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IN MEMORIAM: VERNON E. GREVE (1921 1991)

Vernon Ernest Greve was born on June 4, 1921, at home near Aurora, South Dakota. He was the fourth of eight children born to Paul and Hannah Greve. On June 26 he was born again as a child of God through water and the Word in Holy Baptism.

Pastor Greve spent his early years in Brookings County, South Dakota, where he attended rural school. Having received instruction in the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, on Palm Sunday of 1935 he confirmed his vow of life long faithfulness to our Savior God at the Aurora church.

He attended the high school department of Doctor Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, graduating June 9, 1939, from the preparatory course for the ministry. He continued his theological studies, first at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, from which he graduated on June 10, 1943, and then at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Thiensville, Wisconsin, graduating on December 13, 1945.

Pastor Greve's first call was to teach grades 1-8 at Snoqualmie Valley Evangelical Lutheran Parochial School in Snoqualmie, Washington. He served there from January to June of 1945. There he met his future bride, Lila Moe.

Pastor Greve's second call was to serve as missionary at large for the Pacific Northwest District of the Wisconsin Synod. The Lord blessed his labor by enabling him to establish a mission congregation in Spokane, Washington, which he served from 1946 to 1948.

Also during his time in Spokane, on September 8, 1946, Pastor Greve was united in the bonds of holy wedlock with Lila Moe of Snoqualmie. The Lord granted to Pastor and Mrs. Greve 45 years of wedded love and faithfulness and blessed their marriage with five sons, two daughters, and twenty

grandchildren.

From 1948 to 1956 Pastor Greve served at Withrow Lutheran Church of Withrow, Washington. From 1956 to 1970 he served at St. Luke's of Lemmon, South Dakota. While at Lemmon, he conducted services also for congregations in Bison, Firesteel, and Rapid City. In 1970 he accepted the call to Trinity of Watertown and Zion of Hidewood Township, South Dakota, where he served until 1984. During this time, in addition to serving Trinity and Zion and teaching in Trinity's Christian day school, he conducted services for a mission congregation in Sioux Falls. Finally, Pastor Greve served at Mt. Olive of Detroit Lakes and St. Paul of Ponsford, Minnesota, from 1984 until his retirement in 1988.

During his three years of retirement in Brookings, Pastor Greve continued to provide valuable service to the Lord by leading worship services wherever there was a need, by serving as vacancy pastor for area congregations, and by serving as elder at Zion of Hidewood.

The illness that led to our brother's death was of relatively brief duration. He was admitted to Brookings Hospital on September 27 and was diagnosed as having cancer. During the weeks that followed, his physical condition gradually deteriorated, but his faith never wavered. Our heavenly Father called him out of this life in the early morning hours of Monday, November 4, 1991. He thus reached the age of 70 years and 5 months.

Pastor Greve is survived by his wife, Lila; five sons, Lloyd, Daniel, Norman, Mark, and Brian; two daughters, Carla and Wendy; five brothers, Marvin, Arnold, Glenn, Edgar, and Robert; one sister, Mrs. Lola Bode; and twenty grandchildren. His passing is also mourned by nieces, nephews, and many brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those among whom he labored in the Gospel for so many years. He is preceded in death by his parents and one brother.

Pastor Greve's earthly remains were committed to the ground of Zion Cemetery of Hidewood in confident expectation of a glorious resurrection on the last day.

As is our custom, we hope to bring to our readers some hitherto unpublished words from the pen of our departed brother in our next issue. — Editor.

Sermon for Second Christmas Day *

(1854)

Pastor Gottlieb Schaller

* In 1854 old Trinity Lutheran Church of St. Louis, Missouri, was moved to call an assistant for Pastor Wyneken. Wyneken's duties as president of the Missouri Synod occupied so much of his time that the new "vicar" was to be given all the pastoral functions of the congregation.

Toward the end of July the call was extended to a 35 year old pastor in Detroit, Michigan. He accepted the call and on November 5, Pastor Gottlieb Schaller was installed in St. Louis. The following month, on Second Christmas Day (The Feast of Stephen), this sermon was preached by Trinity's new "vicar." It was published posthumously by three sons, John, Adelbert, and William, in 1896. It was translated by Ralph and Paul Schaller in 1988 89 that it might be shared with others.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you

all! Amen.

In the Lord Jesus Christ, dearly beloved brothers and sisters,

It is regrettable, but undeniably true, that very many so called Christians in our day do not reach a true, living, saving faith—one that overcomes sin, death, and the world.

Not only does our Savior speak to the question: “Lord, do you mean to say that few will be saved?” answering: “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to” (Luke 13:23-24). By this He understands those who really would like to be saved, but not along a path of suffering.

Not only does He say that many on that day will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Have we not cast out devils in your name? Have we not done many miracles in your name?” and still will hear the judgment, “I have never known you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.”

Not only does He describe the way that leads to life as a narrow way which few find, but He also opens our eyes so that we can perceive this in our daily experience.

It’s like this: a Christian should be full of faith and power, not indeed to be able to do wonders which are no longer necessary because the true faith has been sufficiently established in the world by means of such wonders, and not as if he must possess the very highest measure of faith. This is handed out by the Lord according to His good pleasure!

But a Christian should be full of faith and power so that the faith might be manifest.

Yet with many faith is a light that does not shine, a fire that does not burn, a mere painting of a fire, a dead faith. With them it is not, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me”; but “I can do nothing, since Christ is not in me, and I am not in Him.” Such people remain without power, as miserable slaves of Satan. They have sold themselves to perform that which is evil.

With many it shows up particularly in suffering. Then they appear to be completely godless people. A true Christian does not base his confidence and comfort on that which is earthly, for he knows only too well that earthly comfort will not stand up.

Yet how many who call themselves Christians say to a lump of gold, “You are my comfort!” How many seek honor from this world, relying on men, and what does it get them? When their little ship of life is tossed to and fro,

when they fall into danger and death,
hang between living and dying,
then their comfort flies away.

Then it becomes evident that their lump of gold is only a Sodom and Gomorrah apple.

It looks so beautiful on the outside, but within it is filled with ashes.

Then it is clear that their glory is nothing more than a rain brook,
which in the spring time roars full and proud, but in the heat of the summer dries up.

Then all their comfort is like Hagar’s flask in the wilderness,
which held nothing, and let an Israelite be parched.

Then they lose courage, they despair, and have no support.

What they could cover up pretty well in the good days, namely, that they neither had nor were acquainted with true saving faith,

this gushes forth in their days of trouble.

Then they reveal themselves before the whole world as miserable, godless men, grumbling against God without shame or bashfulness.

How fortunate, on the other hand, is the Christian, whose faith never shines in a more beautiful light

than when human help has vanished.

Especially in the time of suffering, when all seems to have come to an end,
in the most burning days of martyrdom
when the blood of the Christians is flowing,

it is just then that the comfort of faith that belongs to a victorious warrior of Jesus Christ stands out in full glory!

This makes him the most highly blessed person on earth.

However, since we all by nature shrink back with horror at such a blessedness, therefore let us all behold it a little closer today. By the grace of God may we gain a genuine love for the happiness of a true Christian who must suffer for his faith.

Text: Acts 6:8 and 7:54-59

Now, Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. . . .

When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

From this epistle reading for the day of St. Stephen the Martyr, let me present to you today:

The Blessedness of a true Christian, who is willing to suffer for the sake of his faith,
by which we would ponder

- 1) how unavoidable it is that a true Christian suffer for the sake of his faith; and
- 2) how blessed he is in such suffering.

Prayer: O beloved Savior Jesus Christ, You became a true child of man and allowed Yourself to be laid in a manger for no other reason than that You might walk the road of suffering for us. We, Your worried, fearful children, Your own members, so skittish of suffering, humbly kneel at Your little manger, and adore You. We kiss Your head, thorn crowned, flowing with blood for us! In spirit we already see Your hands pierced with nails. We know You will soon leave Your manger to walk the way of Golgotha, to bear torment, torture, and pain for us all. O Lamb of God, who carried all the sins of the world, grant that we also might willingly bend our backs under the blessed cross, not recoiling, when we must suffer disgrace and pain. Grant rather that we might willingly offer every drop of blood in our veins, and, if it be Your will, let it flow for You with joy, in sheer warmth of love, Precious Savior. O help, Lord! Lord! O Jesus, help and strengthen us, the weak ones, through Your blessed, conquering might, and give us the victory in every suffering! Amen.

1.

There are various things, my Beloved, that make suffering for the sake of one's faith completely unavoidable for the true Christian in this world.

The first is the **malice of the world**,
the second is the **bloodthirstiness of the world**,
and the third is the **wise providence of God**.

First of all, concerning the world, their malice and enmity against God are so great, that they can do nothing else but hate true Christians — persecute and kill them. In this way they are so blind that they actually think they are doing God a service. The last thing a true Christian can hide is his

faith, and this is the very thing the world can tolerate the least. Consequently, for believing Christians it always turns out: "I believed; therefore I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Ps. 116:10).

In this world you can indulge yourself in every way,

you can strut and make a show,
practice usury and be stingy,
overeat and overdrink,

pray to one God or to none,

you can blaspheme God,

you can go around as an abomination to all those close to you,

without the slightest harm befalling you because of

it.

Without any danger you can be a false teacher, a murderer of the souls of men, and ruin thousands of souls in time and in eternity,

and perhaps some will even honor and praise you because of it.

But just open your mouth with the confession of your living Christian faith,

just witness concerning one sin and its punishment,

and you will experience that you have become a sect.

You will be spoken against on all sides.

Immediately you become like the curbstone in the boulevard, which is run against on this side and that!

You become like the great rocks of the sea, which the wind and the waves rush against!

You become like the trees of the forest, against which the stormy weather roars and rages!

You become like the grapes in the wine cellar that are squeezed and pressed,

like targets, set up for the shooters to aim and fire their guns at.

David has experienced this. That is why he complains: "The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead" (Ps. 143:3).

Pious Jeremiah became aware of this and sighed: "Do not be a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame" (Jer. 17:17 18).

This was the prospect which our Savior held before his disciples when he said: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves" (Matt. 10:16). "They will put you out of their synagogues; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2).

Experience also substantiates this prediction. That is why St. Paul can write to the Romans, "As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered'" (Rom. 8:36).

And the sainted Stephen, the first offering (after his Lord and Redeemer) laid low by the hatred of the world, was the first faithful one to witness with his very blood! Thousands of others have followed later on.

If a Christian has formerly walked in sin with the world,

if he has offered spiritual sacrifices to the idols of this world:

the lust of the eyes,

the lust of the flesh

and the pride of life,

if he has refreshed himself with the unclean joys of this world, like the prodigal son feeding on swine food,

and has scoffed at the Mighty One of Israel as an open sinner;

but now he steps away from the fellowship of his former worldly brothers,

this is when contempt, mockery, and defamation come upon him!

On top of all this comes the judgment of the Holy Spirit concerning this world, which the Christian now echoes, namely,

that the world lies in wickedness,

that she is dying with her lust,
that the wrath of God will come upon the children of unbelief,
and the like.

But if the believer now must voice the judgment of eternal death upon a confirmed sinner,
upon his works and ways of darkness,
upon his deeds in their inner disgrace,
what can the world do but gnash her teeth?

So when Stephen pointed out to the Jews that they had crucified the Lord of Glory, that Jesus Christ would come again to overturn the status of his murderers,
is it any wonder, given the natural malice of the world, that even though Stephen only considered the conversion of his enemies, his testimony pierced their hearts and they clenched their teeth against him? Add to this the murderous desire of Satan, who sneaks around the believing Christians everywhere like a nimble bird catcher, and with his lies and murders will not leave them in peace, inwardly or outwardly, day or night. Because of this, a Christian's suffering for the sake of his faith becomes inevitable.

The devil is a murderer from the beginning.
He was the cause of the crucifixion of Christ.

He was the moving force in Judas Iscariot, so that he betrayed the Lord.

He was the moving force in the Jews, when they cried out: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" like a bunch of lunatics and, without knowing what they were doing, put to death the Son of God. There is indeed no doubt that *every hostility*, and particularly that directed against the believers, is stirred up in the hearts of men by Satan. This is especially true of things so horrible that they cannot be called human.

When Cain could slaughter his pious brother, Abel, who had done him no wrong,
when the Jews could slaughter Christ who was their wondrous Savior and Messiah,
when the world becomes so blood thirsty that they pour out in streams the blood of a Stephen, and other holy martyrs,
that is not human anymore. That originates in the pit of Satan. So today Satan still stirs up every evil wind of godlessness, which is planned against the believers in the secret chambers of torture and torment.

Yet this is not to be understood as if the devil possessed limitless power to do evil, and to kill Christians. No, he is a serpent whose head has already been crushed. He only thrashes about yet with his tail. So the matter of Satan's fury stands thus: the Almighty God *for our benefit* sometimes grants him permission to attack us with the greatest suffering.

The third reason that suffering for the sake of his faith is unavoidable for the Christian is the gracious and wise providence of God.

Since this suffering is such an obnoxious thing to our flesh and blood, we need to consider this fact, that without the holy counsel and will of God, without his permission and ordinance, no enemy bent on our destruction can reach us,

can offend us,

can persecute us,

can grieve us.

When at one time Shimei cursed David most horribly and certain of David's people were greatly irritated because of it, the king rebuked them for their vengefulness with these words: "He is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'Curse David!'" This was not as though God awakened this malice in the heart of Shimei. This was something which had been cooking in his heart for a long time. But the Lord ordained it that Shimei was allowed to injure the troubled king at just this time with his bitter words. In such circumstances one must speak with David: "I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this" (Ps. 39:9).

The Lord our God has only gracious and wise reasons for sometimes ordaining such persecutions in our lives.

It is inborn in all of us the same: we love to seek the honor of men. This is self love, which deludes us. It was both Lucifer's and Adam's fall. These dangerous evils happen especially in the good days, days of transient blissfulness

when a person receives riches,

when his livelihood, his business, is blessed

or when his wisdom and good fortune bring him important positions and offices.

When many a town elder, by the operation of God, is able to attain a good position in a productive location in town,

with a fine house that is perfectly located, and he is aware of the increase in earthly goods;

or when another is elevated to a preferred position of high honor,

— then pride, boasting, worldliness, and egotism are seldom left out.

Then the Lord our God thinks: I will send you a bad neighbor, a sharp tongue, as Satan was sent to Job, and as Satan's angel to Paul. I will decree that a scourge fall upon you,

and a fist strike you,

in order to keep you truly humble of heart.

So that is one reason why God ordains it that we now and then come under trials of our faith.

Another is the possible conversion of the persecutor.

God sent His Son into the world,

the light into the darkness,

the holiest one into a stall belonging to an inn, which was full of evil people,

so the light might shine into the darkness,

and grace overcome wickedness.

So the Lord also deals with his sanctified, the followers of our Lord Jesus in this world. He sends, sets out, and transplants often the most beautiful flowers in the middle of a thorn hedge.

He sets his lights in that place where the gloom is the deepest. In such a situation the persecution and the suffering of truly believing Christians cannot be avoided.

Yet, from viewing the gentleness and patience,

the humility and love,

the piety and godliness,

or even just the spilled blood of the saints,

many a beautiful flower springs up,

many a persecutor's heart will be converted by the persecuted

one.

Thus through the holy martyrs many of the torturers were converted, so that they could immediately also suffer martyrdom for the faith. And right here, in our text, such a persecutor of the blessed Stephen is mentioned,

who not only suffered as a martyr of the Lord,

but also became, by the mercy of God, a chosen weapon for the conversion of many thousands of hostile hearts down to this very day, yes, to the end of the world!

This was the great apostle to the heathen, Paul himself.

“Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

St. Paul later prayed in Jerusalem: “And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval by guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.”

So the suffering of Christians for the sake of their faith is unavoidable, not only because of the ignorance of the world, and the murderous spirit of the devil, but also because of the wise and gracious decree of God.

2.

And yet, in order that we might become very willing to suffer for the sake of our faith whatever and however our heavenly Father might determine for us,

let us in the second place also consider: how great the blessedness of a true Christian is, whom God has granted the honor of suffering for the sake of his faith!

To this suffering belong not only those true physical martyrdoms, such as being sawn in pieces, boiled in oil, burned, torn apart by wild beasts, crucified, stoned, etc.,

but also all those small persecutions —

those biting speeches of mockery,

those poisonous insults,

those malicious defamations of character,

which daily befall a Christian because of his faith, and which at first have a great effect on him.

How tender is our heart! How it shies away from suffering! Many are those who just fall away because they cannot bear to pass through such a temptation. If you, however, cannot bear a biting word,

a despising look,

or jeering laughter from the children of this world,

how will you stand fast in the faith when you see the sword,

the stake, with the firewood around it,

the boiling oil,

the ferocious beasts,

or the flying stones?

Alas, if God should allow such bloody persecutions to come upon us, how many would be able to stand firm in the faith unto the end? Which of us would follow the pious Stephen and the thousands of other holy martyrs willingly? Who would love his God and his Savior more than father or mother, wife and child, and yes, his own life?

And yet, there lies a great blessedness hidden in this suffering, for the enmity of the world very frequently makes for an inner friendship between God and His believers or confirms the same to a much higher degree. The bitterness and the spite of the godless make the Word of God, especially the noble Psalms, that much sweeter and transform them into pure honey blossoms.

The evil neighbor,

the enemy's godless curses,

abuse,

slander,

all drive the godly into their private chambers where they can feel heaven very near.

Our heart is often like a partridge, which, when chased, always runs along the ground as long as it has the chance of escape. But as soon as it notices that it is surrounded and about to be snatched, it swoops into the air, heavenward. When we know or hope for a way of escape here on earth, we stay earthbound and are satisfied with earthly comfort. But when the malice of our antagonists has encircled us completely, then we learn to lay hold of the way to heaven, and are filled with joy that this way still stands open to us.

For that reason Dr. Martin Luther says:

God is the carpenter, we are the wood, the tool is the beloved cross. Here God works and carries out His carpentry on us, planes on us, so that He might put to death the old man in us, together with his wisdom, good judgment, holiness, yes, with all his reviling, thus preparing us completely, that we might be His new creatures. For this He must use great axes,

little hatchets,

saws,

wedges,

which is simply to say —

*evil tyrants,
the devil,
factions spirits,
false brethren,
hunger,
pestilence,
sickness,*

*imprisonment,
traps,
swords,*

and who can mention them all? God continues such work until our death; through such work Christendom has become so large and strong.

Through it, God says, the beloved martyrs reached heaven,

through it the holy fathers in the Scriptures were enlightened,

through it, experienced and skilled Christians, who are fit, will be counseled and helped in all things.

Through this work they become bold and mature, to fight against Satan and sin, and through it they become proficient in every good work. To sum it up: In this manner faith is exercised, the Gospel is sharpened, and Christians become truly upright beings, the new creation of God.

Sometimes in dealing with His children, the righteous but gracious God lets the malevolent world attack and torment them with the aim of bringing to view a secret sin, which they had previously committed, and which they had not sufficiently recognized and repented of. Then it is His wish that they thoroughly search their hearts and, dissolving in repentance, take note of the ancient wrong and cry out with Joseph's brothers: "We are guilty of doing this and that evil to our brother."

In this chastisement, however, there is great blessing, for God deals with them ever so gently. He corrects them in such a manner that they have the honor before men as those who suffer without guilt.

If, for example, David, after committing adultery and murder, is not immediately handed over to the blood avenger, still God does not forget to chastise his beloved child. At a fitting time He allows a persecution to come, whereby the pious David must flee from his own son and be abused and cursed by Shimei. Thus David would be chastised and yet before men have the honor that he suffered unjustly, for he was driven from his rightful throne while he himself was guiltless.

And it still happens today that often a devout child of God will be overtaken in a fault, about which no one knows, except God and himself. Then God says to the troubled soul: "Do not concern yourself, I do not wish to cast you aside, but I will discipline you with moderation so that you do not consider yourself guiltless" (Jer. 30:11). And at an opportune time He allows the godless to discipline His child, and yet at the same time He honors His child before the world, as one who must suffer innocently for the sake of his or her faith. Oh, how blessed is it not to discover such fatherly faithfulness in the Lord our God! How sweet the suffering then becomes, even the heaviest suffering!

Also another blessedness is that through the suffering the believers will be removed from the danger of seduction. For experience teaches how often the world's friendship draws and drives away from God, while the world's enmity draws and drives to God.

How many the world leads into hell with jokes, flattery, attention, laughter, and play,
and how many on the other hand the world drives to the door of heaven with abuse,
cursing,

slander,

and persecution!

For this reason godly souls, who held a great confession before men, have always rejoiced more over the persecution from the world's side, than over the ovations. And therefore God often takes the earthly comfort away from us through persecution, so that we might be filled with heavenly comfort.

Why is the ground turned upside down?

Why is the gold cast into the fire?

Why is the precious stone cut and polished?

Why is the pearl bored through?

The land should bring forth fruit.

The gold should be refined.

The precious stone should shine like a mirror.

The pearl should be strung into a necklace.

In persecution the heart should become that much more an offering to the Lord, a sweet fragrance, and it cannot become such without the deepest, the most heartfelt, heaven sweetened comfort of the Holy Spirit. In the rainy weather the ears of corn stand and weep with hanging heads, as if they were in mourning, but inside they feel the life giving power of the breath of the Almighty and will soon respond in outward life.

If Stephen had not been denounced by false witnesses as guilty of death, his face would not have shone like the face of an angel. If the men had not encircled him like lions, the heavens would not have opened to him, that he might be overjoyed to see the glory of God with his own eyes. If the murderous stones had not been flying around his head to bring his bloody end, he would not have kneeled down and prayed so powerfully for himself and his enemies, with such fiery fervor, such heavenly tranquility, and such burning love for his enemies.

“I will be with him in trouble,” speaks the Lord concerning the persecuted soul. “I will deliver him and honor him.” The floods dare not drown him. The flames shall not set him on fire. The stones that are thrown shall not kill him, and even if he does die, he will not feel it, because of his inner comfort and blessedness. So he will not taste of death, but live with me eternally!

O how blessed is the true, living Christian, who suffers on account of his faith and in faith victoriously overpowers the swords of the enemy!

If our faithful God were to put us to the test all the time, if He should perpetually try our faith and our love, yet He cannot forsake us with His comfort. He will teach our hands to fight and our fists to wage war against the last enemy, and He will put Stephen’s ascension song into our mouths:

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Amen.

The Authority of the Received Text

Stephen C. F. Kurtzahn

If the only Bible we used were the King James Version, there would be no need for an article such as this which discusses the authority of the Received Text, or the *Textus Receptus*. But as it is, our pastors, teachers, and laypeople are utilizing a varied spectrum of Bible translations. The New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version, and An American Translation are just a few of the many out on the market today. Catechisms are being printed and bulletin inserts are sent with our bulletin covers which use translations other than the King James Version. As we all well know, the New Testament portions of these newer translations are based in one way or another on a Greek text different from the Received Text of the KJV.

And that is where the problem enters. Modern textual scholarship has all but abandoned the Byzantine text type (on which the Received Text is based) for a Greek text which has only been with us since the end of the 19th century—the critical text of Westcott Hort. On the other end of the pendulum we have a growing number of fundamentalist and conservative theologians and laypeople who have an extremely firm reliance upon the Received Text.

Our people are caught right in the middle. Many are not bothered by the use of the newer versions. Others do not change so easily. Many have no reason or basis for their stubbornness. But others have legitimate concerns. Why should I use a Bible which is based on a critical text developed by liberal theologians? If the KJV is a better, overall translation (we ourselves give this impression when we tell our parishioners to examine their new versions in light of the KJV), why should I settle for second best?

It is for these varied reasons that this article has been written. The reader should be aware that what we pastors learned in Seminary about textual criticism has been challenged and theories are changing. Our people have also become more educated in these matters. We need to know what they're talking about as well as what we're talking about. Above all, we dare not ignore or look down on those who want to remain faithful to the KJV. Their reasons may be very valid.

History of the Received Text

The infant history of the Received Text is mostly guesswork. This is important to remember since we'll be getting back to it later. The most popular opinion held today as far as the rise of the Received Text is concerned is this: After the holy writers sent out their inspired letters, copies were made and circulated. For example, the Epistle to the Romans was read by the congregation in Rome, and then copies were made by hand and shared with the other Christian churches throughout the Empire.

This hand copying gave rise to mistakes in the text. After a period of many years, each center of Christianity in the Empire had its own type of Greek New Testament. These centers are presumed to have been Rome, Alexandria, Caesarea and Constantinople. This would explain the different families of texts that we have today, each with its own peculiar characteristics.

Then, in the year 325, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine. The king ordered fifty new copies of the New Testament for the church in Constantinople. It is presumed that these Bibles were based upon the text type of that area. As this official text type spread throughout the Empire, it became the standardized or accepted text of the church at large. After the Eighth Century, almost every New Testament Greek text written out by hand was based on the "Byzantine" Testament.

Centuries passed until the year 1456, when Johann Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press. Books, letters, tracts, etc., could now be printed up quickly and without mistakes. There would be no more variants in the Greek New Testament. In 1502 Cardinal Ximenes of Toledo, Spain, accepted the challenge of publishing the Scriptures in the original languages. His work was not completed until 1522. His effort resulted in what has been called the "Complutensian Polyglott."

In the meantime, an ambitious printer in Switzerland was determined to publish a New Testament in Greek before Ximenes was able to get his work out to the buying public. Johann Froben asked his friend Erasmus of Rotterdam to begin preparing a Greek New Testament. This was in April of 1515. Erasmus published his first edition through Froben in March of 1516—beating Ximenes by six years.

How did Erasmus do it? He used no more than six manuscripts. All were of Byzantine origin

except one. The manuscript he used for the Book of Revelation was missing the last six verses, so he retranslated them into Greek from the Latin Vulgate. This Greek New Testament of Erasmus went through four subsequent editions. Martin Luther used the second edition for his *Deutsche Bibel* (German Bible).

After Erasmus and Ximenes published their Bibles, several others entered the work in France and Holland. Robert Estienne, sometimes known as Stephanus, printed four editions of the Greek New Testament using the editions of Erasmus, Ximenes and 15 other manuscripts from 1546 to 1551. His 1551 edition, called *Regia*, or the Royal Edition, became the standard text in England and the United States. His fourth edition (1551) gave to us the verse numberings which we have in our Bibles today.

In France, Theodore Beza published nine editions from 1565 to 1604. His text was basically that of Erasmus and Stephanus. The King James translators made large use of his editions in 1611.

Then we come to the two Elzivir brothers in Holland— Bonaventure and Abraham. They printed seven editions of the Greek NT from 1624 to 1678. Their second edition (1633) became the standard text in continental Europe. The preface of this NT reads in part, “*Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.*”¹ [“Therefore you have the text now received by all, in which we present nothing altered or corrupted.” — Ed.] From this statement came the term, *Textus Receptus*, or Received Text. Needless to say, it was Byzantine in background.

Criticism of the Received Text

As we stated previously in the introduction, modern scholarship has all but abandoned a serious consideration of the Received Text. The rejection of the Received Text is based on three presuppositions:

1. The Received Text does not agree with the oldest Greek NT manuscripts;
2. The Received Text is a revised and, hence, secondary form of the Greek NT; and
3. The readings of the Received Text are repeatedly inferior to those of the earlier manuscripts.

Let’s take a closer look at these criticisms, one by one ——

1. The Received Text does not agree with the oldest Greek New Testament manuscripts. The two great uncial Manuscripts, Aleph (Sinaiticus) and B (Vaticanus), do not agree with the Received Text in many places. Aleph and B are much older than the earliest representative of the Byzantine family (the text type of the Received Text). Aleph and B were both written in the Fourth Century. Since they are much older, they are much more reliable, being closer in time to the originals.

Also, the papyri which have been found rather recently in Egypt support the text of Aleph and B in a majority of readings. This has great importance, for these little bits of papyri date back to about 100 years after the apostles wrote their books. If these very, very early papyri do not support the Received Text, then it must not be the more important Greek text.

2. The Received Text is a revised and, hence, secondary form of the Greek New Testament. There is some evidence to support the conjecture that the Received Text represents an ecclesiastical revision by Lucian of Antioch (d. AD 311). This revision is presented as fact by most modern textual critics.

This revision by Lucian was to bring together all the different types of texts in the Christian world in order to construct a uniform text. Thus the Received Text contains readings from other text types.

We find support for such a presupposition in publications, such as the *Concordia Theological Monthly*:

The Syrian text is least important, since it seems that the editors had before them the documents representing at least three earlier former texts: Western, Alexandrian, a third. The reason for the mixture, it seems, results from the destruction of MSS. under Diocletian's persecution (284 305), in which whole regions were undoubtedly robbed of texts, necessitating the procurement of copies from elsewhere.²

3. The readings of the Received Text are repeatedly inferior to those of the earlier manuscripts. Modern textual critics use the following two rules in determining which variant to select:

Critics today seek to ascertain in each set of textual variants the reading that is most nearly in accord with the style of the author and that accounts best for the origin of the other variants.³

Since the Received Text appears to have variant readings which are drawn from two or more other manuscripts, it must be an inferior text; an editing job must have been performed on it. An example of this is found in 1 Thessalonians 3:2a.

The sentence appears in five forms, all of which begin, "And we sent Timothy . . ." They continue as follows:

1. "our brother and collaborator of God"
2. "our brother and minister of God"
3. "our brother and collaborator"
4. "our brother and minister and collaborator of God"
5. "our brother and minister of God and our collaborator"

The first seems to be the most difficult reading. There appears to be no reason for changing the text to read "collaborator of God" . . . If that were an original reading, however, it might have proved to be offensive to some, and, thus, motive would be given for the change. In the second the offensive word is changed to "minister." In the third the words "of God" are omitted, thus making Timothy a collaborator of Paul and not of God. The fourth and fifth are combinations of the previous readings . . . Thus the first seems to explain the other four readings.⁴

The Modern Day "Received Text"

The Greek text of Erasmus has all but been abandoned for a new "Received Text." Most textual scholars have fallen head over heels in love with the critical text of Westcott Hort. Sir Frederic Kenyon says that Westcott and Hort's theory is the starting point of nearly all NT textual criticism work today. Let's examine this modern "Received Text" a bit more closely.

Since the time the Erasmus editions of the Greek NT were published, church leaders and theologians have tried to update the text and make it more workable. We are familiar with such men as Tregelles and Bengel. It was not until the time of Karl Lachmann, however, that a new approach was

made toward the Greek Bible. Lachmann was a classical scholar who applied the critical principles of ancient secular literature to the Bible. He confined his attention to a small group of very ancient manuscripts, versions and Church Fathers. He bound himself to follow the majority of his authorities, much as Nestle does in his critical edition of the Greek NT.

The next name we come across in the history of modern critical text is that of Constantin Tischendorf. He discovered and edited Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph). We should all be familiar with the story of how he found it in a monastery on Mount Sinai. Tischendorf's critical edition of the NT leaned heavily on Codex Aleph—he was quite prejudiced. Kenyon says of it:

Valuable as his text is as representing the opinions of one who gave a strenuous lifetime to the study of the subject, it could not in any sense be final, or even made a striking epoch in the history of New Testament criticism.⁵

But the greatest contribution Tischendorf did make to modern textual criticism are his six rules of determining the original text. As we continue, you will notice that Westcott Hort base much of their theory on Tischendorf's six rules.

- 1) Text to be sought only from ancient evidence, and especially from Greek mss., but without neglecting the testimonies of translations and Church Fathers.
- 2) A reading peculiar to one or another ancient document is suspicious, as also is any which seems to show that it had originated in the revision of a learned man.
- 3) Readings, however well supported by evidence, are to be rejected when it appears that they have preceded from errors of copyists.
- 4) In parallel passages, whether of the Old Testament or New Testament, especially in the first three Gospels, those testimonies are to be preferred in which there is not precise accordance of such parallel passages, unless there are important reasons to the contrary.
- 5) In discrepant readings, that reading should be preferred which may have given occasion to the rest, or which appears to comprise the elements of the others.
- 6) Those readings must be maintained which accord with New Testament Greek or with the peculiar style of each individual writer.⁶

Next on the dramatic stage of NT textual criticism appear B. F. Westcott, Bishop of Durham, and F. J. A. Hort, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University. These two men were part of a commission to update the English language of the King James Version. They went above and beyond that, however, developing a whole new Greek text of the NT. Their edition came out in 1881. Westcott and Hort did not collate or edit manuscripts, as Tischendorf had done, but, as Kenyon states:

... devoted themselves to the study of materials collected by others, and to the elaboration of a theory of the history of the New Testament text, which might serve as a guide to the discovery of the true text among the multitude of divergent witnesses that have come down to us.⁷

Basic to the theory of Westcott and Hort is the idea of text types, or families, of which we spoke earlier. They classified these families as Western, Alexandrian, Syrian and Neutral. The Neutral, as exemplified in Codex B, was to be the closest to the original autographs. Hort claimed that the Byzantine text type had its origin in a revision by Lucian of Antioch. In fact, Hort's theory stands or falls on the proposition that no distinct Byzantine reading existed before the revision of Lucian and the days of St. Chrysostom.

What rules did Westcott and Hort use in their work of textual criticism? They narrowed Tischendorf's six rules down to two: 1) Intrinsic Probability—that reading is to be preferred which best suits the context; 2) Transcriptional Probability—that reading is to be preferred which best explains the origin for all the others.

The critical text of Westcott Hort reigns supreme to this day—especially in the Nestle and United Bible Societies New Testaments. It is upon these texts that all of our newer versions are based, and that is also the reason why our newer versions are so different from the KJV.

Criticism of Today's "Received Text"

A great deal has been said and written against the modern day "Received Text" by both armchair and serious scholars. Voluminous arguments could be presented against the critical text of Westcott Hort, but we will limit ourselves to simply three basic points:

1. There appears to be a fine, fine line between textual criticism today and higher criticism. Recall what we said before about Karl Lachmann? He took the Bible and subjected it to the same rules which were applied to the Classics. It is true that textual criticism strives to find the true text, while higher criticism wants to find the message hidden in the text. But to treat the Bible as a Classic?

Kurt Marquart has this to say about higher criticism, and a great deal of it may apply also to modern day textual criticism:

The historical critical method arose out of the rationalistic Enlightenment and differs from traditional biblical scholarship in that it insists on treating the Bible not as an unquestioned authority, but as one ancient book among others. All biblical statements are therefore open to challenge before the court of sovereign human reason. Historical criticism understands itself simply as the general scientific method applied to past events, namely history. This means that the critic and his reason are judge and jury, while the Bible, like all other ancient documents, is on trial, whether as defendant or witness; for even as a witness its credibility depends entirely on the findings of the critical "court." This situation, of course, represents a complete reversal of the classic roles of reason and Scripture in Lutheran theology.⁸

We are not the only ones who have noticed the equal ground shared by both textual and higher criticism. In a paper entitled "Bible Critics Criticized," we read:

In contrast to higher textual criticism the discipline of textual criticism was supposed to deal with the text alone. The latter is a valuable tool and a worthy enterprise when undertaken by those who believe in Verbal Inspiration but since very few believe this anymore the subjective and rationalistic approach applied by higher criticism to the literary sources of Scripture are found to influence, to a great extent, the critical study of the texts themselves. In 1949 Wikgren noted: "The line . . . between higher and lower criticism has become very thin or has often ceased to exist."⁹

Now someone is sure to respond to all this: "If there is no difference at times between higher criticism and lower criticism, how come none of Scripture's teachings are removed or found wanting in our newer versions?" Such a statement reflects what Hort said about no doctrine being watered down or

removed by textual criticism. But what about the layperson who opens up his New International Version and finds Mark 16:9-20 preceded with the words, “The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20”? His first impression will be that this is not a part of the inspired text.

And then we have a textual scholar saying in a lecture at Duke University:

It is also a false assurance, offered by many, that textual criticism can have no effect upon Christian doctrine.¹⁰

He also goes on to say regarding revisions made by Marcion, Origen and Tatian on Luke 10:21; John 2:15; John 11:25 and Mark 1:41:

These revisions clearly were made with deliberate intent and, furthermore, they do alter the sense of the text and affect the interpretation . . .¹¹

2. Was the revision by Lucian actually factual? Primary to Hort’s whole argument that the Byzantine text is a later revision of several of the earlier text types is the claim that it is the result of the work of Lucian. Are there any references to this revision in ancient Christian literature?

Little is known of the life of Lucian of Antioch.¹²

The earliest references to Lucian are two brief and highly favorable estimates which Eusebius includes in his *Church History*.¹³

Later in the fourth century Jerome makes three references to Lucian . . .¹⁴

Among testimonia of uncertain origin there is an unequivocal statement that Lucian concerned himself with the New Testament as well as the Old.¹⁵

Now what about the content of some of these references?

Jerome: It is obvious that these writers (Lucian and Hesychius) could not emend anything in the Old Testament after the labors of the Seventy; and it was useless to correct the New, for versions of Scripture already exist in the language of many nations which show that their editions are false.¹⁶

Under the date of October 15, the *Menaion* of the Greek Church (this is a liturgical volume which includes short accounts of saints and martyrs to be read on their festivals) states that Lucian made a copy with his own hand of both Old and New Testaments . . .¹⁷

Looking at these two comments, can we definitely prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Lucian revised and edited the Greek NT, thus resulting in the Byzantine text type? We can infer from the first quote from Jerome that Lucian did edit the Greek NT. But the second quote could not prove so. The reading says that Lucian made a copy. It doesn’t say he revised it. We must also take into consideration what one modern scholar claims:

Lucian was an Arian, a vocal one. Does Metzger seriously invite us to believe that the victorious Athanasians embraced an Arian revision of the Greek NT?¹⁸

3. Hort’s first rule of “Intrinsic Probability” is not a scientific rule at all, but merely guesswork. Modern textual critics of the Greek NT base most, if not all, of their decisions to accept one or another

variant reading on the rule: Pick the best reading which fits the style of the author. This is a revision of Hort's rule: Pick the reading which best explains the origin of all the others.

Hort himself said that

In dealing with this kind of evidence (Intrinsic Evidence of Readings) equally competent critics often arrive at contradictory conclusions as to the same variations.¹⁹

This is nothing more than guesswork and implies that the original wording of the inspired text cannot be recovered. Kenyon states this in so many words:

Critics of this school are prepared to admit that, here and there, the original readings may have been wholly lost.²⁰

We see this kind of guesswork in our UBS New Testament, which is the basic Greek text of most translations coming out today. In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Bruce Metzger says concerning the selection of certain variant readings:

As the first draft of each major section was completed, it was circulated among the other members of the Committee to make certain that the comments reflected adequately the Committee's deliberations. Frequently it had happened that the members of the Committee differed in their evaluation of the textual evidence, and thus many readings were adopted on the basis of a majority vote. In special cases, when a member holding a minority opinion had strong feelings that the majority had gone astray, opportunity was given for him to express his own point of view.²¹

There are probably as many opinions on a variant reading as there are textual critics. We would again do well to listen to Kenyon:

No authority could be attached to words which rested only upon conjecture; and a critic who should devote himself to editing the Scriptures on conjectural lines would be merely wasting his time.²²

The Present Dilemma

If we are to be honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that in the area of textual criticism we are in a very serious dilemma. The criticisms aimed against the *Textus Receptus* have been found to be wanting. But the damage has been done. For a hundred years now we have been witnesses of a growing lack of respect for the KJV. We ourselves are to blame for a portion of its downfall—can you count or remember how many times you disparaged the KJV?

We must admit, however, in looking at the picture from every angle, that there are some real barriers our people run into when they use the KJV. Arthur Repp once said:

There are some physical factors which make Bible reading difficult. The one most frequently mentioned is the antiquated language of the KJV. . . . It is a real handicap and deters people from studying the Scriptures, at least when they must do it on their own initiative. . . . No one thinks of reading the German Luther translation as it originally appeared from his pen. It has

been constantly revised. But we have strangely enough clung to an English version of the 17th century.²³

Put yourself in the place of a child who is presently attending Sunday School or Confirmation Class. Secular education is not what it used to be. We have found over and over again that our children many times do not even know the basics of the English language. Must we force on them a version of the Bible with which they have to struggle? Must we be stubborn and say, “If I could do it when I was a child, they must do it, too?”

Someone would suggest then that we use one of the newer translations, so our young members can understand the Scripture better. But which one? One based on the critical text of Westcott Hort? And, chances are, our parishioners will come with all sorts. Such a practice often leads to confusion. After a Bible Class, how often haven’t we heard the complaint, “Pastor, it is so hard to follow along in the Bible Class because of all the different Bibles that are being used.” We would do well to listen to the sainted Dr. Luther, whose words about the Small Catechism apply also to our use of various versions of Scripture:

First, the minister should above all things avoid the use of different texts and forms of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, etc. Let him adopt one form and adhere to it, using it one year as the other; for young and ignorant people must be taught one certain text and form, and will easily become confused if we teach thus today and otherwise next year, as if we thought of making improvements. In this way all effort and labor will be lost. This our honored fathers well understood, who all used the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments in one and the same manner. Therefore we also should so teach these forms to the young and inexperienced as not to change a syllable, nor set them forth and recite them one year differently from the other. Hence, choose whatever form you think best, and adhere to it forever.²⁴

Also, the critical text of Westcott Hort has been justifiably criticized from the days of Dean Burgon to the present. Modern textual scholarship cannot ignore these criticisms forever. They cannot continue to call those who hold to the Byzantine family of texts “unscholarly,” “fanatics,” and “people who still hold to the antiquated concept of Verbal Inspiration.” There are many knowledgeable people—true scholars—who support the Byzantine family and who have directed legitimate questions to the disciples of Westcott Hort. They must be answered.

And this leads us to our last and final dilemma. There has been really no progress in textual criticism (if you could call it “progress”) since the days of Westcott and Hort. Eldon J. Epp supports this claim:

One response to the fact that our popular critical texts are still so close to that of Westcott Hort might be that the kind of text arrived at by them and supported so widely by subsequent criticism is in fact and without question the best attainable NT text; yet every textual critic knows that this similarity of text indicates, rather, that we have made little progress in textual theory since Westcott Hort; that we simply do not know how to make a definitive determination as to what the best text is; that we do not have a clear picture of the transmission and alteration of the text in the first few centuries; and accordingly, that the Westcott Hort kind of text has maintained its dominant position largely by default. Guenther Zuntz enforces the point in a slightly different way when he says that “the agreement between our modern editions does not mean we have recovered the original text. It is due simply to the fact that their editors . . .

follow one narrow section of evidence, namely, the non western Old Uncials.” This lack of progress toward a theory and history of the earliest NT text is a strong indication that the 20th century has been an interlude in NT textual criticism.²⁵

It has come to the point, in their efforts to uncover the original text of the Holy Writers, that many critics have despaired of ever finding the true text. Don't I recall the prophet saying, however, “The Word of our God shall stand forever”? (Isa. 40:8).

Finding a Solution

Textual critics have almost all agreed that if we are to find the true NT text, we must uncover the true history of the text. Hort's theories about text types, the revision of Lucian, etc., have been found to be severely wanting. Present day textual critics have all but abandoned Hort's theories of the text's history for “eclecticism”—the guesswork we spoke of earlier. One critic says:

The textual history that the Westcott Hort text represents is no longer tenable in the light of newer discoveries and fuller textual analysis. In the effort to construct a congruent history, our failure suggests that we have lost the way, that we have reached a dead end, and that only a new and different insight will enable us to break through.²⁶

One such new and different insight—which is not really new at all—has been propounded by students and faculty of the Dallas Theological Seminary and the Trinitarian Bible Society of Great Britain, among others. We believe that their theory is tenable and much more sound than what has been proclaimed this past century by the followers of Westcott Hort.

One of the foundation stones of modern, textual criticism is the assumption that the NT writings were not recognized as Scripture when they first appeared. Since they were not looked upon as inspired or authoritative, the text was confused and the original wording lost through the carelessness of the scribes.

But this assumption is simply not true. We believe in the Verbal Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, as did the earliest members of the Christian Church. Those who did not believe and confess the infallibility of the Sacred Writings were rejected as heretics. Such passages as the following show conclusively that the original writers thought their works to be authoritative:

2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .”

1 Thessalonians 2:13; “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God . . .”

And we are to believe the NT writings were not considered authoritative? Would a faithful Christian tamper with the Scriptures, especially after hearing the warning in Revelation 22:18-19?

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

After hearing such words, would a faithful Christian dare be sloppy in copying the Sacred Writings of the Savior's apostles? The answer is an unqualified "NO."

But there is more. A great number of the first Christians were of Jewish descent and background. The Jew had an almost hereditary reverence and care for the Sacred Scriptures, which extended to the very jots and tittles. Wouldn't this care also be extended to the NT Scriptures?

And there is more:

Are we to assume that everyone who made copies of the New Testament books in those early years was a knave? or a fool? Paul was certainly as intelligent a man as any of us. If Hebrews was written by someone else, here was another man of high spiritual insight and intellectual power. There was Barnabas and Apollos and Clement and Polycarp, etc., etc. The Church has had men of reason and intelligence all down through the years. Starting out with what they KNEW to be the pure text, the earliest Fathers did not need to be textual critics. They had only to be reasonably honest and careful. But is there not good reason to believe they would be especially watchful and careful?²⁷

We have seen that the faithful believers realized the authority of the NT writings from the very beginning. If they hadn't, they would have been looked down upon as heretics. So it is obvious that they would be reverent in handling the text. But were all the faithful in an equal position to hand down the true text? No. Those who held the Autographs would be in the best position. Who were they?

Speaking in terms of regions, Asia Minor may safely be said to have had twelve (John, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Philemon, 1 Peter, 1 and 2 and 3 John, and Revelation), Greece may safely be said to have had six (1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Titus in Crete), Rome may safely be said to have had two (Mark and Romans)—as to the rest, Luke, Acts, and 2 Peter were probably held by either Asia Minor or Rome; Matthew and James by either Asia Minor or Palestine; while it is hard to state even a probability for Jude, it was quite possibly held by Asia Minor. Taking Asia Minor and Greece together, the Aegean Area held the Autographs of at least eighteen (two thirds the total) and possibly as many as twenty four of the twenty seven New Testament books; Rome held at least two and possibly up to seven; Palestine may have held up to three; Alexandria (Egypt) held NONE. The Aegean region clearly has the best start, and Alexandria the worst. On the face of it, we may reasonably assume that in the earliest period of the transmission of the NT text the most reliable copies of the Autographs would be circulating in the region that held the Autographs.²⁸

Those congregations which held the Autographs would faithfully copy what God had so graciously given, sending them out so other churches and believers could read and hear what the Lord of the Church had to say. Since the true wording could be verified, scribes would be discouraged from making deliberate changes in the text. It is assumed that by the second century faithful copies were disseminated widely through the Empire. And so it can be said:

The considerations just cited are crucial to an adequate understanding of the history of the transmission of the text because they indicate that a basic trend was established at the very beginning—a trend that would continue inexorably until the advent of a printed NT text. I say

“inexorably” because, given a normal process of transmission, the science of statistical probability demonstrates that a text form in such circumstances could scarcely be dislodged from its dominate position—the probabilities against a competing text form ever achieving a majority attestation would be prohibitive no matter how many generations of MSS there might be. . . . It would take an extraordinary upheaval in the transmissional history to give currency to an aberrant text form. We know of no place in history that will accommodate such an upheaval.²⁹

Since the Byzantine type of text has remained dominant and in the majority until the first printed NT text, we must conclude that with the Byzantine family of manuscripts, from which the *Textus Receptus* was created, we are closest to the original wording of the Apostles and Holy Writers.

NOTES

¹ Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 71.

² Elmer Moeller, “P46 and Textual Criticism,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* May 1946.

³ Bruce Metzger, “The Textual Criticism of the New Testament, Part 2,” *The Expository Times* 78 1967: 372.

⁴ E. C. Colwell, *What Is the Best New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952) 83.

⁵ Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1926) 290.

⁶ Colwell 83.

⁷ Kenyon 294.

⁸ Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977) 113f.

⁹ R. W. Shekner, *Bible Critics Criticized* (The Lutheran Reformation Hour) 3.

¹⁰ Kenneth W. Clark, “The Theological Relevance of Textual Variation in Current Criticism of the Greek New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1966) 5.

¹¹ Clark 7.

¹² Bruce Metzger, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 1.

¹³ Metzger, *Chapters* 3.

¹⁴ Metzger, *Chapters* 3.

¹⁵ Metzger, *Chapters* 6.

¹⁶ Metzger, *Chapters* 3.

¹⁷ Metzger, *Chapters* 3.

¹⁸ Wilbur Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Nelson, 1977) 90.

¹⁹ Pickering 77.

²⁰ Kenyon 17.

²¹ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971) vi.

²² Kenyon 17.

²³ Arthur Repp, "Obstacles to Bible Reading in the Home," *Concordia Theological Monthly* May 1950: 364.

²⁴ Martin Luther, Preface to the Small Catechism, *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921) 533,535.

²⁵ Eldon Jay Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (N.d.) 390f.

²⁶ Pickering 92.

²⁷ Pickering 100.

²⁸ Pickering 105.

²⁹ Pickering 106.

(Please note: Incomplete references are due to photostatic copies without all the necessary information and hand copied notes from years gone by.)

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PANORAMA

What Is Going On?

John Lau

Two news releases which appeared during the latter half of 1991 are of special interest to observers of the shifting tides in Lutheran church bodies in the United States. The first involves a "Lutheran Leadership Consultation" sponsored by Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal insurance and financial planning organization, which not only financed the meeting but also helped to plan it. A press release reported: "The consultation brought together 130 leaders from the ELCA, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Held in the Wasatch Mountains in Utah July 18-20, the meeting was arranged with the stated purpose to "motivate and equip every participant to be a catalyst in identifying and actively integrating a vision, theory and practice of leadership which helps each Lutheran church body to carry out God's mission in our changing world." [The release is from the Chicago headquarters of the ELCA.]

Evidently some of the meeting time involved sessions in which representatives of the three church bodies met separately, but there were also plenary sessions shared by all the participants. Herbert Chilstrom, ELCA bishop; Ralph Bohlmann, LCMS president; and Carl Mischke, WELS president, all spoke concerning their vision for their church. Some of the other speakers in plenary sessions were representatives of financial organizations; two speakers, however, were notable in that they represented theological schools, namely: Walter F. Taylor, professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio; and William McKinney, dean and professor of religion and society at Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut.

The release does not quote statements made by Bohlmann or Mischke but does quote Chilstrom's statement that he envisions "a Church so deeply and confidently rooted in the gospel of the grace of God that we are free to joyfully give our life away in witness and service."

It is quite evident that WELS "leaders" attended and took part in a conference which had the clear purpose of jointly developing leadership principles and practices "to carry out God's mission in our changing world."

James P. Schaefer, involved for many years in WELS public relations and editor of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, commented on the "consultation" in the September 1, 1991, issue of that publication. Regarding the plenary session presentations, Schaefer mentioned the "secular" speakers but did not, for some reason, mention the two theological professors who also spoke. Schaefer's article concludes: "As a 24 year veteran of the WELS administration, I have attended a number of seminars, consultations, and other forums. This one I rank among the best, and we are grateful to Lutheran Brotherhood for this opportunity to consult together in so productive a setting."

The second item of interest also comes via a release from the ELCA headquarters [*Newsbriefs*]. We quote the release, headed “There is Joy in the Air,” in its entirety.

“A new sacred classical music radio program soon will be available to radio stations across the country. The hour long, weekly program, called ‘Joy,’ is an inter Lutheran project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. ‘Joy’ will be produced by KFUE FM in St. Louis and will be funded by Aid Association for Lutherans, a fraternal benefit society. ‘I’m excited about being involved in the project which is **the first joint venture into ministry that has ever been done by these three Lutheran churches,**’ said the Rev. Richard Jensen, a member of ELCA communications staff and the Joy Advisory Committee [Emphasis added. Ed.] ‘Joy is a program of sacred music. The focus is on the classics of sacred Christian music which will have great appeal to commercial and non commercial stations alike. Three percent of the general population express a preference for classical music. Three percent is a significant share of the market in terms of program targeting.’”

Beyond Schaefer’s remarks in *The Northwestern Lutheran* we have not read or heard anything official from WELS regarding these two items of information released by the ELCA. That is why, at this time, we are asking: What is going on? It seems apparent that the ELCA, at least, regards both of these activities as carrying out “God’s Mission” and as a “joint venture into ministry.” If one of the partners in a joint undertaking understands it so, and the other does not, it behooves the denier to make his position clear.

In passing, we cannot help noting that both joint enterprises are financed and promoted by fraternal life insurance societies, Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans. Over the years these two associations have involved their members, wittingly or unwittingly, in many unionistic and, therefore, sinful activities. Joint activity in religious matters together with heterodox church bodies is contrary to God’s clear word in Romans 16:17 18.

Concerning Church Fellowship, one of the confessional statements of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), declares in Paragraph 81 (p. 37): “With great subtlety unionism of many kinds has infiltrated the Church under the guise of innocent phrases such as ‘cooperation in externals.’ Though we would not say that it is impossible (especially in days of confessional vigor and honesty) for churches to cooperate in certain secular activities even though they are divided in doctrine, yet when this expression is used to allow working together with heterodox bodies in religious matters, then we condemn the expression as a cloak for sinful disobedience to the Word of God, and a procedure which confuses and offends the simple Christian” [Emphasis added. Ed.].

From a Pastor’s and Professor’s Notebook

Roland A. Gurgel

XV

Isaiah

Perfect Peace in an Imperfect World!

Nowhere can one see the imperfections of the world more clearly than in the gods it creates for itself. The Apostle Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:22-23, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Recall the gods of the “wise” Greeks—“an image made like to corruptible man”; recall the gods of the mighty Romans—“an image made like to corruptible man”; recall the gods of the ancient Egyptians—“made like to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Imperfect gods created by imperfect man for his imperfect hopes and dreams! “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

Isaiah, too, touches on the imperfect gods that imperfect man creates for himself. He brings it to light in the words of Hezekiah set forth in Isaiah 37:18-19, “Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire: **for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone**: therefore they have destroyed them.”

The Lord God zeroes in on the imperfection of imperfect man’s gods in chapter 41:6-7; 44:9-20; and 46:1-2. The idols were conceived by man, shaped by man, decorated by man, carried by man, nailed by man, and then worshiped by man.

A few quotes from these verses may help to underscore the truth of the imperfection of imperfect man’s gods.

So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. (41:7)

Then shall it [the tree] be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and maketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. . . . And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image . . . and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. (44:15-17)

“Deliver me, for thou art my god.” Those very words would sound forth many times 100 years after Isaiah’s death—words that would be spoken by the exiled people of Judah—exiles in the land of Babylon. Words spoken by reason of a promise made 100 years before by the Lord Jehovah through the pen of Isaiah. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished . . .” (40:1-2). “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, **be not afraid**; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come **with strong hand**, and his arm shall rule for him . . .” (40:9-10).

Judah cries, “Deliver me; for thou art my God.” Is this just another vain hope built on the promise of a man conceived and man made god? Chapters 40-42 of Isaiah reveal how different the Lord Jehovah is from the helpless idols of the world. In these chapters the Lord is calling out 100 years in advance to His people who were to be living in an imperfect world, calling out to them that they should have perfect peace of heart, should have no fears, for the almighty, living God would deliver them.

True, they would be exiles in a strange land; true, they would have no army to fight for them; true, they would have no foreign power to intercede on their behalf. Humanly speaking, they wouldn’t

stand a chance of deliverance. But the Lord bids them look away from man and to direct their attention and center their trust on Him.

What were they to see? Not a powerless and corruptible god fashioned by the mind of man from the materials of this world, but **the almighty, living** God, who is the source of all things and who has all things in His power.

Behold His power! “Who hath measured the waters [all the oceans, etc.] in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span . . . and weighed the mountains in scales . . . all nations before him are as nothing . . .” (40:12 17). “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers . . . that bringeth the princes to nothing . . . and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble” (40:22 24). “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? . . .” (40:28). “But **they that wait upon the Lord** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (40:31). Perfect peace in the midst of an imperfect world for those whose minds are stayed on thee—thee—the almighty, living Creator of heaven and earth.

The Lord God had promised deliverance to His people 100 years in advance of the exile and in these chapters, 40 42, He made it abundantly clear that **He has the power** to keep His promises. History reveals that He did exactly that in His own time and in His own way. For the people who lived through those days of exile it was a matter of taking the Lord’s promises to heart **by faith and holding to the peace they offered**. Being flesh born of flesh, living in a skeptical world, the danger was always there to turn the eyes away from the promise of the Lord and demanding to see an immediate fulfillment. They could easily become like Thomas, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Peace offered—peace lost because “mind was not stayed on thee.”

Perfect peace **was there** and **is there** for God’s children living in an imperfect world. The words of Luther based on Psalm 46 (which thoughts are more extensively developed in Isaiah 40 42) still hold true for us also:

A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from ev’ry need
That hath us now o’ertaken.

NOTE: Lest someone jump to a conclusion that there is something missing in this consideration of God’s promise to deliver His people, let me point out that in these chapters, 40 42, the emphasis lies on **God’s power** to keep His promises. In the next article, which will deal with chapters 43 45 of Isaiah, the emphasis will be on the truth that God’s promise to deliver is certain **by reason of His grace**.

(To be continued)