him on the basis of the Word of God: 1) that Jesus came out from God, that is, His incarnation; and 2) that Jesus had been sent by the Father into the world. These are two facts about Jesus which human reason cannot grasp. They can only be *believed*. Therefore, they are facts which depend entirely upon what the Bible reports to us!

The disciples had come to "know surely" these truths. In the previous chapter we hear them say: "Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God" (16:30). Though the disciples had believed in Jesus from the start, yet the more they were with Him, the more they arrived at the supreme realization that Jesus was indeed the Son of God in the flesh, and the more they believed that Jesus was the one who had been *sent on a specific mission* by God the Father. Over ten times, according to our count, the Apostle John quotes Jesus as saying that He was the one *sent* by the Father. Why did Jesus so emphasize this fact about Himself? He did so to make clear that He was not just another religious teacher on the scene! To make clear that He was not on a self-conceived mission, Jesus was not seeking to attract followers, but *believers*. Indeed, He was the Sent One! He was God's own Messenger, who is therefore called the great Apostle of

our confession (Heb. 3:1), for an apostle is one sent directly by God on a specific mission!

In closing this portion of our study, let us review the nature of the mission for which God the Father sent His only begotten Son into this world. First of all, it was that Jesus would keep the law perfectly for us who were hopelessly in bondage to sin and death. Secondly, our great High Priest was to endure suffering and the cross for us voluntarily. When He cried out, "It is finished," Jesus witnessed to all that His heaven-sent mission had now been accomplished. He had won the victory over sin, death, Satan, and hell for all sinners. And in Him, the great Apostle and High Priest of our confession, we too are victorious over these enemies. Right now our exalted High Priest is interceding for us that we may come to the final realization of our eternal victory in heaven. May our Savior be able to say of us, as He did of His chosen few, that we have known surely that He came out from God and that we have believed that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world!

OVERALL THEME: LEARN OF JESUS CHRIST TO PRAY

Theme for 17:6-8: "Jesus Prays for His Disciples Who Have Kept the Word."

- I. Jesus rejoices in the knowledge that the eleven kept (guarded) and received God's Word.
- II. Jesus rejoices that, on the basis of the Word, the eleven acknowledge Him as the one sent by God on a specific (redemptive) mission.

Liturgical suggestions: Antiphonal reading: Psalm 119, part III; hymns 142, 463, 264, 159:1.

Paul Fleischer

(To Be Continued)

A NEW PERICOPIC SYSTEM

(Conclusion)

One special section remains--that of a four-Sunday Reformation series. The festival of Reformation has become an embarrassment for the ecumenist. The Protestant fawns in self-effacing apology to the church of Rome, while the church of Rome patronizingly opens her ecumenical arms to the descendants of the well-meaning but misguided monk, Martin Luther.

We would like to swim strongly against this ecumenical current which is pulling all towards Rome to the destruction of the glorious truths of the Gospel rediscovered through the Reformation. We would do that by advocating a month-long celebration of the Reformation, not a single service. Such a celebration should be conducted not only in the public service, but also in the Bible class. Our people, even the well-informed among them, have lost much of the historical perspective of the Reformation. The theological background is, for the most part, vague. Few know the issues or realize that the very same issues that confronted Luther are very much alive and continue to threaten the conservative Lutheran church today. We use the word "conservative" advisedly, in the sense of truly conserving that which by God's grace and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was restored to the church through Martin Luther and the Reformation.

The possible themes are endless. We offer three that treat the relationship of Christ to the citizens of the Kingdom in His threefold office:

I. CHRISTUS SOLUS
CHRIST ALONE, AS PROPHET WHO TEACHES ALL
CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM THE TRUTH.

II. CHRISTUS SOLUS

CHRIST ALONE, AS PRIEST WHO SAVES THE CITIZENS OF
THE KINGDOM BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN HIM.

III. CHRISTUS SOLUS

CHRIST ALONE, AS KING WHO RULES DIRECTLY
OVER ALL CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM.

The sermons are topical; no single text is to be announced or read. As the preacher develops his theme, he will have recourse to multiple texts, chosen from both the Old and the New Testaments. Rather than suggest a list of such texts, it would seem wiser to let each man use his knowledge of Scripture and his creative powers to develop each of them according to his own selection of texts.

Suggested Scripture lections are as follows:

- I. OT: Psalm 119:105-112
Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:14-17
Gospel: John 8:30-32
- II. OT: Leviticus 16:5-10, 15-22
Epistle: Romans 3:21-26
Gospel: John 11:45-53
- III. OT: Deuteronomy 18:15-22
Epistle: 1 Peter 2:9-10
Gospel: Matthew 27:45-53

The fourth Sunday, which could serve as the message for the specific festival of Reformation, has been chosen to reflect Luther's greatest battle--that with Erasmus over the bondage of the will. This places before the hearer the ever-relevant paradox between freedom and slavery. The text chosen is 1 Corinthians 12:3b: "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

**"FREEDOM" REMAINS SLAVERY;
SLAVERY BECOMES FREEDOM!**

- I. The Lord led Luther to perceive the bondage of the will; thereafter He led him to freedom through the Gospel.

- II. We can only continue in the Reformation as long as we keep in mind that the natural will of man can be liberated only by the Gospel.

OT: Psalm 14
Epistle: Romans 3:9-20
Gospel: Matthew 15:10-20

Paul F. Nolting

PAIDEIA

THE CONCEPTUAL APPROACH IN THE TEACHING OF THE CATECHISM

What is the conceptual approach? It is what the question suggests: it is an approach; it is a way of teaching that involves the use of concepts, that is, the formulation of ideas, generalizations expressed (or mentally received) through an object, situation, or symbol (word or phrase). A child who possesses clear and deeply rooted conceptions of the Bible truths that lie behind Luther's Small Catechism will treasure his Catechism as a true statement of the Scriptures. He will love his Catechism for Luther's simple, masterful and lucid explanations and will cling to them for a lifetime. The conceptual approach will help the child discuss the basic truths of the Catechism as a confessional statement, and lead him to take a personal position on them. Briefly stated, to effect the conceptual approach means to organize the whole Catechism as a series of basic, but related, concepts that are suggested by the Small Catechism and clarified by Luther's Explanation of each.

To teach the Catechism conceptually does not mean, however, to teach it dogmatically. One of the basic mistakes in teaching the Catechism is teaching it as a course in dogmatics for children. If we look to the Catechism as a treatise of doctrine, it will never be adequate for our purposes. We will find many things missing; doctrines we feel ought to be touched are not there; polemical issues we feel should be impressed on the 12 or 13 year old mind are missing. We find a lack of definitions--there is no definition of faith or of love, nothing about the state of humiliation or exaltation--and one could go on with a lengthy list.

Is this a fault of the Catechism or a fault of those who teach it? Is it a proper approach to consider the Catechism merely a "skeleton" on which we need to add the meat of a much deeper theology, a foundation, if you will, on which a rather complex building must be built? Because of this attitude many

Lutherans have received the lasting impression that the Small Catechism is really an incomplete text, and that it is only through the explanation, the "large Catechism," so to speak, that our children are led to a genuine confession of God's truth. With this concept of catechetical instruction the teacher not only misses what Luther wanted to convey, but makes precisely the pedagogical errors that Luther tried to avoid. As a result the teacher does not do justice to the Small Catechism, but leaves many of the inexhaustible concepts of the text untouched. Contrariwise, he expects from the children dogmatic skills whose true religious value is quite worthless despite the "splendor of word-orthodoxy."¹

There are a number of reasons why we might look for more in the Catechism than there seems to be there. Because of our highly confessional position some feel that it is important to emphasize strongly at every turn what we are for and what we are against; they feel constrained to indoctrinate our children thoroughly on any issue over which there is controversy between us and any other religious group. The result can be a dogmatic presentation of "do's" and "don't's" and restrictions to the loss of the vital, positive, evangelical presentation that Luther intended. Others sometimes tend to think of the confirmation class as a class in dogmatics simply because of their training. While many of those who teach the Catechism very often have themselves been thoroughly trained in dogmatics, they, at the same time, have had little training in the methodology necessary to teach children in a way that would positively influence their soul-life and have had little meaningful practical experience working with children in the classroom. Con-

sequently, their approach to the Catechism can be none other than to bring to bear on the children a complete system of dogmatics. Luther did not intend the Catechism to be used that way. Generally speaking, Luther was not a dogmatician; he was not a man of system. "His alert spirit which was constantly beset by an overflow of ideas could not be forced into narrow categories. It was an idea quite distant from him to provide children a systematically arranged doctrine of faith."²

One of the problems of a dogmatic approach is the almost exclusive appeal to the intellect, an approach to which we submit the Catechism, but a spirit which the Catechism does not demonstrate. As an example, consider Luther's remarkable pedagogical skill in his introduction to the Lord's Prayer. In a masterful way he fits his presentation to the child's power of comprehension, not addressing himself to the child's reason, but to his feelings.

God would thereby tenderly urge us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him confidently, with all assurance, as dear children ask their dear father.³

What a masterpiece! In words and thoughts of child-like simplicity he expresses such evangelical profundity. With a picture from family life, one with which most children are intimately familiar, Luther touches our deepest feelings and presents the evangelical insight into God's kingdom that the introduction to the Lord's Prayer requires. Or consider the Second Article.

In the Second Article Luther allows the father, who above all others has been called to lead his child to salvation, to say to him how he obtained salvation, what God has done to win life and salvation for him. Can a method of teaching be any clearer and more directly address itself to the emotions and less to the reason? And in what a masterful way Luther makes use of this means of instruction!

How child-like and simple and yet how powerful and gripping when he speaks of the person and work of the Redeemer. His mastery of the language enabled him always to "play the right note and pull the right stop." "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord . . . who lives and reigns in eternity." What a statement! Goethe called it the most beautiful statement in the German language. What a simple and yet noble and powerful construction! What variety in its parts and yet what symmetry! What an abundance of windows! And each one of them sparkles in the rays of the brightly shining sun, Jesus Christ. Luther wrote this article over 400 years ago, and yet it is so classic that its noble beauty and power elicits admiration as much today as then. Is there a pedagogue who deserves the name, who thinks he can find a form that better summarizes what the pupil in Bible Histories has heard of the life, suffering and death of the Son of Man, and that more clearly and with more vitality reproduces the intuitive pictures that have been drawn from the history of salvation than these?⁴

Luther's Small Catechism is amazing for its lack of theological abstractions and definitions. For example, in the First Article Luther in no way defines either the concepts of creation or preservation; but rather, in the form of a confession that a housefather would ask of his household, he lists all the essential parts of creation and preservation, one after another, things that God has done and still does for the housefather. Can anything be more direct and appeal more fully to the feelings?

Moreover, an approach that is strictly dogmatic in its emphasis can easily give the impression that true Christianity consists in purely outward memory. John Schaller writes: "In the final analysis, it is the Holy Spirit that works when and where He will; but dead intellectual instruction hinders the workings of the Holy Spirit and arouses in the children the false feel-

ing that Christian religion consists in purely outward memory."⁵ Henkel stated it even more forcefully when he wrote in 1929:

... It is above all true, religion is a matter of the heart. A teacher of religion who appeals solely to the understanding of the student, who teaches religion as he would l x l, and leaves the impression that if a person knows the Catechism from memory and can correctly define what cursing, swearing, stealing and committing adultery mean, as well as what faith, justification and sanctification are, and that nothing more is needed to stand in a correct relationship to God--such a teacher is training "mouth-Christians;" there are hardly more repulsive "mouth-Christians" than the orthodox, who speak as people saved by pure doctrine and the importance and necessity of its preservation. And yet to these people God's Word is indeed so a matter of indifference that there really is no room in their hearts for a single truth of it, nor does it affect their inner life. But I will go still further. It is established as a well-founded truth that, because of the nature of the Christian religion and especially the nature of the soul of the child, instruction in the plan of salvation should not be presented in the form of doctrine! Doctrine presumes the formation of concepts; but concepts are abstractions. A young child has little interest in abstractions, and even less understanding of them. A young child has a strong interest in life. He is interested in everything that has form and lives. It is for this reason that the teachings of Christianity should be presented not as abstractions, but as related to life, as a life-force. A child only understands what he himself has to deal with. If, for example, I wish to explain to a child what faith is and I begin with the definition of faith and then divide it into its various categories, I might achieve this that the child can readily repeat the definition, and can even answer penetrating questions correctly. But there is

little value in the repetition of memorized words, for the child has learned words and has not assimilated truths. But if I wish to show faith as a life-force, if I teach the child, for example, about Abraham, the father of believers, and show how he in the most varied situations of life maintained his trust in God, then, so to speak, "the light goes on," and he can grasp deep inside what faith means. Now he has learned a truth and not merely words.⁶

While Henkel's words are addressed to an extreme position--those who teach doctrine while they themselves are not affected by their teachings--they are nonetheless a strong reminder that memory is not enough, and in itself is nothing. The chief glory of Luther's explanation is its evangelical spirit, a spirit so apparent that it does not need to be demonstrated, and yet it is a spirit that can easily be diminished or even destroyed by a dogmatic or legalistic presentation. Luther's Catechism is in itself such a gold mine of theological truth, so comprehensive and yet so succinct, that it is enough to explore its marvelous riches and impress them on the hearts of our children. Luther himself wrote: "Nor do I know how to present this instruction or teaching in a form more simple than it already has been presented since the beginning of Christianity, and hitherto retained, to wit, the 3 parts: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. These three parts contain in simple and brief form everything that a Christian must know."⁷ Luther intended the Small Catechism to present the principal truths of salvation, to explain and illustrate their meaning and importance thoroughly. It did not trouble Luther either to deal with the same material two or three times, of course, in a new context and from a different point of view. To quote Henkel again:

The brevity of Luther's explanation, the restriction to the essential parts of Christianity that can be understood by children and the use of language employed in daily life and that avoids all

technical expressions--these belong to the excellencies of Luther's Catechism and are worthy of high praise. Elementary school children should not be instructed in dogmatics but in the principal truths of Christianity. It is sufficient, for example, if they learn that Jesus Christ, true God and man, has redeemed and reconciled the world to God through His holy life and blameless death. What the dogmaticians teach about the union of the two natures in Christ, the communication of attributes, the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation, and the parts that belong to it, and similar doctrines, these teachings are not for children. They ought to be spared them. It is not an advantage to them, but a "ballast." It confuses them and compels them to mimic words they do not understand. We should be content, especially in our day, if we are successful at it, to bring them to understand what is presented in Luther's Catechism, to make it live for them, and to impress it upon them firmly and deeply.⁸

The Small Catechism should be sufficient for us. The explanation (the so-called "large Catechism") is really a guide only for the teacher, to help the teacher bring Luther's text to bear on the hearts of his children.

Two points ought readily to be clear: When we speak of the conceptual approach, we are restricting ourselves only to the Small Catechism, and not to the "explanation," whether Gausewitz, Schwann, Kuske, or a committee; nor to workbooks or worksheets or guides. And, secondly, we do not highly value a strictly dogmatic approach, but suggest an "intuitive" approach to the formation of concepts. This, of course, is the approach that Luther himself suggested. Bente makes this relevant comment on page 73 of the *Concordia Triglotta*: "In the same interest, viz., to enrich the brief text of the Catechism and, as it were, quicken it with concrete perceptions, Luther urged the use of Bible-stories as illustrations. For the same reason he added pictures to both of his Catechisms." Most of the concepts with

which the Catechism has to do would remain empty forms without intuitive material, that is, Bible stories, to fill them out and make them live for the child.

The most elemental intuitive material, of course, is pictures. That is why Luther incorporated many woodcuts in the later editions of his Catechisms. He explained that the purpose of these pictures was to appeal to the very young child and give him something to "talk to," to discuss and explain. In this way he hoped to involve the emotions and feelings of the child. But in addition to his Catechism with pictures was a Bible History, known as the *Passionale*, a little leaflet which had 49 pictures that accompany the Bible stories (38 from the New Testament and 11 from the Old) for which an explanatory text was provided. He wanted the Bible stories to clarify the Catechism instruction for the children. His ideas benefited religious instruction until the end of the seventeenth century, for Bible History was given a place next to Catechism instruction. In addition, Scripture passages were found necessary in connection with both, as well as a selection of precious, meaningful hymns.

For children of all ages the chief intuitive material of Luther was the Bible History. Nothing is as powerful as the Bible History to impress truths upon the soul of the child. Consider how frequently our Lord Himself used parables and illustrations to make His point and then would ask a penetrating question at the end, like "Which of these, thinkest thou, was a neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" or "Are ye not much better than they?" or "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Truths that cannot be explained with words can be beautifully illustrated with a story. Who can explain love? Here is a word that defies definition, for it describes a function of the soul, and an emotion cannot be described. Moreover, if we do not know what "love" means, will a definition help? A Bible story will. The story of Abraham, who loved His Lord so much that he was willing to sacrifice his dearest earthly treasure, a son for whom he had prayed and longed for

a whole lifetime, shows what love really is without having to define it. The Bible story is a very powerful intuitive tool, one that, even in the upper grades, exceeds the worth of pictures, or film strips, or movies or pageants. For the Bible story enables the child to make his own mental image of what is portrayed. At times the effect of a Bible story may be so great that it is best not to draw a specific conclusion. "When a teacher tells the Bible story so graphically and vividly and with such personal enthusiasm and involvement that the pupils are completely involved and deeply moved, it might be a good thing to break off after the presentation and not follow with the penetration and ensuing arrival at the concept involved. In this way the strong impression that the story created may not be erased, but rather have time to influence the child."⁹

To use the Bible story effectually in the teaching of the concepts of the Catechism to children, it is almost imperative that the teacher understands children and their development and how they think. Luther said in 1523: "And let no one consider himself too wise and despise such child's play. When Christ desired to train men, He had to become a man. If we are to train children, we also must become children with them. Would to God that such child's play were carried on well; then we should in a short time see a great wealth of Christian people . . ."¹⁰ Understanding child growth and development is important! We need to know what there is to know about the children we teach, how they think, how they react at a given age, what they are capable of and what they are not. In an article on Christian high school education in 1919, John Schaller summarized very well:

The placidity of mind with which the young child accepted statements concerning facts and figures with unquestioning faith; which confined its activities chiefly to memory work, to store up much undigested material; which was not greatly troubled by the urge to get at the causal relation of things--this placidity disappears at the threshold

of adolescence, just as the body changes from mere external and superficial indications of sexuality to a stage where differences of sex steadily become more pronounced and physically influential. The careful educator will take account of these important changes taking place in the bodies of his pupils during this period, throwing around them all hygienic safeguards necessary to insure normal development. But his best educational efforts will be fore-doomed to failure unless he recognizes that the adolescent stage is the most critical period in the *soul* life of every human being. We must resist the temptation to show in detail that the turbulent condition of the adolescent soul is at once the most fascinating and the most complex object of psychological study. It is a stage of intense growth in all directions, and of quite peculiar dangers the particular form of which can never be anticipated with certainty in the individual case. The sexual development of the body with its novel physical sensations of diverse kinds causes strange new thoughts, emotions and urges in the soul which in turn call for unaccustomed efforts of a will which, while still unstable itself, is expected to control them, and for tremendous work of the mind to put them into their proper relation to the thought complexes of childhood. To complicate the situation, the mind now begins to grope, at its own initiative, after the hidden causes of all things. No longer does the boy or girl accept unquestioningly what the teacher asserts; they feel the surging need of arriving at their own conclusions. This is particularly true of the known or newly acquired particulars of religious knowledge. It is the age of religious doubt and uncertainty, not equally pronounced in all adolescents, but never altogether in abeyance. And to make the complicated task of the educator doubly difficult, it usually happens that the child becomes decidedly reserved and self-contained, developing a shy unwillingness to come into the open with its doubts and difficulties, and even resisting the efforts of

the educator to elicit frank statements so that adequate assistance might be offered.

Now give an educator no means of influencing the child beyond a mass of secular knowledge, coupled at best with the insipid, forceless, and conventional morality on which all the world agrees-- what will he be able to do with the adolescent child in the direction of real spiritual uplift?¹¹

All who would impress Bible stories on children must indeed know the children they teach. But more. They should have basic pedagogical training. They should know from history, from the great teachers of the past, how to tell a story effectively, how to involve the students in a discussion of the story, and how to elicit from the story the truth it was meant to express. Sometimes this procedure is referred to as the "formal steps"--7 or 5 or 3. However, to know these steps is not enough. Practical experience and guided training in applying these principles to teaching children (in other words, guided classroom experience) are necessary if we want to be effective teachers. It is little less than foolhardy to ignore the principles of good teaching with the argument that the children of confirmation age are mature young people to whom we no longer need "prattle" with Bible stories; that these young people can readily discuss doctrines per se and can be taught to respond with all the right answers. If a teacher would not teach empty words, he must always employ intuitive material in one way or another, no matter what the age of those being taught.

But Bible stories are not enough. Certainly we do not want to deny that the final result of religion should be a matter of the heart and not merely of the understanding. And yet there comes a point in a child's development where even Bible stories carefully taught and beautifully summarized and crystallized into the basic truths of salvation are not enough. The older and more mature the child becomes, the more he likes to make use of his reason, to arrange and order insights he has

already received, to connect new presentations and insights with former ones, to arrive at clarity especially in matters having to do with the soul. Nebulous presentations and hazy insights are no help in the development of the inner being, but are really a shortcoming. "In so far as my conception of a matter is unclear, it is really no perception at all."¹² All piety that is not rooted in a clear perception of the truth, but is a fruit of vague presentations, is more or less unhealthy and easily may have an effect contrary to that which we desire. As our young people approach adolescence there is a definite need for Catechism-training that makes the conceptual forms of the Catechism become a medium of strong spiritual life.

Additionally, the formulation of clear concepts and clear perceptions, without necessarily becoming polemical or negative, is a *sine qua non* in the religious training of our children if they are to stand firm in a syncretistic religious climate or to hold their own in a godless society. Henkel correctly asserts:

The disparagement of the formation of clear perceptions is not in harmony either with Scripture or Lutheranism. We ought be careful not to disparage the idea of "pure doctrine." It is precisely this misuse that our church or circles in it have fostered in periods of decline. The time in which we are living [1929!] is truly of not such a nature that we dare expect our Lutheran children to preserve the truth of Scripture and the confessions of our church with nebulous insights. The religious scene of our time is governed by hazy thinking, and a Lutheran child who is not fortified with a clear conception of the truths of salvation can be easily deceived out of his inheritance.¹³

The formation of meaningful concepts in the teaching of God's plan of salvation to our children is important for a vital, mature and well-founded Christianity. While Luther's Catechism lends itself beautifully to this approach, the existing explanations of the Cate-

chism do not treat the material that way. To go question-by-question and answer-by-answer through the explanation of the Catechism tends to focus the attention of the student on the explanation rather than the Catechism, and often finds the teacher busier explaining the explanation than the Catechism. Such a procedure has little to recommend it; the relation of the questions in the explanation to the Catechism of Luther is obscured and very often falls by the way and the student is left unmoved, even though he or she may be able to recite any number of passages from memory. This, of course, is less likely if the explanation is used as a handbook, not for the student, but for the teacher. How, then, is the teacher going to proceed? One cannot conduct two years or more of a confirmation class on 30 pages of a Small Catechism—or can one?

To teach the Catechism conceptually the teacher must first of all require of himself an accurate and complete memory of Luther's Small Catechism, a memory so intense that he can recall any part of it at any time, and refer freely to it without opening the text. Luther wrote: "(Everything) is summed up with such brevity and simplicity that no one can complain or offer the excuse that it is too much or too hard for him to remember what he must know for his salvation."¹⁴ A basic pedagogical principle is not to require of our students what we do not require of ourselves.

Coupled with the memory of Luther's text follows a scrupulous study of the explanation of the Catechism by one or many authors. This study must include a careful investigation of every Scripture lesson and Bible passage suggested, with an endeavor to understand why the author used that Bible History reference or specific passage in this particular place.

The last and most difficult step is to organize the material around a single concept which expresses the portion of Luther's Small Catechism that we have set out to explain. Once this concept is arrived at, an appropriate Bible story is chosen to form the intuitive

material that would impress this concept or concepts on the heart and soul of the child so that what he has learned from Scripture will become a lasting treasure for him and serve to strengthen his spiritual life and fortify him against the wiles of the devil. The use of intuitive material is a step that is critically important and one that is so often neglected. It is considerably easier to present facts, to state what we want children to learn and then get them to parrot it back, than it is to deal with the whole inner being. It is easier to present a given number of Bible passages and show how they establish the concept we want developed, perhaps adding a Bible story at the end of our catechesis to prove the correctness of our doctrinal presentation, than it is to elicit the desired response through the use of intuitive material.

Does this sound like considerable work for the teacher? Indeed, it is! Many hours of study are involved, but as in all study of Scripture, it is not without the richest blessings, both for the teacher and the students. The more deeply one studies, the more one realizes the absolutely magnificent and yet succinct evangelical summary of Bible teachings Luther put together in his Catechism, and the easier it becomes to achieve a unity and clarity in our teaching by arranging the material around fundamental Bible concepts. These newly-developed concepts become a tool, a point for discussion, a basis for application to our lives and the world in which we live. By making Luther's Catechism live, we make the Scriptures live, for the Catechism has value only because it is derived from Scripture and is truly Scriptural.

As an example of how this procedure works, let us consider the First Commandment and its explanation. The basic thought is this: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Luther carefully summarized this thought with the words: "We should fear, love and trust in God above all things." Just because the First Commandment is the basis and summary for all the Commandments, Luther took part of the original com-

mand in Exodus and made it the Conclusion. Then he sandwiched the other Commandments in between. Just as he used "fear and love" with the First Commandment, so he used the same words to begin the explanations of all the other Commandments. Obviously "fear" and "love" are the big words; what they mean, how they are related to each other, how they form a concept that will be the key to understanding all the Commandments--these are things that we must consider. After studying the word "fear" in the Scriptures, let us assume that we would choose it as the first concept that we feel important to develop in connection with the First Commandment. This would be in line with Luther's explanation as well.

While there are many definitions for the fear of God, the one that has always seemed to be the most consistent with Scripture and the easiest to explain is the one that is found in the Gausewitz explanation of 1919: "To fear God is to give all glory to Him." This explanation is very appealing in developing the concept of fear, because there is simply no "being afraid" in the definition, a definition very much in line with Luther's evangelical nature. Definitions like "being afraid to displease God" still carry with them some idea of being afraid. Admittedly this is a very difficult concept, since the "fear" of God is just the opposite of what children ordinarily understand "fear" to mean. In addition, the same word for "fear" is used in both senses in in the Scripture. Yet, despite the difficulties, this is a concept that needs to be carefully and simply developed.

Assuming that we have chosen this as our basic concept, a Bible story that very clearly establishes this truth is the account of Abraham sacrificing Isaac on Mt. Moriah. It is a simple story that children can understand--they can sympathize with a father about to sacrifice his dearest treasure, his only son; as children who understand the love of their parents, they can feel deep inside how difficult it must have been for Abraham to do this thing and how very much he must have loved the Lord. At the end of the story they get a

glimpse into the heart of God when He tells Abraham, "Now I know that thou *fearest* God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." These are touching words, words that show that Abraham was in no way afraid of God, but that he loved Him and placed Him above everything else including his own flesh-and-blood son. Abraham gave all glory to God, not out of fear, but out of love.

Once we have established the concept we can work with it--we can discuss how vastly different this fear is from the fear that means to be afraid. This at once establishes the relationship between the true fear of God and love, and shows how beautifully they go together--love is the only God-pleasing spirit with which we give Him all glory. And then with any number of Scripture passages we can go on to show that the greatest glory we can possibly give our heavenly Father is to accept His Son as our Savior. To reinforce the idea of "giving all glory" as the principal thing in Christian life we need only refer to the striking words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Once this concept is clearly established, not only in the minds but also in the hearts of the students, it becomes a basic tool to influence their lives in regard to the whole Catechism and consequently all of Scripture. Think of the meaning these words from Mary's Magnificat will now have: "And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." Or think of the Commandments. In the Second Commandment, for example, when discussing "swearing," it is quite impossible to list every case of false swearing; but it is relatively simple to use our concept, to describe false swearing as "all swearing that is done without the true fear of God."

In no way is it the intention of this paper to lay out or discuss all the concepts of the Catechism, or even to touch on the principal concept of the First Commandment, that of "trust." The intent is rather to suggest the conceptual approach as a meaningful way to

simplify and unify our teaching of the Catechism, and thus impress this precious book on the hearts and lives of our children, so that they will treasure these teachings throughout their lives.

Robert Dommer

Notes

In preparing material for this paper, the author kept searching for an article in the *Quartalschrift* that he had read many years ago, and that clearly reinforced what he wanted to express. Alas, the article could not be found! However, the three other articles mentioned below proved to be of great worth. The English translations are by the author.

Notes 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13: W. Henkel, "Welche Stellung sollten wir dem Kleinen Katechismus Luthers im Religionsunterricht in unsern Elementarschulen zuweisen," *Quartalschrift* 26 (1929): 1-15.

Note 11: John Schaller, "On Christian High School Education," *Quartalschrift* 16 (1919): 284-85.

Notes 1, 5: John Schaller, "Blüchertisch: Dr. Martin Luthers Kleiner Katechismus. Herausgegeben von C. Gausewitz, Pastor," *Quartalschrift* 14 (1917): 165-70.

Notes 3, 7, 10, 14: *Concordia Triglotta*.

"DEFEAT FOR STRICT CREATIONISTS"? NOT REALLY!

Time magazine for June 30, 1986 (p. 75), carried an article entitled: "Defeat for Strict Creationists: 'Evidence' of dinosaur and human coexistence proves false." The article correctly states that for several decades creationists have pointed to fossilized sets of alleged dinosaur and human footprints along the Paluxy River near Glen Rose, Texas, as evidence that men and dinosaurs once coexisted on the earth. Such evidence would, of course, draw into question the validity of evolutionary ideas about biological evolution, for evolutionists believe that dinosaurs and men are separated in time by about 70 million years. In his book *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*, published in 1984 and reviewed elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*, Dr. Henry M. Morris affirmed: "The prints are there, and they have every appearance of being authentic, showing conclusively that man and dinosaurs lived at the same time. . . . The evidence seems conclusive that men and dinosaurs made the footprints at almost the same instant, and therefore they certainly lived at the same time, evolutionary chronologies to the contrary notwithstanding" (332, 353).

The *Time* article continues: "Thanks to the efforts of investigators like Glen J. Kuban, a computer programmer and amateur track expert--who also happens to believe in the Creator--creation scientists have conceded that the second set of tracks was not human after all." This statement too is substantially correct, for Dr. John D. Morris, a son of Dr. Henry Morris, has recently written: "None of the four trails at the Taylor site can today be regarded as unquestionably of human origin. The Taylor Trail appears, obviously, dinosaurian, as do two prints thought to be in the Turnage Trail. The Giant Trail has what appears to be dinosaur prints leading toward it, and some of the Ryals tracks seem to

be developing claw features, also. Trails and prints elsewhere along the Paluxy, while contributive to the original interpretation, may be insufficient to stand alone" ("The Paluxy River Mystery," *Acts & Facts* Jan. 1986: iii). After listing several "mysterious points" about the recent findings, Morris concludes: "Even though it would now be improper for creationists to continue to use the Paluxy data as evidence against evolution, in the light of these questions, there is still much that is not known about the tracks and continued research is in order. We stand committed to truth, and will gladly modify or abandon our previous interpretation of the Paluxy data as the facts dictate" (iv).

Our dissent with the *Time* report has to do chiefly with its representation of the situation as being a "defeat" for strict creationists. It simply is not true, as the article affirms, that creationists have in the past used the Paluxy prints to "prove their contention that all species had once coexisted." The evidence for this contention, both Biblical and extra-Biblical, is far broader and more varied than this. In the words of Dr. Henry Morris, "It should be emphasized that this question in no way affects the basic creation/evolution issue. These tracks have always been only illustrative, not definitive, and the over-all scientific case against evolution, which is overwhelmingly strong, is not affected in any way" (published letter dated Jan. 1986).

It is surely significant that it is the creationists themselves who have reevaluated the footprints and have decided to refrain from using them as evidence for their position. These scientists have thereby shown that they are not obscurantists but are willing to consider objectively any new scientific data.

It must be remembered, furthermore, that the convictions of a Christian regarding the truth of creation are not based on anything so flimsy as the fossils. Such faith is based, rather, on the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of the Creator-God Himself. The large

bulk of scientific evidence continues to point to creation rather than evolution as the correct answer to the question of origins. Nevertheless, it is "through faith [that] we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3).

Evolutionists are no doubt gleeful about the news from the Paluxy River, but creationists remain undisturbed in their convictions.

C. Kuehne

BOOK REVIEW

The Biblical Basis for Modern Science, by Henry M. Morris. Grand Rapids: Baker, c1984. 516 pages, hard-cover, \$24.95.

Henry M. Morris, the 67-year-old president of the Institute for Creation Research at Santee, California, is perhaps the most prolific writer among modern-day creationist scientists. In this volume, which may well be the most ambitious of his writings to date, he tries to show that the Bible is scientifically accurate in all of its allusions to the things of this world and universe, and that these Scriptural statements provide the proper basis for all scientific endeavor. This aim he has carried out with zeal, conviction, and ability.

The entire book breathes a spirit of full confidence in the complete accuracy of the Bible in all matters which it treats--whether spiritual, scientific, geographical, historical, chronological, genealogical, or whatever. The author's personal convictions are expressed in this statement at the close of his autobiographical sketch in *Who's Who in America*: "The Bible is the inerrant word of God and thus should be believed and obeyed in all things" (43rd ed. [1984-1985] 2: 2328). Morris recognizes that the scientific statements in the Bible are not couched in modern-day scientific jargon, but he affirms that they are nevertheless fully accurate.

In the book Dr. Morris manifests a wide-ranging knowledge both of science and of Scripture. The topics treated are as follows: I. Science and True Christianity (Biblical Theology, Biblical Cosmology, Biblical Supernaturalism, and Biblical Evolutionism [a Biblical refutation of theistic evolution, progressive creation, the pre-Adamic gap theory, etc.]); II. The Physical Sciences (Biblical Cosmogony, Biblical Astronomy, Biblical Thermodynamics, and Biblical Chemistry and Physics); III. The Earth Sciences (Biblical Geophysics, Biblical Hydrology and Meteorology, Biblical Geology, and Biblical Paleontology); and IV. The Life Sciences (Biblical

Biology, Biblical Anthropology, Biblical Demography and Linguistics, and Biblical Ethnology). Several appendixes are included: Bible-Believing Scientists of the Past, Biblical Miracles of Creation, Biblical Miracles of Providence, Satanic and Demonic Miracles, Zodiacal Constellations and the Primeval Revelation, and Global Processes Indicating Recent Creation. Chapter bibliographies are provided, and the volume closes with complete indexes of subjects, names, and Scripture references. Many helpful illustrations are included throughout the book.

As might be expected from the unit and chapter headings, Morris continually compares the data and laws of science with statements in Holy Scripture. For example, he finds the first law of thermodynamics--the law of the conservation of mass-energy--firmly established in God's ceasing from His creating activity on the seventh day of creation week and His ongoing providential preservation of this completed creation; and the second law of thermodynamics, which speaks of increasing disorder and decay in the universe with the passage of time, he relates to the curse of God upon man's sin, as expressed in Genesis 3:17-19 and Romans 8:20-22. Morris is to be commended for basing his scientific models on the data of Scripture and of science, without resorting to hypothetical causes for which there is no reliable evidence.

Since Morris regards the Triune God of Scripture as the God of creation as well as of redemption and sanctification, he repeatedly sets scientific observations alongside religious truths, in an attempt to show a similarity or correlation between the two areas. Thus he finds the "tri-universe"--a unified creation consisting of the three physical entities of space, matter, and time--a model of the unity and trinity of the Godhead. Most of Morris's comparisons are fully appropriate; a few of them may seem to the reader to be strained or far-fetched.

Because of this constant reference to the Bible in the scientific discussions, the volume contains some 1500 references to Scripture passages. Not surprisingly, almost one-fourth of them are from the foundational

first eleven chapters of Genesis. In his comments on Bible passages, Morris frequently refers to the Hebrew or Greek words which lie in the original texts, and in most cases his understanding of the passages manifests a proper grammatical-historical approach to exegesis. There are a few places where his interpretation is subject to question, but in these cases he generally qualifies his statements with words like "seemingly" or "perhaps."

Some of Morris's exegetical observations provide information or insights which many Bible students may not have found elsewhere. For example, he suggests that the "dragons" of the KJV translation may well have been dinosaurs; and that the behemoth, leviathan, and coney were similarly species which are now extinct--not elephants or hippopotami, crocodiles, and rabbits, as affirmed in many lexicons and commentaries. Again, he finds the prevailing wind patterns of the earth simply but accurately described in a passage like Ecclesiastes 1:6: "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." Morris adds: "This is a striking example of modern knowledge, revealed in God's Word nearly three thousand years ago" (273). As another example, Morris gives a very satisfactory explanation of the seemingly strange cattle-breeding techniques used by Jacob when he was serving his uncle Laban.

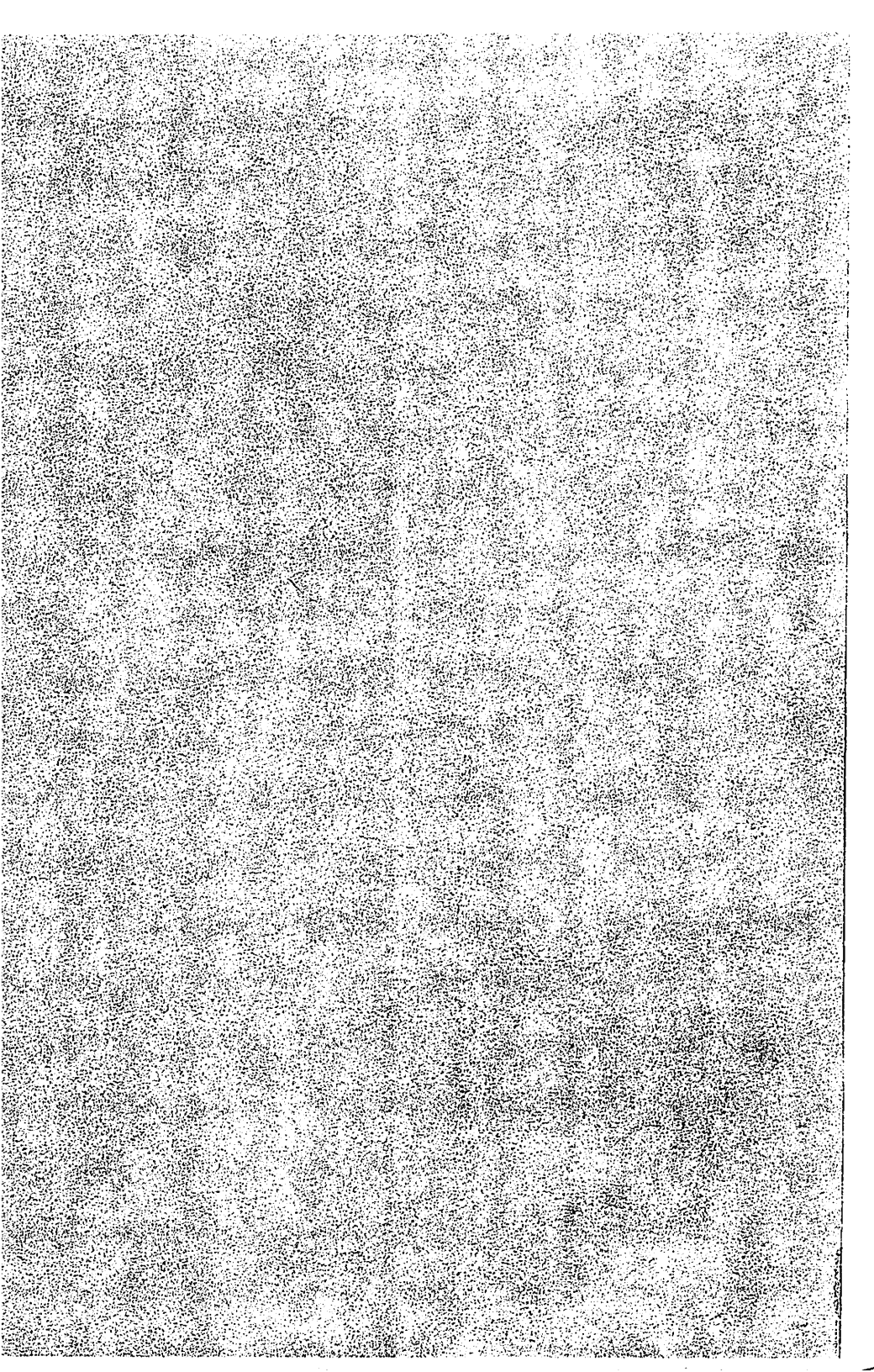
During the course of writing this book, Dr. Morris inserted many fine references to man's sin and God's redemption in Christ Jesus. Compare this striking comment: "Only life can vanquish death, and only righteousness can conquer sin, but this is absolutely impossible for any mere human being to accomplish. If it is done, it must be accomplished for him by someone else. He must have a substitute, one who can completely take his place before God, who can suffer in his stead for his sins, and who can also attain full victory over sin and death on his behalf. This is impossible for anyone other than God Himself to accomplish. God must be Redeemer as well as Creator and Sustainer. Before true and lasting life can be provided for dying mankind, God

Himself must bear the earth's Curse and die for the sins of the world" (72).

Dr. Morris is a Baptist, and some of the doctrinal errors taught within that denomination appear on the pages of the book. While the author does give fine testimony to the life-giving power of the Word of God, he mars such testimony with occasional statements that seem to deny the monergism of divine grace in conversion. Compare the following: "Only when the 'tension' or 'pressure' resulting in the heart of the hearer of the Word is relieved by *his permitting* the Spirit's conviction to press him into the kingdom is he truly set 'free from the law' (Rom. 8:2)" (229, emphasis added). Moreover, Morris apparently regards Baptism as a merely symbolic ceremony (297), and he has evidently adopted the millennial view of a literal 1000-year reign of Christ in the city of Jerusalem (253, 299).

The reader is advised, therefore, to read Morris's book critically. Yet the reading of it is encouraged. For among the positive fruits of such reading are the following: a greater appreciation for the marvelous works of God in creation and preservation; a strengthened conviction regarding the complete accuracy of Scripture also in matters of science; a more-informed recognition of the fact that an acceptance of the statements of the Bible does not involve one in scientific obscurantism, but that the Bible provides a solid basis for modern science; a better ability to discern the Scriptural and scientific errors inherent in such pseudo-scientific ideas as the Big Bang and biological evolution; a fuller competence to testify as a Christian apologist over against the humanistic evolutionism of our day; and a renewed longing for that day when the Lord Jesus Christ shall deliver this groaning creation from the curse of mankind's sin and establish the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness shall eternally dwell!

C. Kuehne



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