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Graduation Address: Heavenly Treasures In Earthen Vessels *

* The "President's Address," at the Graduation Service of Immanuel Lutheran College, May 22, 1993.

John Lau

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:7 - "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Although one commonly looks at such an occasion as this as the celebration of the successful end of a course of study, it is interesting that the two terms usually used for the event have a completely different meaning. I am referring to the words "commencement" and "graduation." "Commencement" comes from the Latin verb "*cominitiare*," which simply means "to initiate, to begin." "Graduation" also comes from the Latin; its root is the word "*gradus*," which means "a step." And so we see that, at least from the standpoint of the terms we still use, we are today celebrating a beginning of things, a step forward.

From this day on, the relationship of all our students (particularly our graduates) to ILC will be different. Those who will be returning next fall will have advanced a grade and will therefore see things from the viewpoint of a step forward. Those who will not return as students to this campus will have a completely different view of ILC. As days, weeks, months, and years go by, their remembrances will be more and more tinged with nostalgia; they will, we hope, look back and see ILC as their Alma Mater, their "nurturing mother" who lovingly fed them with what they needed for time and eternity.

It is our prayer that these are not pious platitudes, spoken so often at graduations that they are empty words, devoid of real meaning. For our school is worthy of the term "Alma Mater," in a true sense, only in so far as it has taught here the truth of God's Word, both law and gospel. For that is indeed how "God is with us," as our school's name, Immanuel, implies. The heavenly treasures of our Lord are where His gospel is proclaimed and is received by believing hearts. On this occasion, then, permit me to discuss with you "Heavenly treasures in earthen vessels."

The Apostle Paul, the divinely inspired author of our text, was not only an expert in the use of words and phrases, but also a master in finding striking examples and pictures to set forth important truths. We will recall that his ministry had been attacked by certain opponents in Corinth who had not even hesitated to impugn his honesty and integrity of purpose. For the sake of the gospel he had been commanded to preach, Paul had to defend himself and his work, and in doing so he took the opportunity to describe the glory of the New Testament ministry. It is in this connection that he wrote to the Corinthians, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." But what does he mean? What is the treasure to which he refers?

That is made amply clear in the verses which precede our text. There Paul speaks of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (v. 4), and also of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (v. 6). There can be no doubt, then, that the treasure is nothing less than the gospel of Christ. And this very gospel is what Paul was commanded to preach, as he plainly says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (v. 5). Similarly, he wrote in his earlier letter to these same Corinthians, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Is not this gospel rightly called a wonderful heavenly treasure? Men speak of precious jewels, of gold and silver, even of freedom from slavery as great treasures, but certainly all such things pale into insignificance when compared and contrasted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are of this earth and therefore are only of a temporary value, while the gospel is of heaven and thus is eternal. The gospel is the glad news of God's grace in Christ, God's grace for a lost and sinful world; the good news promised of old to the patriarchs and conveyed to God's people by the prophets of the Old Testament; the promise become fact, when the angel of the Lord announced at Bethlehem, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!" All this and more the apostle includes when in our text he speaks of "this treasure."

With regard to this treasure, Paul declares that we have it in earthen vessels. An earthen vessel is any vessel made of dried or baked clay, such as a common flowerpot. A vessel of this kind is common and cheap and fragile; it has very little value and may therefore be carelessly handled, because if it breaks, and it is bound to break sooner or later, no one is unduly concerned, since it may easily be replaced. The astonishing thing about Paul's picture regarding treasure in earthen vessels is that such a great treasure, God's own grace, should be placed into such a wretched container. How utterly incongruous! We might compare it to a rich woman who owns all kinds of precious jewels, such as diamonds and emeralds, and keeps those precious jewels in a rusty old tin can. One simply does not handle precious things in such a fashion. No, precious treasures are kept in their proper setting. You don't mount a costly diamond on a ring made of an old horseshoe nail, nor does a housewife wrap her silver in burlap bags. A rich treasure is treated according to its value.

But see what God has done! It is His way, His desire, to present the treasure of His gospel in shabby garb, in earthen vessels. This is apparent, when we recall that God sent His own Son into our flesh, permitting Him to be born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in the lowliest surroundings; while as a matter of truth, all the glories of the Godhead dwelt in that manger-Child. There was no form nor comeliness, as Isaiah declared, but God Himself was there.

Now Paul declared, "WE have this treasure in earthen vessels." Thus he included himself as well as the Corinthians. He knew himself to be nothing but a fragile earthen vessel. Of himself he wrote, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3). We may be sure that the apostle remembered his earlier bitter hatred for Jesus and the gospel, and he also knew his own frailty and weakness which was a constant part of his life. Paul, the poor tentmaker, continually buffeted by his thorn in the flesh, was surely an earthen vessel as compared with the heavenly treasure he bore. | And the Corinthian believers, weak and sinful, divided into partisan groups, prone to the lusts of their former heathen ways|they too were earthen vessels indeed, but having in their possession and enjoying the heavenly treasure of the blessed gospel. What a picture the Apostle Paul paints for us in our text! What can we learn from it, especially on this occasion?

II.

No one here will deny that the gospel of Jesus Christ is still the greatest treasure there is. And we all thank God for it. But this glorious treasure is still placed by our Lord into earthen vessels; it is still entrusted to the weak hands of sinful humans. It is still God's way, His amazing way, to call earthen vessels into His special service in His Church, namely the ministry of teaching and preaching. It is certainly true that there is no one here who has been called to be an apostle, like Paul; but there are three called pastors and four called Christian day school teachers among the graduates here to receive their diplomas. There is one among the graduates who will enter our seminary next year. There are two more who have finished a special course of study to prepare them for entering the seminary next year. There are others waiting in the wings, as it were, to finish their courses of study leading to the ministry of teaching and preaching. Besides all these, we have our present graduates of our two-year college course, six in number, and our seventeen high-school graduates. All of these are earthen vessels, like many who have gone before, bearing the precious treasure of the gospel in their hearts as they go forth into the world, for they have all been given our Lord's Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature. What a great honor the Lord has bestowed upon us!

These considerations lead us all to a deep sense of humility and gratitude | humility before the Lord our God, Who has given us everything we have; and gratitude to Him for the gospel and for our gospel-calling! We thank God for the grace He has granted to those among us who have had the privilege of being God's earthen vessels for many years, especially to that one among us who is this year retiring from her service at ILC; and we ask Him to provide many years of being His earthen vessels to those who are just now setting out upon their chosen careers.

All this ties in so beautifully with God's purpose, as Paul explains in our text: "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." In other words, God works in this remarkable way and makes use of earthen vessels to carry the heavenly treasure of the gospel, in order to impress upon us the fact that it is not we humans who really do things in the kingdom of God, but, rather, it is the power of God in the gospel itself. With this in mind, the apostle declared to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The successes of the gospel ministry are not due to even the greatest efforts of human beings, but solely to God.

Therefore, today we honor you graduates for your achievements under God, as we honor those among us who have labored long and hard in God's kingdom | but the greatest honor and glory is the Lord's! Amen.

The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians

Exegesis by Dr. Joh. Ylvisaker

Luther Seminary, Hamline, Minn. 1905

Translation from the Norwegian by C.M. Gullerud

PART II

The apologetic - dogmatic section. 1:11-4:31.

Proofs for the truth of the apostolic teaching.

At this point the apostle begins the chief content of his letter. His purpose in writing is to advance proof that the doctrine which he proclaimed to the Galatian congregations is the only divine saving truth. Since the false teachers have sought for acceptance of their heresy by instilling doubt about his apostleship, Paul starts out by showing that his standing as apostle is of a validity equal to that of the twelve. Paul knows how important it is to have the confidence of the Galatians if he is to move their hearts with his message. He begins by showing that he has received the truth immediately from the Lord even as the twelve had received it (vv. 11,12). This constitutes the theme of the entire dogmatic section.

Verse 11. *γνωριζω δε*, "but I make known." This is the reading of Tischendorf and not *γαρ* according to Lach. With this *γνωριζω* Paul, in a solemn and striking manner, introduces the theme which he will consider and certify (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 15:1; 12:3). *δε*, "but." This is not the adversative, but the metaphoric *δε*. It introduces the matter which is now to be considered, a procedure often used in the NT. "I make known" - Paul had certainly proclaimed the gospel to the Galatians before, but he now presents it as though he were proclaiming it for the first time. Unfortunately, the Galatians kept on forgetting the essence of the gospel. "Brethren" - Paul often uses this form of loving address in his epistles when he is presenting a serious matter and especially so when the matter involves admonition. He wants to assure them that he wants nothing but the best for them. They are indeed his brethren and he wants them to take to heart the message he brings. "The gospel which was preached of me." The linguistic presentation in the original text is blunt. *το ευαγγελιον το ευαγγελισθεν* is a prolepsis or an anticipation (cf. Curtius's Greek Grammar, § 397). That which should be the subject in the dependent phrase with *οτι* is contained in the verb *γνωριζω*. *το ευαγγελιον* is the grammatical object of *γνωριζω* and the subject of *εστιν*. Paul uses this form in

order to emphasize the solemnity of the presentation leading the readers to understand that this is a timely and independent proclamation. "Not after man" - *ουκ εστι κατα ανθρωπον*. *κατα* with the accusative serves to express conformity. It is a gospel not in conformity with man, i.e., not of the nature of man nor originating with man. Its essence does not owe its existence to man nor has it come as a product of human philosophy. If that had been the case, it would have had the marks of human wisdom and activity. It would then not have been a gospel which is foolishness to natural man, but a philosophic system acceptable to man's way of thinking, a rational doctrine (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3,4). The opposite of *κατα ανθρωπον*, which is rejected, would be *κατα θεον*. This stands in a qualitative relationship to Him alone, being from Him. The proof of this is given in the following verse.

Verse 12. Looking at this verse grammatically, we notice that *ουτε* appears only once. It refers back to the *ου* in *ουδε* and is simply rendered "neither" or "nor." We take note what Buttm. calls to our attention, namely, that when *ουτε* (*μητε*) follows *ουδε* (*μηδε*), then the *ουδε* negates (or combines) the entire sentence, and *ουτε* must in thought be supplied before the first predicate or the first part of the sentence - consequently, then, it must be implied before *παρελαβον* (cf. Buttm., § 149, n. 15b). The entire thought would then be as follows: neither have I - as little as the other apostles - received or been taught the gospel from any man. The difference between "received" and "taught" is this that the first word designates the reception purely in a passive sense - that one merely receives that which historically has been given; the second word involves a certain mental activity on the part of the disciple through instruction or as Philippi says: "An independent appropriation or that which is mediated through a methodic, understandable instruction." *παρα ανθρωπου*, "by or from a man." *αυτο*, i.e., *ευαγγελιον*.

"But by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Here comes the exact opposite. Just as the other apostles, Paul received the gospel through an immediate communication. The genitive "of Jesus Christ" is not the objective, but the subjective genitive which shows the opposite of *κατα ανθρωπον* in v. 11. The apostle is saying that Jesus Christ has revealed to him the gospel. It was given to him by revelation. When did this revelation take place? Thomas Aquinas, Baldwin, et al., believe that it is the one referred to in 2 Cor. 12:1ff. But this revelation came to Paul after he had preached the gospel for a long time. We can-

not well think of another time than on the way to Damascus. Thus also Theodoret and Jerome. But how did he get the gospel? Was it by a personal or verbal revelation? We must reject an "either or" as being one-sided and inadequate and accept a "both and." If we compare the record of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 with his own account in Acts 26, we will come to the conclusion that the revelation at Damascus was both personal and verbal. The Christ who had revealed Himself personally to Paul was the Christ whom he had persecuted through His members. Having thus revealed Himself to Paul as the resurrected One, He proved to Paul that He was indeed the Son of God. Paul therefore calls Him "Lord." By seeing Jesus as the resurrected and living One, he had the proof that He was not a deceiver, but the One who He said He was and whom the Christians believed Him to be. The truth of the Christian faith that Jesus did not die for His own sins but for the sins of the world was in reality the chief content of his gospel (cf. v. 16). In Acts 26 we hear Paul saying that Jesus at the meeting with him spoke to him saying: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (vv. 15-18). Here indeed we have a short summary of the gospel. Luther correctly says: "Paul received the gospel on the way to Damascus where Christ revealed Himself to him and talked to him." This view cannot be negated by the argument that Paul was referred to Ananias to find out what he should do (Acts 9:6), for there is no proof to show that Ananias instructed him in the gospel. Ananias received no instruction to go to Paul for that purpose, but he came in order by baptism and the laying on of hands to confirm him in the call and to communicate the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17,18). Paul could therefore truthfully say that it was by the revelation of Christ that he received the gospel as well as his special call. Consequently, he did not fall behind the other apostles in this respect. Even as they had received all directly from the Lord, so had he. To show that it could not be otherwise, he now proceeds to prove it as a fact:

First of all, he refers to his conduct before his conversion

(vv. 13,14). It was plainly evident that this behavior excluded any thought that he might have received these things from any man, or even from the apostles as though he was in some respects dependent on them; he refers to his conduct toward Christianity (v. 13) and toward the Jew's religion (v. 14). His spiritual tendency at that time was of such a nature that he was not receptive to any instruction in the gospel or to any command to go forth with its proclamation.

Verse 13. *ηκουσατε*, "ye have heard." What I now declare is a well known fact which I do not need to report to you. It is with special emphasis that *ηκουσατε* is placed at the beginning. *γαρ*, which is translated "for," must here be taken as the explicative *γαρ* which serves to introduce the following material, like our "namely." The particle *γαρ* is a contraction of *γε* and *αρα* or *αρ* which expresses the fact that the content of the sentence thus introduced is to be emphasized, *γε*, and contains something that is to be carefully noted, *αρα*. *αρα* is a particle which essentially serves to make the speech vivacious, attracting special attention. *γαρ* does not really tell us anything about the relationship of the sentences following. But frequently the word appears in sentences which serve to prove something in the preceding; in which case it takes on an argumentative meaning. But often it also appears in sentences which serve to explain and expound upon the foregoing. It therefore also takes on an explicative meaning and should then be rendered "namely." The word also has a conclusive meaning, but this is seldom the case. *αναστροφη*, "conduct," derived from *αναστρεφεισθαι* and therefore meaning "a turning around," then "staying in a certain place" and so, "way of living," "conduct," "behavior," *vivendi agendique ratio*.¹ In this ethical meaning of life style the word is used in several places in the NT (cf. Eph. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 3:7; James 3:13). *ποτε*, "formerly," before his conversion. "In Judaism" - the article is not repeated in the prepositional consideration, though it belongs to the substantive because Paul wants it definitely joined to it. It shall serve to characterize his conduct. The substantive and the prepositional consideration is to present "one leading idea." "Judaism" is the specific, exclusive Judaism in contrast to every other religious creed. "How" introduces a phrase which is to explain in more detail how he conducted himself in the Jewish religion. *καθ' υπερβολην*, "beyond all measure," *supra modum, eximie*² (cf. Rom. 7:13; 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Cor. 1:8; 4:17). The imperfects "persecuted" and "wasted" - *εδιωκον και επορθουν* presents it as being a continual

occupation at that time. *επορθουν* from *πορθω* (a strengthened *περθω*) the Latin *perdo, everto*, our "destroy," "plunder," "lay waste." "The church of God" - a congregation which belonged to no one else but the living God. Paul sets this forth with painful consciousness. And Paul was carrying out this persecution and destructive work against God's church at the very time that the Lord stopped him outside of Damascus. Therefore it is said in Acts 9:21, "Is not this he that destroyed?" *ο πορθησας*, not only "persecuting them which called on this name." Compare also what Paul himself says in Acts 26:9-11. Thus has Paul now laid bare, for the readers, his black sin. He does not hide it nor does he excuse it.

Verse 14. This presentation is an elaboration of the *οτι* of v. 13. *προεκοπτον υπερ πολλους* means "I pushed my position ahead of many," i.e., I distinguished myself ahead of many. *συνηλικιωτης* is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and belongs to a later Greek form of expression. It is made up of *συν* and *ηλικια* and means in reality "equal in years." He distinguished himself above others, equal in age. No one could say that he spared himself. In what regard did he distinguish himself? "In the Jewish religion," in its zeal for the law and righteousness of deeds. He was consequently well acquainted with the work-righteousness which the Judaists were promoting in the Galatian congregations. He had promoted it himself more than anyone. "In my own nation," *εν τω γενει μου*. *γενος* - "family," but also "nation," referring to all those who have their origin from a common ancestor (cf. *εκ γενους* in 2 Cor. 11:26; *εκ γενους Ισραηλ* in Phil. 3:5; also *συγγενεις* in Rom. 9:3). With this *γενος* he was not thinking only of the Pharisaic family of which he was a member. "Being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers." Here he describes the area in which he had distinguished himself. *περισσοτερως* is really *abundantius* but in the NT it has the meaning of *magis, majore gradu, vehementius*.³ The other reference to those of equal age is here omitted. He had a greater zeal than they (i.e., the fathers); he was zealous to an extraordinary degree or, as our translation has it, "more exceedingly zealous." *παραδοσις* - really that which has been handed down or learned, "doctrine," whether belonging to the theoretical or the practical discipline; to the theses or customs, oral or written (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:3). Here Paul is surely referring to the commandments and provisions which in the course of time had been added to the law; for he would not speak of the

law itself in this manner. But if Paul was so zealous for these additions, then he would surely be zealous for the law itself, i.e., for the outward observance of the law to which he adhered. But whom does the apostle mean by fathers when he speaks of "the traditions of my fathers"? Here there is no unanimity among interpreters. Some say that by "the fathers" is meant the apostle's own ancestors, the Pharisees in general, whose doctrine was the very quintessence of Judaism. Against this interpretation others like Wieseler maintain: (1) the word "fathers" has clearly reference to "my nation" and therefore cannot refer simply to the Pharisees, but to the whole nation to which he belonged. Consequently the tradition of the fathers would be doctrine held by all of the Jewish people. Paul would then use the term "fathers" to denote the holiness of the nation and how dear to his heart this had been. (2) The comparative *περισσοτερος* cannot be brought into harmony with this interpretation. This comparative relation cannot be doubtful on account of the preceding "above many my equals in my own nation." The meaning must be: more than many of my equals in my nation I was zealous of . . . If "the traditions of my fathers" only refers to the traditions of the Pharisees then Paul would not be saying much by saying that his zeal for them was greater than that of many of the contemporaries of his nation, since there were many of them who had shown no zeal for the doctrines of the Pharisees since they did not belong to the Pharisees. (3) The context proves that these "doctrines" must have been derived from Judaism. The whole reference was to explain his "conduct in Judaism" (v. 13).

The apostle, having spoken of his conduct before his conversion to show how impossible it would have been for him to have received his gospel from men or to have received a call from them to proclaim it, now begins to speak of the earth-shaking change which he had experienced and how truly his conversion and calling was due alone to the gracious mercy of God.

Verse 15. "But when it pleased God . . ." *ευδοκειν* - "to please." This verb, as Philippi says, sets forth God's free resolution (cf. Luke 12:32; 1 Cor. 1:21; Col. 1:19). *Θεος* is missing in many manuscripts and Tischendorf has stricken it. But there is no doubt more reason to believe that it was dropped inadvertently than that it is a later addition. "Who separated me" - *απορισειν* means "mark the boundary," to determine the boundary of a territory (from *ορος*, *terminus*, "border"), thus to "separate," "determine," "appoint," also to "set apart for a holy office" (cf. Rom. 1:1; Acts 13:2). Here the context shows that

the reference is not to the separation or calling in conversion unto faith and salvation, but to the apostolic office. Unto this office God had separated him and that *εκ κοιλιας μητρος*. This terminology can sometimes be synonymous with "from birth." But here where the apostle, with this expression, evidently wishes to emphasize that his apostolate rested in God's gracious mercy, the phrase must be understood to say: "while I was still in my mother's womb," "even before I was born" (cf. Luke 1:15 with v. 41; Jer. 20:17; Isa. 49:1-5; 44:24). There was absolutely nothing in him that could cause God to separate him for this office. God had made him what he now was. Also "die Mitgift seiner Naturanlage, Temperament und Talent, die Stimmung der Saiten seines Characters, Kraft und Schwachheit Leibes und der Seele, Familienleben und Erziehung, Wohnort, Umgang und Bildung - alles hat die verborgene Hand Gottes also geordnet und gefuegt, dass seine Gnade an dem auserwaehlten Ruestzeuge herrlich werde" says Besser (*Paulus*, p. 3).⁴ *κα και καλεσας* - "and called." If the separation which the apostle here speaks of is a separation unto the apostolic office then the call here spoken of must be to the same office. Paul is not here thinking of a call to conversion and faith, although we know that in his case the call to the office and to conversion occurred at the same time. There are interpreters who have joined the phrase "from my mother's womb" to the words "called me," the predicates thus coming together in time so that one could see the same reference from two different angles. This call is then viewed as dependent on God's decision, a resolution which was activated in the revelation and call outside of Damascus. But the place thus given to the prepositional phrase does not seem to favor this view. The simplest interpretation would be to take the calling in time as a calling whereby the divine separation was accomplished. *δια της χαριτος αυτου* - "by his grace." If the apostle by the prepositional phrase, "from my mother's womb," is saying that this separation took place by the grace of God, he is with even greater emphasis affirming this also of his call. Thus the apostle does not tire of emphasizing the fact that he is an apostle "by the grace of God." He affirms this first by the predicate *ευδοκησεν* and then by the prepositional phrases *εκ κοιλιας μητρος μου* and *δια της χαριτος*. All is undeserved and wholly unmerited (cf. Rom. 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor. 15:10).

Verse 16. *αποκαλυψαι*, "to reveal," is dependent on *ευδοκησεν* in v. 15. The infinitive aor. expresses the completed action. We cannot render it otherwise than with the present.

"His Son" - namely as His Son in the metaphysical sense and here naturally as the resurrected One. The apostle is referring now to the revelation near Damascus and not to a later one. This is shown by the whole context. Earlier he did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God; rather he rejected Him as such and persecuted, with glowing hatred, the Christians who accepted Him as God's Son. It was Jesus who revealed Himself to Paul near Damascus; but this occurred by the will of the Father, and therefore Paul here attributes the revelation to Him and says that it was God who revealed the Son. *εὐ ἐμοὶ* - This must not be understood as simply equal to a simple dative with the meaning "for me" nor is it "by me," as Erasmus takes it as he paraphrases: *ut per me, velut organum, votum redderet filium suum.*⁵ The words are simply to be taken as saying: "in me," i.e., in my spirit, namely through the faith which was at the same time created in his heart. And this "in me" says Besser: "unterscheidet das Erlebnis Sauls auf dem Wege nach Damaskus von den gleichzeitigen Erlebnisse seiner Begleiter (Apostelg. 9,7; 22,9). Ihm wurde das Auge des inwendigen Menschen aufgethan - während seine Leibesaugen erblindeten - zu erkennen Jesum Christum den Sohn Gottes."⁶ Thereby he was also prepared to carry out that which was the purpose of the revelation from God. Rightly understood this must occur in all those who are to become true witnesses of the Lord. When they have come to a living knowledge of Jesus as God's Son and have Him revealed in them through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, only then will they be prepared to proclaim the message to others. Otherwise they will be speaking of Him as parrots. *ἵνα εὐαγγελίσωμαι αὐτόν*, "that I might evangelize Him." This does not mean that he should omit to preach the law; but the preaching of the gospel should be the main topic. The present tense indicates that this should continue. To proclaim the gospel of God's Son was to be Paul's business, the work of His calling. But the Lord also here pointed out where his service should be rendered: *ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* - among the Gentile people. The prepositional phrase does not here point out the objects of his service, but rather the location (cf. 2:2,8,9; Rom. 1:5,13; 11:13; 15:16; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). It is not the Lord's intention that his service should be limited to the Gentiles. Nor did Paul understand it that way. On the contrary, he turned always first to the Jews, "to the Jews first and the Greeks." But it should be noted that the reference is to the Jews who were living among the Gentiles (Acts 22:15). The

twelve apostles from the beginning were active among the Israelites. But already at that time they also preached to individual Gentiles although not to the Gentiles as a nation.

Now Paul begins to talk about his conduct after his conversion. Here it was also plainly evident that there was no indication that he had received his gospel from man. *προσανεθεμην* is 2 aor. middle of *προσανατιθημι* which with *τενι* is the Latin *adeundo me compono alicui, me committo alicui scil. eum consulurus, hence, concilium adhibeo aliquem, consulo.*⁷ That is to say that he engaged in a one-to-one conference for the purpose of seeking advice. *σαρξ και αιμα*, "flesh and blood," in Hebrew (*בְּשָׂר וּדְמָי*). This is a description of man according to his natural weakness and fragility as a result of sin (cf. Matt. 16:17; Eph. 6:12). The apostle is not here speaking of himself, for he now wants to bring evidence that he had not received the gospel from man. "Flesh and blood" refers to other weak men of which the apostles were only a subdivision. *ευθως*, "immediately" - This is not to be referred to the foregoing "that I might preach him" nor to the following "I went up"; but to the predicate, namely, *ου προσανεθεμην*. "I conferred not . . ." The meaning then is this: Immediately, I did not seek counsel with flesh and blood, other weak persons, as to whether I should preach among the Gentiles or as to what I should preach among them.

Verse 17. I did not go up to Jerusalem to seek counsel of those who were apostles before me, but without asking I went unto Arabia where there was no opportunity to receive the gospel from man. I then went back to Damascus, not to Jerusalem. It should therefore be clear to everyone that there was no *ανθρωποδιδακτος* with reference to the preaching of the gospel. Luther says: "He does not first go to man to learn the gospel nor even to the apostles, to receive from them permission or authorization to preach, but was satisfied to have his call from heaven and to have received Christ's revelation." "To them who were apostles before me," - in these words it is shown that Paul was conscious of his apostolic office. He knows that he has as much right to the name of apostle as did the twelve. The only difference is that they preceded him in the office. He is saying: I was neither instructed of men in general nor by the apostles in particular. "But I went into Arabia." - This trip into Arabia is also referred to in the book of Acts. Luke only tells of his stay in Damascus from which location he went on his way. The trip to Arabia must be included in Acts 9:19ff. Why did Paul go

to Arabia? The apostle does not answer this question and interpreters do not agree concerning this. These and others claim that he went there to avoid persecution from the Jews. Luther believes that he went there to preach the gospel. Thus also Meyer, Philippi, and some others. But if that were the case it would be difficult to understand why Luke omitted such a reference. It would then have been the apostle's first trip outside with the glad tidings, and it is just such mission trips that Luke set out to record. Other interpreters, on the other hand, hold that Paul went there to find opportunity for privacy, for the purpose of meditating on the Scriptures and to have an opportunity for contemplation, as a time to clear his mind after the experience near Damascus. It was such a sudden occurrence. The reason why he went to Arabia lies in the fact that it was king Aretas' more or less remote country which stretched out from the mountains southwest of Damascus. Here lived a peaceful people who were shepherds and tent makers. Here Paul was able to pursue his skill as tent maker at the same time that he searched the Scriptures. Even though we may assume that Paul went to Arabia in order to enjoy a period of solitude, this does not rule out the fact that he might, as he did in Damascus, speak to others of the Savior who had revealed Himself to him. Only he had not at this time made the preaching of the gospel his life's calling. In Damascus he made the confession that Christ is the Son of God already before he went to Arabia (cf. Acts 9:20). It is not possible, with V. Hofmann, to stretch the *εὐθὺς*, "immediately," to a time period after his return from Arabia. If that were the case, his stay there would have been so short that it would be difficult to understand why he went there at all. Acts 26:20 is an important passage casting light on this matter. The historical connection must have been as follows: Paul stayed with the disciples in Damascus a few days after he recovered his sight. During this time he bore witness, in the synagogue, to the divine sonship of Christ. This he did because he felt the urgency to do it and to show forth, without delay, the change which had taken place in him. Thereupon he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus before making the trip to Jerusalem. Just how long he sojourned in Damascus and in Arabia is not known. This is known that there is an interval of three years between his conversion and his first journey to Jerusalem. This we know from the following:

Verse 18. "Then after three years" - These three years are not to be dated from the return to Damascus, as some interpreters

have done, but from the apostle's conversion, which is in agreement with the "immediately" of v. 16. Not until now does the apostle go to the place where he might seek instruction from the apostles. He is not going there for the express purpose of seeking counsel or instruction from the apostles, but to become acquainted with Peter. *ιστορησαι* is the aor. infinitive of *ιστορειω*. This word is frequently used of those who travel in order to see and become acquainted with different places, their conditions and scenery. The difference between *ιστορειν* and *ιδειν* is this that the first always refers to something that is worth seeing and studying. It is similar to the Latin *visendo, cognoscere*. In classical Greek it is often combined with *χωραν*; not with persons in the accusative. This, however, is the case here in the NT and in a few instances in Josephus; but more often in the Clementine homilies. Then the word has this definition: to establish a personal acquaintanceship. Consequently, Paul did not go up to Jerusalem to be instructed by Peter but to become acquainted with him. Therefore also he lays stress upon the fact that he remained there only 15 days. But this would not allow enough time to be instructed in the gospel. If his opponents would carefully consider this they would understand how foolish their accusations were. In Acts 9:29,30 and 22:17-21 we read about the purpose of this short visit in Jerusalem. According to these passages the purpose was twofold.

Verse 19. Who is the James here referred to? Among recent interpreters there is controversy about "the two or three Jameses." The interpreters who maintain that there were three deny that the James here mentioned was James the elder or James the younger, but insist that it was the natural son of Joseph and Mary and therefore Jesus' brother from the mother's side. According to this view he was not an apostle. But this view contradicts contextual connection of this passage. If this James is a third James, then the term *αποστολος* would either have to be taken in a broad sense or else one would have to refer *ει μη το ουκ ειδον* only. The latter may be possible linguistically; for *ει μη* as an exception may refer back to a supposed negation (cf. Matt. 12:4; 24:36; Luke 4:26,27; Rom. 14:14; Rev. 9:4; 21:27), but this cannot apply here, for where *ει μη* refers back to a supposed absolute negation this must be pointed out lest the saying becomes meaningless. If this is to be applied here, then the negation would run as follows: I saw no one except for Peter and James. But this is absurd. Acts 9:27 shows that he saw Barnabas, for

example. We must therefore explain *ει μη* in the usual manner and refer it back to the entire sentence. It thus presents an exception to the general negated expression as in 1 Cor. 1:14; 2 Cor. 12:5; Eph. 4:9. To take the word *αποστολος* in a general sense here and refer it to others besides the original apostles is not being true to the text; for Paul in this context is bearing witness to the fact that his apostolic office was as authentic as that of the twelve. It is therefore impossible that he should be taking the word "apostle" in a general sense. He would thereby be removing the force of his line of argumentation. His opponents would raise no objection if Paul called himself an apostle in the same sense as Silas could be thus called as long as it would be understood that it was not to be equated with the office of Peter, James, and John. If this James is to be understood as being outside of the apostle grouping, then special emphasis must be placed on *των αποστολων* with the meaning: "of the apostles I saw none other and except for them only James." But the word order shows that the emphasis must be placed on *ετερον*, "other." Luke tells us in Acts 9:27 that Barnabas brought him to "the apostles." Paul on that occasion must have seen more than one apostle. According to all this we must take this James to be the apostle James the younger, son of James Alphaeus, James the righteous, head of the congregation in Jerusalem. "Brother" is here taken in the sense of cousin. This word is often used in the OT in this wider sense (cf. Gen. 24:27; 31:23-25; 1 Chron. 23:22). Besser says correctly that if one should not rewrite the words in an artificial manner "so wird dieser Jakobus unter die Zwölf zu zählen, mithin eine Person sein mit Jakobo Alphaei oder dem Juengern, eine Schwetersohne der Maria und Bruder Johannes, Jakobo dem Alteren. Hiefuer spricht auch die Vergleichung der Textstelle mit Kap. II,9 wo kein anderer Jakobus als der Apostel Jakobus (naemlich der Juengere) gemeint sein kann, Paulus aber schwerlich unterlassen haben wuerde, ihn von dem zuvor erwachten Bruder des Herrn deutlich zu unterscheiden, wenn nicht beide dieselbe Person waeren."^B But why does Paul express himself as he does here? Why doesn't he simply say "except for him and James he saw none of the apostles"? Is Paul here correcting himself? No. To understand this we must be reminded that after the death of James the elder there was another James who had the distinction of being a "pillar" in the congregation at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:17; Gal. 2:9). This James the righteous was a member of the congregation and therefore in Jerusalem, as Paul says. This makes

it clear why Paul speaks as he does: naturally I saw James who was in Jerusalem (cf. Besser, V. Hofmann and others). In support of this interpretation of the verse, one can refer to the fact that after the death of James the elder in the year 44 the book of Acts speaks only of one James and always without any addition to the name (cf. Acts 12:17; 21:18; 15:13). In our letter (2:9) James, without any addition, is referred to along with Peter and John, since at this time John the elder was dead. But in 1:19 "the Lord's brother" is added to the name, which distinguished him from James the elder who was living at that time. It is very significant to read how a person such as Th. Zahn regards the apostle James Alphaeus' son when he makes of James the righteous a third James. He must regard the apostle as a very insignificant person who died a little-noticed death. At any rate he disappears from the scene with very little notice (cf. Th. Zahn's *Einleitung*, etc., p. 75).

In 1 Cor. 15:7 James the younger is reckoned with the apostles along with Peter as in v. 5.

In the ancient church, our verse deals with James the younger according to Clemens Alexandrinus (cf. Euseb. II. 1) and to Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine; later to Luther, Palov, Brockmann, Bengel, Baumgarten, Crusius, Hengstenberg, Lardner, Starke, Guericke, V. Hofmann, Besser, Keil, Philippi, and many others.

But how does this agree with what Luke says in Acts 9:27? There seems to be considerable lack of agreement. Luke says nothing of Paul's desire to become acquainted with Peter. He simply tells of Paul's desire to approach the congregation, which at the beginning held itself in the background until Barnabas brought him to the apostles. People have wondered about this, that three years should have passed before notice of Paul's conversion reached Jerusalem. In answer it may be said that Acts 9:26 says nothing to indicate that Jerusalem had heard nothing about Paul's conversion, but simply that they did not believe that he had become a Christian. The congregation in Jerusalem had just recently experienced his bitter persecution. We should not be surprised that the congregation in Jerusalem would at the beginning be sceptical. According to Acts Paul was brought to the apostles, but he himself says that he did not see others of the apostles except Peter and James. When Luke says that Paul was brought to the apostles, he would thereby announce that Paul was brought to the apostle group, the apostolic collegium which was then represented by the two apostles, Peter and James,

who were present (cf. Besser, Philippi, and others). The other apostles must have been absent, out on travels.

Verse 20. With an oath the apostle affirms that what he has said is true. *ενωπιου του θεου*, "before the face of God," who is called upon as a witness, he declares that what he says is no lie. (לפני יהוה). The expression *ενωπιου του θεου* in similar contexts is not essentially different from the formula, *ο θεος ουδεν* (2 Cor. 11:31) or *μαρτυς μου εστιν ο θεος* (Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23). After *ενωπιου του θεου* a simple *εστιν* or *λεγω* is implied. But what is it that the apostle here so solemnly affirms? What does the "which" refer to? Does it refer to everything after v. 12, or to everything after v. 15, or merely to what is said in vv. 18 and 19? Surely to the last, namely, that he went to Jerusalem after three years, that he made this trip to see Peter, that he remained with him 15 days, and that he did not see any others of the apostles save Peter and James. This was not something that should be left in doubt; therefore the oath was very much in place. With reference to what he had said in v. 13ff., this was so well known to the readers that it did not require an oath. Thus: if he had been a disciple of the apostles and had learned the gospel from them, then it would have taken place during this visit in Jerusalem, but he says under oath that this was not the case. Here is a proof that a Christian may swear an oath to the honor of God and the welfare of the neighbor even though it does not occur under the law. From a linguistic viewpoint, we notice that the relative clause, for emphasis, is placed in advance anacoluthically.

From v. 21 to 2:10 we have another proof of Paul's equality with the twelve. Paul is recognized as an apostle by the Christian congregations in Judaea with the mother church in Jerusalem at the head (vv. 21-24).

Paul has now clearly proved that he had not received his gospel or his authority to proclaim it from anyone else than Jesus Himself and therefore was no different from the other apostles. Now he goes a step farther and affirms that he had been acknowledged as an apostle. He begins with the acknowledgment which the congregations in Judaea had freely given him. For the Galatians this should have served as a counter-balance to the suspicions raised by the false teachers. What Paul wishes to express is first mentioned in v. 24, "They praised God in me." And to advance the thoughts farther he tells of his journey to Syria and Cilicia. He did not tell this just in order to give a travelogue nor to show how far he had removed him-

self from Judaea and from the apostles' sphere of activity. V. Hofmann surely has given the right thought-sequence, about like this: The sentences in vv. 22 and 23 must be considered as coordinate with v. 24, logically. Therefore also *δε* is repeated in v. 23. "I was unknown to the congregation" in Judaea (v. 22), and for the purpose of clarifying the truth of this to the Galatians he told of his trip to Syria and Cilicia after 15 days (v. 21). They knew of me only by means of rumor. These two thoughts are connected by a simple "and." While the first sentence (v. 22) tells of how he was unknown to these congregations, and while the second sentence (v. 23) tells what they had heard of him, the third tells what they did (v. 24). In the first sentence *μητιν αγνοουμενος* bears the weight, in the second *ακουουντες παν*, and in the third *εδοξασον*. On the basis of this, which the Christian congregations in Judaea had heard, they glorified God in Paul. This they did without any influence from the apostle. From whom then had they heard of Paul? Naturally, from the mother congregation in Jerusalem, which first and foremost had given him their acknowledgment and witness. This witness was gladly accepted by the churches in Judaea and on the basis of it they received him with praise to God. It was so important for Paul to get the acknowledgment of these congregations because it was given on the basis of the report and witness which they received from Jerusalem. Would that the churches in Galatia take this to heart!

Which journey does Paul refer to in v. 21? It cannot be the Syrian trip mentioned in Acts 11:25, since this would be contrary to the context and word order. It must be the journey spoken of in Acts 9:30. There we read that the brethren, in order to save him from Jewish opponents, brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus in Cilicia. Caesarea here in Acts is the well known seaport town, and not Caesarea near Lebanon, for this city had the surname Philippi (cf. Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27). But does not the reference in our epistle contradict Acts 9? According to Acts 9 one gets the impression that Paul took the sea route from Caesarea to Cilicia. In order to bring harmony some have thought that Paul in this epistle is speaking of Syria in the wider sense, including also Phoenicia, which Paul would have to pass through to reach Caesarea. This would mean that the brethren took Paul by Damascus to Caesarea by the sea. But this interpretation is not acceptable. In the NT Syria either refers to the whole Roman province with Palestine and Phoenicia or simply the Antiochian Syria. Meyer believes

that Paul went from Caesarea to Damascus and then by the land route through Syria to Cilicia. This harmonizing is quite forced. All difficulties disappear when one bears in mind that Paul is not providing the Galatians a simple travelogue. He names only those places where he labored a few years after his departure from Judaea. Whether he names Syria first because it lies closest to Judaea (thus V. Hofmann) or because it was the chief headquarters for his activity at this time (thus Siefert) is a matter of indifference to us.

Verse 21. *επειτα*, "afterwards," namely, after his 15-day stay with the brethren in Jerusalem. He came to Syria with Antioch the capital and in Cilicia he had Tarsus, the city of his birth. In these Gentile places he now preached the gospel. Now he enters upon his public ministry, to which he had been called by God.

Verse 22. "And was unknown by face," *τω προσωπω*, the dative "with respect to," i.e., I was personally unknown to . . . This he says to show that what takes place in v. 24 was due to the testimony from the mother congregation in Jerusalem. The only knowledge that the Judæan congregation had of me was what they had heard. I had not visited them nor preached to them. "The churches of Judaea which were in Christ." This stands in contrast to Jewish synagogues, and the addition "of Judaea" distinguishes them from the mother congregation in Jerusalem. After *τας εν Χριστω*, the verb *εισιν* must be understood, those who through faith were in fellowship with Christ.

Verse 23. "But they had heard only." Literally "They were hearing." *ακουοντες ησαν*. Thereby it is said that the report from the mother church was repeated. The testimony was therefore not some trivial rumor which had inadvertently been passed along by Christians in Jerusalem. The masculine *ακουοντες* refers to the constituent members of the congregation. This is a well known construction in the Greek language *ad sensum* or *analogia generis*.⁹ *οτι* introduces a transfer from *oratio indirecta* to *oratio directa*¹⁰ and should not here be translated. It is similar to our quotation marks and is the so-called *οτι recitativum*. This is shown both by the use of *ημας* instead of the *αυτους* which would have been required in the indirect discourse and by the present *ευαγγελιζεται*. Paul especially uses the *οτι recitativum* when quoting from the OT, but otherwise also as in Rom. 3:8 and 2 Thess. 3:10. *ο διωκων ημας ποτε*, our previous persecutor. The article substantives the participle. "Now preaches the faith," literally "now evangelizes the faith."

Here the mother church testifies to two things, both that Paul's doctrine was in full agreement with the truth as had been proclaimed in Jerusalem by the apostles, and that he was fully authorized to preach. Paul's doctrine was therefore not a strange teaching. Is *πιστις* here to be regarded as *fides qua* or *fides quae creditur*?¹¹ Recent interpreters claim that *πιστις* is never used as *fides quae* in the NT. Philippi reserves judgment. Our ancient interpreters think otherwise. Here one should consider such passages as Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 12:6; Eph. 4:5; Gal. 3:2; 3:23; 1 Tim. 4:1; Tit. 1:13; Jude 3; Rev. 2:13. Also in these passages the most acceptable interpretation is to take *πιστις* as *fides quae creditur, doctrina credenda*.¹² This was the faith which Paul earlier sought to destroy. If faith is here to be taken as the subjective faith, then it must be objectified, but this would be unnatural. *επορθει*, cf. v. 13. Also here the imperfect is used to express the continual situation which formerly prevailed. He had regularly done what he could to destroy it.

Verse 24. Here Paul could now say that the Judaeen congregations received his testimony with joy. With praise and thanksgiving they received him as the one chosen of God. *εν εμοι* is not "for me," not *propter me*.¹³ *εν* with regard to persons is never to be rendered *propter*. That they glorified God in Paul means God revealed Himself to them through Paul, through his conversion and activity in such a way that their glorification of God showed that they rested their cause in Him. Winer says: "*Ut in me invenissent celebrationis materiam.*"¹⁴

What a different regard for Paul did the congregation in Jerusalem and in Judaea have from that held by the Jewish false teachers! These latter teachers sought to cast suspicions on his apostolic rank; the others recognized in him God's great deeds, accepted him willingly, praising God in him. Also here Paul humbly lays down his crown at the Lord's feet. Lord, to Thee alone all honor and praise.

(To be continued)

NOTES

1 "Method of living and doing."

2 "Above measure, exceptionally."

3 *Abundantius* = "more abundantly"; *magis* = "more";

majore gradu = "on a higher level"; *vehementius* = "very powerfully."

4 "The inheritance of his disposition, his temperament, and talents; the harmony of the strings of his character; the strength and weakness of his body and soul; his family life and upbringing; his dwelling, surroundings, and culture — all this the hidden hand of God ordered and arranged so that His grace might be glorious in His chosen instrument."

5 "That He might make His Son known by me, as by an instrument."

6 ". . . distinguishes the experience of Saul on the road to Damascus from the simultaneous experiences of his companions (Acts 9:7; 22:9). For him the eyes of his inner man were opened — while his physical eyes were blinded — to know Christ Jesus as the Son of God."

7 "I reconcile myself to someone by going to (him); I entrust myself to someone for consultation; I treat someone as counsel; I consult."

8 ". . . this James must be counted among the Twelve, must hence be the same person as James the son of Alphaeus or the Less, a nephew of Mary. A comparison of this passage with chapter 2:9 also supports this contention, as no other person can be meant there than the Apostle James (namely, the Less); and there Paul could hardly have neglected to distinguish him distinctly from the 'brother of the Lord' mentioned before if they were not both the same person."

9 "According to the sense"; "the analogy of kind."

10 "Indirect discourse"; "direct discourse."

11 "Faith by which"; "faith which is believed."

12 "Faith which is believed"; "doctrine to be believed."

13 "On account of me."

14 "That in me they might find matter for glorifying."

Psalm 51 Sermon Series

Paul Fleischer

Psalm 51:1b-2

“According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

In the previous section we considered the background of this psalm and of the first half of the first verse. We noted how we would be learning three lessons from our continuing study of the psalm: (1) the terribleness of the might and power of sin; (2) the glorious redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus; and (3) the thankful life that we who are forgiven failures live as a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This section speaks more about the dreadful nature of sin and the urgent need of each of us to be cleansed from it.

After King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, her husband, he lived in impenitence for more than a year. It was a horrible year for him as the 32nd psalm, which he wrote, describes: “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.” Those who by faith have known God, but have fallen away, find it to be so. Their conscience will give them no peace day or night, as long as they seek to ignore their sin. I hope that you, Christian friends, have found it to be so, for that is a sign that, though you have sinned, God is seeking to call you back to Him, and to the joy that springs from knowledge of confession and forgiveness through the gospel. Later on in this psalm we shall hear David pray: “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation . . .” There can be no true joy in the free salvation that is ours in Christ until we say with David: “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5). It was after God’s prophet Nathan had appeared to David that he acknowledged his sin, and prayed this psalm.

In the previous section we also heard David’s acknowledgment of, and fervent plea for, a certain quality in God without which neither he nor any sinner would dare approach God. We refer to the quality of God’s mercy. David prayed: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness . . .” Now we continue to study what we call simply:

“David’s Threefold Plea”

I. “Blot out my transgressions.”

We notice the king’s further acknowledgment of his need for God’s mercy: “**According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.**” I would have you consider with me in this regard that it is good for us to be specific. Take, for example, the case of the blind man who cried: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:38) The Lord then asked him: “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man had already prayed for mercy and compassion, but the Lord desired a statement of what His compassion was to do for the man. So we also notice that David was specific here: “According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, **blot out my transgressions.**” Before we can find true comfort and peace with God, and enjoy the joy of salvation in the forgiveness of sins, our sins must be blotted out by God. In the 32nd chapter of Exodus a word of Moses helps bring this out. Pleading for the children of Israel who had sinned against the Lord, Moses said to God: “Yet now, if You will forgive their sin|but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (v. 32). Our names, as believers, are written in God’s book, but our sins are also written there. The holy law of God takes account of every transgression we commit. In the great account book of heaven our transgressions stand against us as a record of our guilt. David knew that there could be no fellowship with the holy and righteous God as long as this guilt was not abolished, completely blotted out.

We cannot blot out our own sins or sin-guilt. To imagine that we can is to belittle the terrible, dreadful character of sin. To imagine that we can reveals a failure of man, the sinner, to understand the absolutely holy and righteous demands of the holy God. Even our repentance dare not be thought of as a “work” whereby we accomplish this blotting out. Ah, no! It is God in His mercy who says: “I even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isa. 43:25). “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you” (Isa. 44:22). It is only the innocent suffering and death of our Savior which accomplishes this, as Paul writes: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:13f). Behold, our many sins, written with the pen of the law in God’s book, have been smeared out of God’s sight through the work of Christ!

You may recognize that what we are saying describes the New Testament teaching of justification, pictured so clearly in the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector. The latter prayed to God: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) And he “went down to his house justified” with the forgiveness of his sins. With David, the tax collector could sing: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Ps. 32:1f.). This is the power of the “**multitude of God’s tender mercies**” also in your life and mine. It is powerful enough to blot out our every sin, to grant the forgiveness of all sins for Jesus’ sake.

II. “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity . . .”

David continues: “**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity . . .**” David is not done with his plea, nor should we hasten over it. He realizes not only that his sins stand recorded in God’s book and need to be blotted out, but also that his sin has stained his conscience and inner nature. He prays here that God would “wash” him from his iniquity. How did David come to use such an expression? We may assume that he was well aware of all the washings and sprinklings of the Old Testament. Under the old covenant every priest had to wash himself as often as he drew near to God for the sacrifices. Every member of the congregation who had in any way come into contact with anything that was unclean also had to be

washed before he could again mingle with the people. All this was symbolical of the cleansing by the blood of Jesus. Jesus has “washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1:5). Of believers on earth it is said: “But you are washed” (1 Cor. 6:11). Of the saints in heaven it is said that they have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

Thus the blood of Christ was shed as a propitiation for our sins. We are all by nature under the sentence of death. We have sinned against the holy law and will of God. Now God would not be a righteous God and a perfect Judge if He did not uphold the power of His law. No one can be pronounced clean who has not fulfilled the law’s demands to the last jot and tittle. And never has there been a person alive who of himself could do this! Therefore God in His mercy steps in with the gift of His Son. Christ has fulfilled the demands of the law in our stead. He took on Himself our nature to be our substitute before the bar of God’s justice. Jesus was born under the law to fulfill its demands for us, and He did so in perfect obedience. Then, by dying on the accursed tree He subjected Himself to death in our behalf. He bore the punishment and took the curse upon Himself. His blood, His life was poured out that we should be **washed** in that blood.

Fellow sinners, may this comforting truth fill our hearts. The Lord told Peter in the upper room the night of the last passover: “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). The world of men imagine that they can be made right with God by somehow washing themselves|perhaps through their good works, their pious outward lives, their fervent prayers. The secret societies and lodges foster this idea of self-righteousness and work-righteousness. The Roman Catholics imagine that their reciting of the rosary will wash them clean. But it is all a useless farce, for Jesus says: “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” Unless we are washed in the blood of Jesus we cannot be saved from the guilt of sin. This is why we need to pray with David: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.” It is all 100 percent the work of God for we have been “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

III. “And cleanse me from my sin.”

David concludes verse two of our psalm: “**And cleanse me from my sin.**” For the third time David pours out his desire to be liberated from his sin. One result of David’s sin, you remember, was that the Lord struck with sickness the child which David had through his sin with Bathsheba; and eventually the child died. But this punishment or result of sin is not that from which David prays to be freed, but rather from SIN ITSELF. This is underscored when we notice the three different expressions David uses here: “**blot out my transgressions . . . wash me thoroughly from my iniquity . . . cleanse me from my sin . . .**” Transgression refers to lawlessness, stressing the sinful act as rebellion against God. Iniquity comes from a word meaning to bend, twist, distort, representing an openly wicked and vile flaunting of the will of God against one’s better knowledge. Sin is a more general term referring to all wrongdoing. It is “missing the mark”|the bulls-eye of God’s holy law which He has every right to expect that we hit dead-center every time. Let us note that there is no distinction in sins between “venial” and “mortal” (as the Roman Catholics would have it), between lesser or more grievous sinning. Sin is sin in God’s sight. “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

When David uses the terms “wash” and “cleanse” here, he is thinking of sin as filth or pollution. Sin pollutes the heart and conscience. No washing or cleansing with mere soap or water can ever cleanse the heart. In the New Testament the word “cleanse” is often used in connection with the disease of leprosy. A number of times Jesus healed physical lepers, and then sent the healed ones to the priests who must pronounce the leper clean. So with regard to spiritual leprosy, sin. It is God who pronounces those clean, cleansed, who believe in Jesus. All of this is likely on David’s mind when he prays: “Cleanse me from my sin,” and when he adds a little later in this psalm: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (v. 7).

For us New Testament believers the cleansing spoken of calls to mind the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost in our baptism. A daily return to our baptism cleanses us from our sin and our sinfulness, as the Lord teaches through Ezekiel the prophet: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God” (36:25-28).

Fellow-sinners, the prayer of Dr. Martin Luther includes these words: “Lord, I am your sin; you are my righteousness.” That expression shows how well Luther understood the power and might of sin on the one hand, and the power of the gospel on the other. Sin is mine; it is upon me; it is in me. To know and acknowledge this fact is the beginning to finding true joy, for upon such penitent ones God blots out, washes, and cleanses them from all sin; and, in turn, adorns them with the purity and righteousness that is in Jesus Christ our Savior. As Zinzendorf’s beautiful hymn puts it:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
Lord, I believe Thy precious blood,
Which at the mercyseat of God
Forever doth for sinners plead,
For me|e’en for my soul|was shed.
Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

Let David’s plea then be ours: Lord, have mercy upon me, blot out my sins, wash me, cleanse me from my sin|and through faith in Jesus we know we are forgiven, we are clean. Hallelujah and Amen.

Prayer of Dr. Luther “for triumph over sin”:

O Lord, I am your clay. You are my potter and master workman. Because you pronounce me a sinner, I accept your word. I sincerely acknowledge and confess the godless condition which shows itself in my flesh and my entire

nature. I do so that you may be glorified and I humiliated. As with all other men, I am sin and death; you are life and righteousness. Together with all men I am the worst evil; you are and remain the highest good. I acknowledge and confess all this. I am led to this confession not by my reason which would rather cover up and disguise this godless condition, but through your law and promises. Lord, I am your sin; you are my righteousness. Therefore I am glad and have victory without fear. For my sin cannot outweigh or overpower your righteousness. Neither will your righteousness permit me to be or remain a sinner. Your Spirit, O Lord, must make and keep me alive. Blessed are you, O faithful God, my merciful Redeemer. In you alone do I trust. Therefore I will not be baffled. Amen.

PAIDEIA

How To Involve Parents In The Spiritual Education Of Their Children *

* Presented at the CLC Teachers' Conference, Jamestown, ND, Oct. 14-15, 1992

Robert Rehm

Much that has crossed my desk in recent months has been circulating around in my brain as I have pondered the best approach to the topic assigned to me. As an example of this type of material, the last meeting of the Great Lakes Teachers in Addison, IL, had as part of the agenda a discussion paper entitled "The Failure of the Family." Gerhardt Mueller concluded the paper with these words:

What is the real problem? Do we recognize it? It is the break-up of the American home! **What is the solution?** Is industry the solution? Is it more money, higher salaries for teachers, a national curriculum, uniform testing of students and teachers, rewards, incentives, more equipment, parent councils, alternative certification, choices? Is it more time and money spent on a system which is bankrupt and a blue-print for failure?

Our churches and schools have the answer. We cannot save the world, but we can and must labor to strengthen our homes spiritually. What does that mean for you?

"We can and must labor to strengthen our homes spiritually." That would seem to be a fitting answer to the question posed in the title of this paper. How it can be carried out as one of the responsibilities of the Christian Day School Teacher would seem to be the obvious outgrowth of the topic.

A well-circulated bulletin insert this past summer (credited to St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Onalaska, WI) will provide us a good bit of guidance. The title of the insert was "The Christian Home" and I would like to quote the last two paragraphs:

Everything about the home enters the child's training—the pictures on the wall, the books, newspapers, magazines on the table, the music that is heard, the well-swept floor, the arrangement of the furniture. All these and many other things create the atmosphere in which the child breathes and become part of its being.

Fill the home with a Christian spirit and it will become a Christian home; fill it with the spirit of the world and it will become worldly. Attend church services regularly. Children notice your non-attendance and also your excuses and form their own conclusions. Give to the growing children wholesome Christian reading matter. Teach them to distinguish between good and evil amusements. Make the home attractive so that they will not be in a hurry to get away from it. Parents, be seekers first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness for yourselves and for your children. (emphasis added)

If you agree that the two paragraphs above are loaded with possible solutions to help reach our goal, "We can and must labor to strengthen our homes spiritually," then the next question becomes one of choosing the best vehicle(s) to accomplish the task. We ask the Lord to guide us in our work as we consider the awesome responsibilities we have towards our school parents and the children they have entrusted to our care.

Yes, we are talking about our families . . . in most of our congregations when we speak of the break-up of the American home. It will profit us not a bit to think in terms of the extremes that are found in the ghettos of the metropolitan areas of our country. We ought to concentrate on the fact that the CLC is not immune to divorce, to single-parent homes from various causes, to the vicious frenzy in America by which both father and mother feel compelled to work outside the home to make ends meet. We certainly cannot say a few magic words and help the president of the United States to improve the economy in our country in order to allow our young school mothers to remain in their homes instead of turning over a good deal of the training of their infants and young children to baby-sitters. It is probably almost as impossible to expect that our school families could return to that sturdy Lutheran family structure which was possible before TV . . . when parents and children spent time together without the encroachments of the world being funneled directly into the home.

The problem lies in our hands; how best can we strengthen our homes spiritually? How can we best influence our school parents in the choice of the books, newspapers, magazines, and pictures which will make an impact in their home? How can we possibly have an impact on the insidious music that finds its way into our homes through many different avenues?

A first possibility might be to let our visits into the homes become more than talking about the crops, the weather, sports, etc. Especially when we may be aware of a school family having a problem with worldly music (or any other problem), we should make an effort to speak earnestly to them in the privacy of their own home as a means of being of support to them. One could use the passage from Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." Is it even a remote possibility for one's mind to be stayed on Christ when thinking of

(or singing) the lyrics of many of the popular songs that so easily flow from the lips of our young people? The words of James 3:10 would also seem to apply to the filth that passes for lyrics in many popular songs: "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."

Because many of the difficulties that plague our school families are common to a majority of them, we would do well to have an active Parent-Teacher Organization in which practical topics such as rock music, etc., can be studied. Allow your PTO to be more than a social evening together in uncomfortable school desks that were designed for smaller bodies. Bring the Word of God to bear on the matter at hand; we cannot effectively strengthen our homes spiritually in any other way. If the attendance at your PTO meetings is not what you would like it to be, ask your pastor whether selected topics could be taken up in the Sunday Bible class. In this setting you would be likely to have input from older families who may no longer have any children of school age, but who have plowed similar ground with the rearing of their own children in years past.

"Fill the home with a Christian spirit and it will become a Christian home; fill it with the spirit of the world and it will become worldly." A great help towards strengthening our homes spiritually would be to turn the TV off for most of the day. Do we have the spiritual muscle to take command of the remote control and truly "control" what our children watch? Then there would be time for home devotions, and through the daily use of the Word a Christian spirit would fill the home. Then there would be time to make certain that memory work is carefully learned and that other homework is completed. Then there would be time to reinforce what had been taught in the Bible history or catechism lesson of that day.

"Attend church services regularly. Children notice your non-attendance and also your excuses, and form their own conclusions." When going to a stock car race in far-flung cities becomes the routine for each Sunday during the summer, what a powerful lesson has been taught those children by the time the next school term rolls around. When fishing, golf, horseshoes, baseball games, etc., become the main event on Sunday to the exclusion of hearing God's Word, one must try to impress that family with the words of John 8:47: "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." Much more to be desired would be those family members who think of Colossians 3:16 every time a divine service is held: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Also, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep [treasure] it!" (Luke 11:28). It is easy to see the marvelous positive correlation between regular use of God's Word and that spiritual strengthening of our school families that we are seeking.

I have often bemoaned the fact that there are no physical symptoms (such as a severe leg cramp) involved with neglect of or despising God's Word. The high school student who skips breakfast and then eats little at lunch will know for certain that he/she had little or no endurance for the three-mile cross country course. The "idiot lights" in our automobiles tell us when it is not safe to operate that vehicle. The computer and even the copy machine "talk" to us with information to help the experienced or the novice operator. Since the Lord has not promised to use an idiot light when we are guilty of that deadly spiritual starvation, it behooves each of us to be active in that "teaching and admonishing one another . . ." which sometimes seems so difficult to do. As teachers we owe it to that child (who usually can not come to church alone), for the sake of his/her blood-bought soul, to speak to the parents and urge them to ". . . receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

"Give to the growing children wholesome Christian reading matter." It must be the understatement of the age to say that there is much written and published that does not edify (instruct and improve especially in moral and religious knowledge). One could make it considerably stronger by saying that much that is written comes directly from Satan, the father of lies, and is designed for the very destruction of the believer. As teachers we must be ready to suggest wholesome books for the young reader, and ever be ready for the growing battle when the filth that is spewed out for the teen (and adult) reader takes its toll. Take note of some of the titles that are involved in the typical book club literature that comes to the pupils of grades 6-9. We must take every caution that we do not unwittingly contribute to the problem by endorsing membership in such clubs without being able to know the content of the many books available. We must work with the parents to alert them to the dangers of unwholesome reading matter, and aid them in providing that which can strengthen our homes spiritually.

"Teach them to distinguish between good and evil amusements." What kind of example is given children and young people by some of the amusements indulged in by their parents? You must have sayings of your own that bring out the thought, "Actions speak louder than words." If parents are to teach their children to distinguish between good and evil amusements, their first best weapon is to set a positive example. In a world that lives by the philosophy, "You only go around once, so . . ." or "If it feels right to you and it does not hurt anyone else . . ." or "It's my body and nobody is going to tell me . . ." there are amusements that abound in soul-destroying evil. What a challenge for parents, pastors, and teachers to guide children in the Word so that they realize that they can indeed be in the world without being of the world. What a challenge to help our children grow in the Word so they can reserve sexual intercourse until they have pledged themselves before God to that beloved spouse on their wedding day, when all about them the world is engaging in every form of misuse of that blessed sexual union that God has reserved alone for marriage. We now live with the deadly duo of abortion and AIDS as a legacy of that so-called sexual freedom. Have we shown our children that TV is not the driving force in our home by turning the set off with some finality when the amusement provided becomes questionable or obviously evil? Oh, there is so much that must and can be done. Parents can have the strong allies of daily use of the Word and of their Christian pastor and teacher(s) to aid in the battle, if only the parents themselves do not lay the weapons aside and fall prey to the snares of the evil world.

"Make the home attractive so that they will not be in a hurry to get away from it." Perhaps some of you are thinking now about the home of your youth. What was it that made your home special? How did you manage to make it through the years when teens often can hardly talk civilly to brother or sister, or when teens suddenly are blessed with the wisdom of the ages and quite rapidly know most things much better than their parents? Did you do things together as a

family unit? Was there an abundance of wealth so that you could have any material thing that your heart desired? (This is being written after the PBS special on the Joseph P. Kennedy family.) What is it about a home that makes the children want to stay rather than leave at the first opportunity? Hymn 624 gives insights for our search:

If they have given Him their heart,
The place of honor set apart
For Him each night and morrow,
Then He the storms of life will calm,
Will bring for every wound a balm,
And change to joy their sorrow.

No, I will not try to say that the home will be perfect if God lives there with the family; the humans living there still have the old sinful flesh that tries to govern much of what happens each day. Even though they try to do things together as a family (which is far better than always scattering to separate directions and interests), their sinful flesh may get in the way of a totally successful family outing. However, if God does truly live with them, there will be avenues to solve the normal problems of each day. As an application of the Bible reading at their devotion, they can talk over what went wrong between brother and sister, between teen and parents. With the Word of God to rule in their home and in their hearts, there indeed could be many an ugly scene that might have something in common with the worldly settlement of things often seen on TV. We make the home attractive by sharing the Word there, by allowing the Word to guide and rule every heart in the activities of each new day that the Lord grants us, and we continue to gather at God's house as a family for strengthening through each service and Bible class.

“Parents, be seekers first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness for yourselves and for your children.” Each of us should remember the prayer of Prov. 30:8-9: “Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food You prescribe for me: Lest I be full and deny You, And say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.” Would any of us be able to handle it very well if the gracious provider of every good and perfect gift were suddenly to bless us with great material wealth (Cf. Abraham and Lot)? Would we be able to manage things better than did Joseph P. Kennedy (PBS TV special, September 1992)? Have you considered the impact made on our children through the greed of one professional sports figure after another as the annual salaries of the top athletes jump into the millions? Our example will have to prove quite convincing if we are to show our children that we truly believe the words of 1 Timothy 6:8: “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Could it be that the poor economy in the United States has been allowed by the Lord to drag on because too many people have forgotten the words of Psalm 145 (15-16): “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing”? Some of us can look back to the early days of the CLC and remember the rather basic salary schedules that many congregations were able to offer. If the Savior were to ask us today, “. . . did you lack anything?” (Luke 22:35), there should be no response except that of Psalm 37:25: “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” Oh, if only we could convince our own CLC families (who are also caught up in the world's mad rush for their generous supply of the creature comforts) of the unchanging promise of our Lord, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Or as we also read in Romans 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Children notice what concerns parents have . . . children do learn by example. Let the example that we set for them be one of quiet confidence, knowing that “. . . all these things shall be added to you.”

O Lord, we come before Thy face;
In every home bestow Thy grace
On children, father, mother.
Relieve their wants, their burdens ease,
Let them together dwell in peace
And love to one another. (L.H. #624, v. 4)

BRIEF REVIEW

***Logia*: A [new] Journal of Lutheran Theology**

A theological journal must prove its worth over time. A journal emanating as “authorized” by its supporting church body has a distinct role to play on the theological scene. Its primary duty is to set forth as clearly as it can the doctrine and practice of its constituents, demonstrating that what is taught and done by that church body is truly in accord with the Word of God, the sacred scriptures. If it is a Lutheran journal, it has the obligation to demonstrate further that its theology is also in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions. So much for “official” journals.

There are any number of “independent” theological journals on the American landscape. They range from weekly tabloids to newsletters to expensively produced magazines. Most of the independents seem to want to be ecumenical in so far as they gather varying, frequently opposing viewpoints on theological subjects and present them hodge-podge, without claiming that any single viewpoint is more or less correct than another. They are usually recognizable from titles such as “dialog” or “forum” (I have not yet heard of a “stoa,” but you never know!).

Now, as of October 1992, comes a new independent periodical that declares: “*Logia* will be ‘pan-Lutheran’ in the sense that we will address the vital issues which confront all those who bear the name Lutheran, and we want to be a true

forum for all who are struggling to remain faithful to the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. But we will not be 'pan-Lutheran' in trying to be all things to all men. Our goal is a full renewal of the Lutheran churches to the faith confessed in our Lutheran Confessions." So, in a way, this is a forum that is ecumenical with a difference: its attempt to be loyal to the Lutheran Confessions.

Logia's list of editors is headed by Michael Albrecht, one of the pastors of St. James Lutheran Church, West St. Paul, MN (WELS). Pastor Albrecht may be recognizable to our CLC readers from the announcement in *Forum Letter*, a publication of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, a "pan-Lutheran" organization if there ever was one. *Forum Letter* has for the last few years mainly consisted of diatribes against the "quota system" of the ELCA, the church body to which most of its writers belong. In its most recent issue (at this writing), *Forum Letter* announced a new set of contributing editors, "a group representative of Lutheran diversity in the U.S. . . . three pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and one from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod." The WELS representative: "Michael J. Albrecht (WELS) is a son, grandson, and great-grandson of Wisconsin Synod pastors." It is perhaps a trifle rude to have identified Michael's grandfather as a WELS pastor. He was that at one time, it is true; however, Paul G. Albrecht also withdrew from WELS in the late 1950s and became the first president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

In addition to Albrecht, there are five others identified as *Logia* editors; one of these is Erling Teigen, a professor at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN. Furthermore, to demonstrate its "pan-Lutheran-ness," *Logia* has 36 "contributing editors." One-third of these are identified as LCMS professors at various Concordias; one is an LCMS district president; at least one is an ELCA theological professor. Some of the rest are Europeans; some are Australians. Based on its list of editorial writers, *Logia* certainly will be pan-Lutheran; whether or not it will be confessionally Lutheran remains to be seen.

Two comments come to mind at present. The first issue contains a review essay by Robert D. Preus, now former president of Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Fort Wayne, of *Memoirs in Exile, Confessional Hope and Institutional Conflict*, by John H. Tietjen. Almost the same review, plus approximately 3 1/2 pages or so, appeared in the October 1992 issue of the Concordia Theological Quarterly (CTQ). Someone should have coordinated better. Perhaps the author of the review submitted it to both quarterlies?

My second comment has to do with *Logia's* purpose and hope of achievement. Its founders want their journal to remain faithful to the Lutheran Confessions as presented in the Book of Concord. The problem is that they are associating themselves, in this writer's view, with people who have demonstrated again and again, through their writing in other theological publications, that they do not understand the confessions (even the "*satis est*") in the same way. Are their contributions to *Logia* going to have the same standing in its pages as others? I received a clearer interpretation of *Logia's* purpose in a letter from Erling Teigen: ". . . we are trying to be a free conference in print, and we are dedicated to confessional Lutheran theology." I can relate to free conferences, properly defined and constituted (no practice of fellowship), so I will wait and see! In the meantime, let me suggest that *Logia's* founders reread Luther's letter to George Major about remaining "in the same stall with such as teach, or adhere to, false doctrine."

-John Lau

BOOK REVIEWS

On the Philosophy of Translating the Bible

These pages serve as a review and summary of a recently published book by Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version: The Primary Criterion in Evaluating Bible Versions* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, c1989, 89 pp., \$6.95). I found that I could agree with almost everything that the author said regarding a proper philosophy, or approach, in the translation of the Bible. In fact, I believe that I shall have to be more consistent myself in the application of the principles which the author presents. The more that I read, the more I recognized the danger of confusing Biblical interpretation with Biblical translation.

This book will be placed into the Seminary Library collection, and I would urge both theological and pretheological students to read it.

The author rightly affirms that accuracy is the most important criterion in the translation of the Bible--far more important than such things as readability and style. He feels that the reader of an English translation of the Bible should be brought as closely as possible to the very words, etc., of the Hebrew or Greek text.

To read Martin's book with understanding, a person has to become familiar with some technical terminology. He affirms that a translator has to be concerned with equivalence: namely, that his translation "communicates accurately what the original author wrote" (p. 6). When we look at translation philosophy and practice, we can distinguish between two fundamentally different types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The author describes these as follows (p. 7):

When we ask what method of translating best communicates the content of the original text, formal equivalence translators answer that the content of the original is best communicated when the translator consciously tries to parallel closely the linguistic form (i.e., the structure, grammar, and exact wording) of the original.

Dynamic equivalence translators, on the other hand, answer that the best way is to use the most natural form of the language of the reader (i.e., giving priority to the structure, grammar, and idiomatic expressions of contemporary English), whether or not this closely parallels the linguistic form of the original text.

Martin offers the following as examples of translations that for the most part reflect formal equivalence: King James Version, American Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, and New King James Version. The following, he believes, reflect the method of dynamic equivalence: Good News Bible and New English Bible. During the course of his book, he makes a good case for placing also the New International Version into this latter category--even though it may not engage in interpretation and paraphrase to the same extent as do the GNB and the NEB.

Martin is convinced that a belief in verbal (word-for-word), plenary inspiration will lead the translator to adopt formal equivalence as the preferred method. If inspiration extended only to the thoughts expressed in Scripture, then a good case could be made for dynamic equivalence. Inasmuch, however, as the very words were God-breathed, the translator should focus his attention on formal equivalence--letting the English reader come as close as possible to the words and grammatical structure of the original.

In two key chapters of his book (four and five), Martin illustrates the difference in approach between the methods of formal and dynamic equivalence--using the following seven characteristics:

FORMAL EQUIVALENCE

1. Reproduces as fully as possible the grammatical structures of original. Shouldn't the modern reader be presented with a level of "difficulty" comparable to that which the original readers faced?
2. Tries to add as few words as possible in the translation; indicates which words are added by means of italics or brackets. Shouldn't the English reader know which words the translator has himself supplied?
3. Only rarely omits words that are found in the original; strives to reproduce in English as many of the conjunctions, particles, etc., as possible. Shouldn't the English reader receive the help that these "little" words supply as he traces the flow of thought through a passage?
4. Retains the technical terminology of the Bible, because of the theological precision that such terms offer to the reader. Consider, for example, such words as "justify" and "propitiation." (Martin believes that "declare righteous" and "atoning sacrifice" fall short as accurate translations.) Do we have such a low opinion of the modern reader as to feel that he is incapable of mastering precise Biblical terminology?
5. Aims at exposing the English reader as fully as possible to the customs, ways of thinking, and modes of expression of the holy writers and the original readers of the Bible. Will it not aid the modern reader in his understanding and appreciation of the Biblical accounts to enter deeply into the cultural milieu of the writers and first readers?
6. Avoids as much as possible the injection of interpretation into the translation. For example, where the original is grammatically ambiguous (capable of more than one meaning), an attempt is made to retain the ambiguity in the translation--letting the English reader himself determine the Spirit-intended meaning through his own study of Scripture. Do we not have confidence in the universal priesthood of believers, that they themselves are able to understand and apply passages in a proper fashion?
7. Carefully avoids any kind of paraphrasing of the Biblical text. Don't the readers of Scripture deserve to hear the very words of God, and not a mere paraphrase of what the translator regards as the meaning of a passage?

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

1. Breaks up complex passages into series of short sentences--defending this practice as a means to achieve simplicity and clarity for the English reader.
2. Freely supplies words so as make the translation sound like colloquial English; does not indicate which words have been added--since this often involves a large percentage of the total words in a passage!
3. Frequently treats conjunctions, particles, pronouns, articles, adjectives, adverbs, and even phrases as unnecessary verbiage.
4. Eliminates much of the Bible's technical terminology, supposedly in the interest of achieving greater clarity.
5. Engages in what the author calls "cultural leveling," expressing Biblical ideas in terms of modern customs, modern ways of thinking, and modern modes of expression.
6. Tries to assist the reader by presenting the "best attested" interpretation in place of a literal rendering of the words in the original. (The danger is that the translator may at times miss the Spirit-intended meaning and actually mislead the reader --or, perhaps even worse, that the translator will impose his own theological bias on the passage. There is a difference between what a text says and what it means. The translator should restrict himself to reproducing in English what the text says, and not impose on the reader what he thinks the text means.)
7. Engages widely in paraphrase--restating the gist of the text in the translator's own words.

In a closing chapter, Martin affirms that “the NIV is not worthy of becoming the standard version of the English-speaking world. Its accuracy is suspect in too many ways” (p. 70). He states his conviction that “sacrificing precision for simplicity is no bargain. Inaccurate and paraphrastic Bible translations cannot but contribute to the further erosion of theological precision in the decades to come” (p. 70).

The author provides three appendices--the first discussing revisions of the NIV, the second relating archaic language to translation philosophy, and the third reacting to the Textus Receptus and the text of the New Testament. Two indices provide quick reference to authors and to Scripture references.

- C. Kuehne

***The Creationists*, by Ronald L. Numbers. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. 458 pages; \$27.00.**

The author of this significant volume, Ronald L. Numbers, has a Ph.D. in history, with an emphasis on the history of science, from the University of California at Berkeley. He is presently serving as the William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Numbers was born in 1942 and reared in a fundamentalist Seventh-day Adventist family of ministers. He did not question the claims of strict creationism until the late 1960s when he was studying the history of science at Berkeley. At that time he “decided to follow science rather than Scripture on the subject of origins” and “quickly, though not painlessly, slid down the proverbial slippery slope toward unbelief” (p. xvi). The creationist lawyer Wendell R. Bird has publicly labeled Numbers as an “Agnostic,” to which Numbers responds: “The tag still feels foreign and uncomfortable, but it accurately reflects my theological uncertainty” (p. xvi).

It is evident that Numbers did his homework carefully before writing this volume. For example, the notes occupy a full 89 pages near the end of the book! While he occasionally shows his intellectual, and perhaps emotional, commitment to evolution, he has succeeded reasonably well in his aim to treat the advocates of creationism “with the same respect I might accord evolutionists” (p. xvi). He was prompted to this in part by the fact that his own father actively promoted creationism during his ministry in the Adventist church.

This does not mean, however, that the author has pulled any punches in discussing creation scientists, their beliefs, and their work. Again and again he records their foibles, failings, and infighting. While his treatment may be factually correct for the most part, and even sympathetic at times, it does generally depict creationists as a fringe group working outside the mainstream of established science. It is probable that many readers will perceive the thrust of the book to be that of a “put-down” of the creation science movement. (I recognize, of course, that some creationist writers have similarly disparaged evolutionists and their scientific endeavors. It is difficult to remain completely neutral and objective when dealing with the question of origins!) It might be added here that Numbers seems to question also the creationists’ allegation that evolutionary philosophy has had an evil effect on the moral, social, and political realms. We know from Romans 1 and other passages of the Bible that the creationists are correct in this.

Numbers seems to enjoy pointing up the fact that some creation scientists, such as Clifford L. Burdick and Harold S. Slusher, lack proper academic credentials. Yet he is bold enough to admit: “At the beginning of the twentieth century, the handful of scientifically trained creationists worked in obscurity and isolation. Less than a hundred years later, well-credentialed creationists numbered in the hundreds, if not thousands, and organized creationism could be found around the world” (p. 335, my emphasis). Later he affirms: “Twentieth-century creationism cannot be reduced to a mere expression of the ‘anti-intellectual tradition’ in America, as some critics have done, without considerable distortion. Strict creationists may have opposed elite science, but they developed an alternative tradition that in some ways was just as ‘intellectual’ as the one they rejected. What most distinguished the leading creationists from their evolutionary counterparts was not intellect or integrity but cosmology and epistemology” (p. 336). In the closing paragraph of his book, Numbers states: “Finally, for fundamentalists seeking what the anthropologist Christopher P. Toumey calls ‘scientific sanctification,’ flood geology came with the endorsement of real scientists, who assured them that nature, like Scripture, argued for a nonevolutionary history of life” (p. 339).

I would commend the author for making statements such as these in a book that will surely be read by many of his evolutionist colleagues!

This reviewer came away from Numbers' book with a renewed awareness of the danger of separating creation science from its Biblical roots and of the futility of trying to impose a non-religious form of creationism on public education. The author indicates that some recent creationists have succeeded in gaining an acceptance for creationism because they have begun with Biblical presuppositions and, by interpreting the data of science in accord with these presuppositions, "make sense of the Bible"--providing "a total synthesis of biblical data and hard scientific facts" (p. 338; Numbers here quotes David C. C. Watson and D. A. Carson with approval). In an end note, Numbers cites Nigel M. de S. Cameron as finding "the great strength" of *The Genesis Flood* in its method of starting with the Bible (p. 437).

After reading this book and noting these comments, I have gained more appreciation for the Bible-centered approach of John C. Whitcomb, whom Numbers treats with evident respect and whose writings he cites in this paragraph from the chapter on "Creation Science and Scientific Creationism" (p. 246):

Not all creationists, even flood geologists, agreed on the essential elements of scientific creationism or on the desirability of soft-pedaling its religious roots. The Arkansas law, for example, required a young earth, but Morris, for one, assigned that concept to biblical, not scientific, creationism. His sometime collaborator, Whitcomb, expressed reservations about the entire repackaging effort. In his opinion, so-called scientific creationism sacrificed both certainty and Christianity. "One might just as well be a Jewish or even a Muslim creation scientist as far as this model is concerned," he observed disgustedly. Simply for public acceptance, Morris had sold the creationist birthright for a mess of institutional pottage. "By avoiding any mention of the Bible, or of Christ as the Creator, we may be able to gain equal time in some public school classrooms," wrote Whitcomb. "But the cost would seem to be exceedingly high, for absolute certainty is lost and the spiritual impact that only the living and powerful Word of God can give is blunted." He, too, wanted to reach "the millions of students who are being systematically brainwashed in evolutionary humanism in public schools and universities," but he refused to deny or downplay the biblical basis of creationism to do so. "Far from being a hindrance and an embarrassment to scientific creationism," biblical theology "is actually its only source of final authority, power, and victory," he argued.

- C. Kuehne