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THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

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The Preaching Of The Gospel

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Preamble

A series of brief paragraphs on this topic may, under God, serve us greatly in these days of apostasy in the Lutheran Church. For there could hardly be anything else more potent to serve the evil foe in his work of undermining the faith than a condition of the blessed gospel which alone can give faith and life. To recognize such a pernicious treatment of the gospel when it happens and to avoid such who practice it must be the earnest endeavor of every true believer.

In this brief beginning of the series permit us to define the terms of the theme. That we are primarily concerned with the preaching of this gospel of the Lord is only natural. For this gospel was given to the church to be preached, to be proclaimed. Through such proclamation the Lord gathers His elect in all the world and in every generation. Wherever and whenever this preaching stops or is in anywise conditioned and thus altered, the greatest calamity has happened to such place and time. To learn to judge preaching and insist on a correct exercise of this obligation is the very serious business of every member of the church.

We often assume that we all know what is meant when the term gospel is used, but that is unfortunately not the case. Just about anything taken from the Bible and from the philosophy of men has been termed gospel. For far too many the Sermon on the Mount is called the gospel of Christ. Others concentrate the gospel into the one word from this sermon, "All things, whatsoever you would have men do to you, do ye even so to them," the so-called Golden Rule. Thus the devil manages to delude men and keep them from the gospel.

For the gospel of which our theme speaks is a proclamation of the most amazing of all the works of God. This work is described in the historical working out of it in the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Its wonders are concentrated in classical words by the Spirit in the Epistles, such as: "All have sinned,

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23f.), and “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

We note that these statements are quite plainly a declaration concerning a pure act of God for every human being in the world. God justified all the sinners. God reconciled all the sinners in the world with Himself. For His Own sake He did it and to His glory. It is a complete work which suffers no addition to it, certainly no act of man. It is true, whether it is believed or not, whether it is accepted or rejected. It is an act which is unalterable and unchangeable by any set of circumstances whatsoever. It is in fact the “Good News” that God has opened the gates of Paradise, has swept aside the angel with the flaming sword and made free the way to the Tree of Life. The whole world is declared righteous; the whole world is declared at peace with God.

And this is the gospel God has given His church to preach and proclaim. For it is the power of God unto salvation. This gospel does something to sinful man. It is like the call of Jesus into the grave of the sinner Lazarus, dead these four days: “Lazarus, come forth.” The command was unique. It did not mean that Lazarus had the ability to hear the command, nor the ability to obey it. The command itself carried with it the power to make him alive. It did, and he came forth alive. This is what the preaching of the pure gospel of justification does to sinful man. That is its object and its function. But it is entirely in the hands of God. The church is but a voice, like that of John the Baptist. It simply calls in its own amazement that God justified the ungodly. For the Church is not there to save sinners. That is God’s prerogative. He alone saves sinners, He alone can. The Church proclaims His glory in the magnificent act that God has reconciled the world to Himself. Thus the Church fulfills its wonderful mission.

And therefore the gospel must be preached unconditioned. Through all the ages, the chief work of the devil has been to have men condition this gospel. Most, if not all, of these conditions have a pious, Biblical ring to them. For even the stupid devil has had it impressed upon him through the centuries that these foolish Christians actually believe with all their hearts that every word in the Bible is spoken by God Himself. So he must perforce use that very Word if he is to have any hope of distracting some Christians, or even getting them to fall away.

Very fortunately for us, God not only knew that this was coming upon His sheep, but He also forestalled the devil in this very Word which the evil foe so piously uses. That was indeed fortunate. For the devil has at all times managed to make use of very important persons in the visible church to carry out his evil design of conditioning the gospel; and when he gets some unwary soul to think and say, “Well, this has been written (or said) by some high official in the church, or some learned professor, and he also knows the Bible, not just our pastor,” then he is very happy indeed. For he has taken another one away from his only safety and security, the blessed Word, and led him to rely on the judgment of men.

The devil also makes good use of the weakness and frailty of human language to gain this end of conditioning the gospel. For the language was made by sinful men who know nothing at all in matters of the gospel and the Spirit. It has been made to express the sinful, humanly wise, philosophical thoughts of men. It is truly no medium by which to express the wonderful works of God. That the Holy Ghost still managed to do so in the Bible is not the least among the miracles coming from His hands. So the devil has every opportunity to make use of the weakness of human tongue in his constant attempt to devour the children of God.

But God has forestalled him. He has primarily done this by carefully omitting every word that might condition and thus draw His gospel into the realm of doubt. For our introductory purposes today it will suffice to use the classic example we have quoted as the essence of the gospel. We note with great joy that the word from Romans 3 stands like a solid rock and is as clear as any word can possibly be. He says first, “All have sinned.” There are no if’s, no exceptions. There are no exceptions possible. With three words God swept all men into one abyss: All have sinned.

He goes on, “All are justified freely.” Again that clear-cut, unmistakable expression. He does not say, “If they believe it.” He does not say, “If they keep my Word.” He does not say, “If they keep my commandments.” No, it is just simply, “All are justified freely.” And there it stands. Like doomed men (and they were doomed indeed) sinners through the ages have fiercely clung to it. There it stands: “All are justified freely.” It is safe; it is all-inclusive. Even the worst wretch can find room under it. Even the publican found a little corner and crowded in under it; a thief on the cross reached out with nail-pierced hand and managed to touch it. For it is so entirely unconditioned.

And then, as though to silence the devil and all his cohorts for all times, this Lord adds in massive declaration, "By His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Again He deals with absolute facts, with data far removed from the scheming, grasping, sophisticated mind of man and devil. By His grace He sent His Son. His Son bought Himself the whole world and all wretched sinners in it. There is no doubt about it, nor can and dare any condition be attached to it. With absolute finality the Lord of Hosts sets His seal upon it: "All sinned; all are redeemed; all are justified. It is free, by grace, and nothing can possibly be added to this amazing work of God."

As we close these introductory remarks, we urge our readers to note two things and not to be perturbed by them. When we wrote on this subject many years ago, a brother came to us and asked: "But where is your Scriptural proof?" It was not enough for him that God Himself had brushed aside any condition from His Holy gospel by very carefully omitting the conditioning words like "if" or "but" and the like. God had not said in so many words that the expression, "But you gotta believe," heard so often in our land, is the first destructive word against the gospel when inserted where God does not insert it. He simply omitted it.

We urge you to apply the command, "Thou shalt not add thereto nor take away from it," and let that suffice. God is not playing games with us in this supremely important matter. He wants to give us a holy awe towards His Word and He wants to be taken very much "at His Word." Therein and therein alone lies our safety. The much mentioned human judgment, of which man is so inordinately proud, is a broken reed when it comes to His Word. In solemn majesty God sets His Word before us and bids us "eat and drink and live." May He grant us that grace.

The other disturbing thought is that man can have such folly that he actually tampers with the very grace of God which alone saves him. It is powerfully disturbing when men of the church begin also to tamper with His Word. May we urge them to recall that God speaks of that in Romans 16:18, when He speaks and warns of the "good words and fair speeches which deceive the unwary." It should be enough for us to insist upon it that we do not want to belong to the "unwary" and to be most insistent in our prayers that His Spirit might not let us become unwary ones, but rather lead us into all truth.

To this end may He bless also this effort.

Introduction

Ye shall be my witnesses. What a tremendous, impossible declaration from the mouth of the king of the greatest kingdom. Upon sinful, frail, and imperfect men and women He places this crown, this honor, in the most simple of human words. Through 2000 years of history the same words have been glibly and carelessly repeated by the tongues of generation after generation of sinful mortals, and for that same period of time sinners have even claimed to understand and fathom the word and to have been able to follow all its implications. Yet in all that time no human tongue and no fiery words of human oratory, or learned words of dogmatic wisdom have ever been able fully to grasp the full significance of the words.

Ye shall be my witnesses. Ye shall be the ambassadors of Christ. Ye shall preach the gospel unto all creatures. They have remained words which lead poor mortal man, upon deepest study, to the mournful exclamation: "But it is impossible!"

Impossible indeed! The very words of the Master loudly proclaim the impossibility of it. Mortal man should be His witness and proclaim His gospel? Both words, gospel and witnesses, cry aloud: "It can not be!" They are His *witnesses*,

but they cannot begin to understand the mind of the Lord,
cannot begin to measure the immeasurable love that is God,
cannot begin to grasp the immensity of His grace,
cannot even approach to comprehension of His mercy,
not to speak at all of His matchless holiness, His all-power,
His wisdom, His glory.

They should proclaim His *gospel* of love and forgiveness,

but the poor sinful heart and mind cannot even hold on to the fact of one single sin forgiven,

and fails utterly before the enormous fact that the uncounted millions have been redeemed by the eternal Son of God.

We doubt that an eternity of perfected and purified thought will ever follow the implications of that which we often so lightly call the gospel. Like a glittering and unattainable diadem, far removed from sinful man, appears this appellation: *Ye shall be my witnesses.*

The most earnest devotion to the task of living up to this title conferred by the Son of God, the most prayerful application to the profound mysteries it implies, finally always feel the utter impossibility not only of mind, but also of the sinful human language to give adequate utterance to the mystery of God.

Though the Spirit cries in the heart: Abba, Father,

and though the merciful hand of God has compressed into poor human words that which He calls His Good Spell, the news of delight from heaven,

and though He has written it in utter simplicity and clarity, the human tongue gropes and stammers,

searches among human words the choicest,

 piles them up into the most eloquent climaxes,

 only to feel at the end again the entire inadequacy of all human tongues taken together, to proclaim the glory that is God's in His Son Jesus Christ.

How indeed should the tongue of sinful man,

 whose mind could not even begin to find a return to the blessedness of Paradise Lost,

 ever coin words that could express the impossible conception, born from the eternal love of the Father, that the way closed to the tree of life by the hand of justice should have been swept clear again by the same hand,

 losing none of its justice, yet shining in absolute love?

How should we be the witnesses of Christ?

And yet, 'tis so, for He has so declared it. In blind, unreasoning faith we cling to the words, even as we, in unreasoning faith, cling to the cross on Calvary, with all its love and forgiveness and surely with supreme confidence look to a blessed eternity. He has declared that we are His witnesses. He makes us to be such by His creating declaration, and so the diadem of glory rests upon us by the act of His mercy, which made us to be His children and heirs of the kingdom. As His baptized ones, as His elect, whom He has marked with His name, we are His witnesses.

In deep humility, as they who cannot, and yet are able to do all things in Him, who hath made us to be kings and priests before His Father,

 as they who are utterly unworthy and yet have been made worthy through the matchless holiness of His atoning blood,

 as they who cannot fully understand or grasp, and yet have the Comforter who leads in all truth, we are His witnesses.

If all the honors of this world were conferred upon us, never would they begin to approach the honor of that title: **Ye are my witnesses.**

In blind, unreasoning faith we cling to it, in faith and utter trust in Him we approach the activity conferred by this title. For it is surely not merely a badge of honor, an empty title, as man creates them, but rather an activity created within dead-ones-made-alive by the Spirit of God, an activity that burns with the zeal that "hath eaten me up." Ye are my witnesses, the creative voice declares, and behold we are, actively and positively the witnesses, the preachers of the gospel, the messengers of peace, the proclaimers of the mystery which eye hath not seen and ear not heard. By His creative act He makes us to be such, by His continuous act within He ever keeps alive the fire of witness and proclamation, that we might show forth the praises of Him who hath called us from darkness into His marvelous light.

Thus dare we approach the word that calls us witnesses, and thus alone. He hath made us, and we are His. He hath created us to be His witnesses. With trembling hands we feel the crown so miraculously placed upon our heads, and even while believing, stammer the prayer: **Lord, help us not to hinder the power, nor becloud the glory, nor limit the scope of Thine ineffable light given to the world in the word of Thine only-begotten Son.**

For well we know that all the powers of the darkness defeated on Calvary, and all the hatred of blind and stupid men, and all the innate wickedness of our hearts strive against this witness; and of these three we fear ourselves the most. The evil powers are, after all, chained by the strong arm of the Prince of Heaven. His voice cries loud, and it comes down in full volume through the long years: Fear not, for I have overcome the world. But our own wretched heart, our proud and arrogant heart, our wise and prudent heart would ever lead us to besmirch the crown His loving-kindness has set upon us, and hinder our witness to His saving glory. Of all the wretchedness of man portrayed on the pages of history, this wretchedness will ever be the saddest record: That His crowned witnesses ever again silenced the voice of proclamation and grossly defeated the divine purpose of His gospel. From this preserve us in our Lutheran church, heavenly Father.

And lo, in strong and sure mercy He hath set us as pillars of strength in the word of salvation, that this should never be so with us.

Clear and sustaining and strengthening are the words that cause our faith to burn in ever increasing power,

words that declare the message of our witness to stand far above all human doubts and human wisdom and human presumption.

For His witnesses, whom He has created,

proclaim the everlasting gospel,

proclaim the wonderful works of God,

proclaim the praises of the calling forth out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This proclamation is truth, the great truth, the only absolute truth in heaven and earth, and is the power of God unto salvation.

It wants but to be proclaimed, this story of the works of God, to be ever and alone efficacious to the uttermost in the saving of men's souls.

It wants but to be proclaimed, this praise of God in His calling strength, and it is sufficient to build the kingdom.

It wants but to be proclaimed, and lo it stands eminent above all wisdom, and all philosophy, and all science and knowledge, as the light that shines into the eternal heavens.

With such pillars of strength does the King uphold His witnesses that they might be His witnesses in spirit and truth. Ever again He stretches forth the arm that has not grown short, and sets us upon the rock of truth that we might not fail as His witnesses in our appointed tasks. And ever again we look to "the rock that is higher than we," and take strength and sustenance from Him in our glorious task.

In this spirit of humble, confident trust we dare to approach the task we have set out to accomplish. Believing with all our heart that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, we have but one fear: that we might hinder the sure purpose of this gospel

We are confident that the eternal purpose of God will always be fulfilled, regardless of our failures, and just because of this confidence we would anxiously remain at His side, and with Him in spirit and in truth build the walls of Jerusalem and rejoice with Him, when His glory shall be revealed.

The fear that the *spirit of rationalistic wisdom*, the spirit of Calvinism, is creeping apace into the circle of the Lutheran church may be unfounded. Yet, as it is the very *natural spirit of our sinful hearts*, we shall not err in strengthening ourselves, and fortifying ourselves against it unceasingly by making the topic of our devotional study:

THE PREACHING OF THE UNCONDITIONED GOSPEL

- I. Its preaching is the amazed proclamation of the wonderful works of God.
- II. Though it involves the sinfulness of man, it is not conditioned by the same.
- III. Though it does not remove the Law, it is entirely free of the same.
- IV. Though its reception is by faith, it is in no wise conditioned by faith.

- V. Though its reception is connected with repentance, it is not in any wise conditioned by the same.
 - VI. Though it is proclaimed by means of human language, it is not to be conditioned by the legalism of the same.
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Thesis I

*Its preaching is the amazed proclamation
of the wonderful works of God.*

The preaching of the gospel commanded by Christ is most fittingly described in His word as the amazed proclaiming of the wonderful works of God, as the astonished spreading abroad of the excellencies, the praiseworthiness, of Him who called us out of darkness into His astounding light. It is but natural that no such definition of preaching is expressly given in His word; for it lies in the very nature of the gospel itself that it only thus can be adequately proclaimed, that in any case no suitable words in human tongue can even then be found to express the glories of His righteousness and the wonders of His love. Thus the Master Himself does not set forth any added instruction concerning the preaching, simply calling upon His disciples in all the world to preach the gospel. But in the two instances referred to above we have at least by way of suggestion, a sufficient ground to supply ourselves with a clear-cut definition.

In the first case we have the reaction of the multitude in Jerusalem on Pentecost after they had heard the many-tongued utterances, the first New Testament preaching of the disciples of Christ after His Ascension. The one great and outstandingly clear impression gained by the hearers there, hearers who were mightily gripped by the preaching, who were filled with astonishment and dismay following the Pentecostal demonstration | the impression gained by them is expressed in the words: "We do hear them speak the astounding, the magnificent deeds of God." It is especially striking that they use the simple word, "speak," *lalein*, finding the essence of the sermons not in their oratory nor in the magnificence of language, but in the content, the subject-matter itself, which so predominated and stood forth that it crowded aside everything else. The peculiarities of both language and speakers were covered up and made to be forgotten by the amazing deeds of God which had been spoken.

Now it is, of course, evident that this is not intended as a clear-cut and binding definition of that preaching which the Lord had commanded. It is indeed a striking peculiarity of the New Testament dispensation that it does not bind and fetter with laws and rules and ordinances the people of God, but much rather stands by the old prophetic word of Jeremiah: "They shall all know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest, and no one shall say to his brother: Know the Lord." In this case we have first of all and simply the conception the disciples had of the preaching expected of them. The text permits only the conclusion that this is what was done on the first New Testament preaching day, the first obedience over against the command of Christ to preach: They preached, they spoke of the amazing works of God. Or better still: Their first preaching left with their hearers this one certain and clear remembrance, that they had heard, to the exclusion of everything else, the wonderful works of God proclaimed.

Peter's sermon afterwards, in response to the slur of the scribes, was no doubt of a somewhat different nature than the first sermons, because it was an answer and an explanation. Yet a close study of the same reveals the remarkable fact that here also the hearers heard essentially the same: a speaking of the amazing works of God. He speaks of the astounding faithfulness of God, who makes good His word, in that he declares the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This was also his answer to the slanderers who had spoken of the preachers' drunkenness. But the outstanding thing is the claim that this great prophesy was here fulfilled. But then he leaves this topic entirely and continues with the works of God. He swiftly sets forth the life-story of Jesus in a few bold strokes, so that there may be no doubt in the hearers' minds whom he might mean, only to climax the story with the rejoicing and amazing declaration: Him has God raised from the dead. Once more he refers back to the Old Testament, proclaiming the fulfillment of the Psalmist's prophecy of the resurrection. With proud confidence he portrays this Jesus sitting upon the throne of the high God, also in fulfillment of the written word, this Jesus who rules the world and has poured forth the Spirit, as you see and hear.

This is a remarkable example of establishing a somewhat chance word spoken by the congregation on that first Pentecost Day. Even Peter's answer to the calumny of the stubborn scribes is adjusted to the definition of preaching: He speaks the wonderful works of God. How natural would it not have been for Peter to lash out at the evil tongues and brand the scribes as murderers of Christ, calling down upon them the vengeance of the eternal God. What a just opportunity was it not to call upon them to repent, to show forth the evil of their hearts, to threaten and to condemn. As Peter was human and impetuous we can well imagine how the words would have come forth in torrents of denunciation. But it seems he could not; he could but speak as the Spirit gave him utterance. True, he does mention the fact that they had crucified and slain Jesus, whom he proclaims. But it is so evidently not the intention to make this deed stand out. He does not for a moment let the evil murder stand out enough to make it seem a work worthy of emphasizing, lest it cast a shadow on the amazing glory of the Lord. So even here he claims that the death of Jesus was caused only through the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, thus setting aside any possible thought that the evil deeds of men could play an important part in the course of God's glorious works. That he mentions their act at all is clearly for the purpose of sure identification of the glorious Lord whom he serves, so that even these evil men might surely know the source of their salvation.

It would thus seem quite safe to accept the reaction of the hearers on Pentecost as a true definition of the meaning of the word Preach the gospel: it consists in the amazed proclaiming of the glorious works of God.

In fine corroboration of this we have the words of Peter in his first letter to the Christians in Asia, even though it alone does not so definitely relate to the actual preaching of the gospel. "Ye should show forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His astounding light." One could very well argue that this "show forth" is and must needs be a far wider term than the *lalein* referred to in the other text. Yet while this is true, no one would be ready to deny that the preaching of the gospel is at least included in this "showing forth." And then we find how Peter through the Spirit is now saying the same thing the hearers on Pentecost had said. The contents of the preaching of the gospel are again the acts of God, which are here called by one who had been preaching many years "the excellencies of God," the great things of God, the praises of God, as the King James Version translates. No matter which of the three translations one chooses, it is always the same: His excellencies become apparent and alive in His deeds, His glorious works; His great things are the works He has done for the salvation of man, His praises are rendered in the telling of the great things the Lord has done for us.

If anything, Peter is here even more definite and more restrictive in describing the work of preaching. We can at least immediately notice what was for him the outstanding work of God. Into his readers' hearts he reads the main theme of the proclamations with the words: "who called you out of darkness into His glorious light." That makes it so definitely clear how the preaching of the gospel stays on such a definite, unswerving course. Ah, an eternity of preaching could never exhaust the wonders, the depth and the height, the immeasurable greatness of that love that called us out of darkness into light. If we could speak with the tongues of men and angels, how should we find utterance to completely fathom and express in poor human tongue the splendor and effulgence of that light which shines into the uttermost recesses of the eternal heavens? In a life-time of preaching, who would dare to claim to have declared the full glory of the Lord in this alone, that He has made us the sons of God? Small wonder that Peter finds it the only purpose of the existence of the peculiar people, that they show forth the excellencies of Him who in divine love called them to light and life.

So the more we speak about it, the more does it become a self-evident definition and certain description of the execution of that one great New Testament commission, *Preach the gospel*: the amazed proclaiming of the astounding works of God. It is no more astounding that the Master couched this command, which was to accomplish the only great thing for which the world exists, the only thing which shall remain when the last fire shall destroy the universe utterly, into such simple words without adding lengthy instructions for its carrying-out. Nothing can be added in human words to the statement: Preach the gospel. As soon as this word *gospel* resounds, it pushes aside and crowds out all other things. Its greatness and its eminence is so beyond all human comprehension, that it even dims the command, "preach," to such an extent that it only stands there as a vehicle, entirely filled and covered to overflowing with the glory of the Lord, His redeeming glory, which fills heaven and earth. For the humble preacher of the Lord, the word can never sound: *PREACH the gospel*, but much rather always and ever: *Preach the GOSPEL*, this incomparable recital of a love past understanding, a

mercy never-ending, a loving-kindness beyond measure, a saving strength that rends mountains, a grace stronger than the pains of death.

Thesis II

*Though it involves the sinfulness of man,
it is in no wise conditioned by the same.*

It lies in the very astounding nature of the gospel of Christ, that it is not and cannot be conditioned in any manner whatever, and this is true to such an extent, that its very nature and true greatness is destroyed as soon as it is in any way restricted or hedged in. This is always true and is especially true regarding the preaching of the same. We need only keep before our eyes the fact that this gospel is the proclamation of acts of God, acts founded in His love, actuated by His saving grace, acts fully accomplished in and by God Himself, regardless of anything excepting that which lies in God Himself. "I, even I, blot out thy transgressions for mine own sake and remember not thy sins." What man could not do, God has done; it is finished, it is forever accomplished and cannot be changed or restricted or conditioned by any thing.

It is equally almost an axiom that the Evil Foe will attempt just this, that he might bring about a restriction of the gospel and cause man with his accursed reason to spoil the astounding new thing that has come into the world. By this temptation he has helped with all his treacherous knavery to bring about the endless breaking up and heretical separations within the church visible throughout history. Indeed, it has never failed that the conditioning of the gospel has wrought all the havoc which has ever hindered and spoiled the activity, the unity, the strength of the church. This was true at the end of the Apostolic church, it repeated itself in the church of the Reformation, and it is again rearing its evil head to bring about the same collapse in the Lutheran Church of America.

Therefore with desperate earnestness must we strive to keep it before us that our task of preaching the gospel be and remain unrestricted and unconditioned by anything at all, though our reason tell us a thousand times that this is unreasonable, though it whisper that it will bring about looseness of living and the downfall of the Church.

So it must remain axiomatic within our hearts that though the gospel in its preaching involves the sinfulness of man, it is in no wise restricted by the same. Certainly it does involve the sinfulness of man, for what else is the great and wonderful work of God but that He has taken the burden of man's sin and guilt, placed it upon the Lamb without blemish and spot, and removed the burden from all men for all time and all eternity? Very much does it involve the sinfulness of the lost and damned world; it presupposes the same, it takes it for granted and as something that is historically and factually there since the fall of man. It is interwoven, this gospel, with four thousand years of patience and forbearance of the just and righteous God, who made it His business to establish beyond all shadow of doubt that man was sinful in such a measure that he could under no conditions even begin to free himself from the burden. Those four thousand years, from the fall to the birth of Christ, stand as a **loud testimony** before all men. It proclaims: *He has given men ever greater and higher gifts of wisdom and knowledge, of power and might, of wealth and dominion, that haply they might seek Him and find Him. He took out from among them a people, the Jews, for only this one time in history and for two thousand years declared them His very own people, hedging them in by the school-master, the law, trying to separate them from all people in an isolated land, and giving them the gospel of promise, that haply this one people might as an entire nation remain with Him and be true to Him. And finally it proclaims the bitter truth at the end: They have all become unprofitable, the Jews and the Gentiles, a world utterly bankrupt, vile and lost, helpless sinners all.*

Indeed, the preaching of the gospel involves the sinfulness of man, is predicated upon it. The very awe-inspiring greatness of the wonderful works of God involves the fact that where gift and blessing, promise and help, of the omnipotent Lord did fail, His all-encompassing love and eternal mercy reached into the turmoil, lifted the four-thousand-year burden of failure and did make it come to pass, that all the mountainous load of guilt was removed in one mighty act and canceled out forever. He was made sin for us, the Lord placed on Him the iniquity of us all.

But it is finished now, it has indeed been accomplished, and in the proclamation of this gospel there must and dare not be a shadow of a doubt ever cast, that this could ever be untrue for any man, for any group of men, for any nation or kingdom. This gospel is not conditioned by any of the present sins of me and never can they stand in the path of the proclamation of the fulsome grace of God. Whether this preaching be done to a congregation of Christians, who have for years heard the gospel, or whether it be preached to a multitude of unbelieving heathen, for neither group can sin be set as a barrier to be crossed, before the fullness of the gospel can reach them. The very thought that the preaching for one group must be different from the preaching to another already sets condition and bounds to the preaching of the wonderful works of God. The preacher then forgets that he is but the bearer of good news to men—forgets that the news is not made up by him or in any way made fit for consumption by his presentation of it, but that the good news is already fact, accomplished of God and can but be proclaimed.

All too familiar has become in our own church a curious manifestation of this restriction of the gospel and conditioning by the sin of man. Indeed at first blush it seems innocent enough and seems not to belong to the group of preacher sins that would belong under this heading. And yet, because of this seeming innocence it is of all the most dangerous for us. This type of preaching begins by acting as if the salvation had not yet been accomplished, still lies in the future, because it lies further along in his sermon. Having set up this curious mental attitude, the preacher then proceeds to hammer away at his audience, as if they all were wretchedly lost, trying like the heathen before the time of Christ to solve the problem, but all, all woefully failing. He leads the hearers into a frame of mind where they must feel that nothing has been done about this wretched state, indeed speaks to them as though they were unredeemed ones who are still under the curse.

When this has been thoroughly accomplished, then suddenly he turns and proceeds to affirm that all this is, of course, not true, because Jesus has come to redeem all men from their sins. But alas, unfortunately the damage has been done for him and for his hearers. In order to remain logical and consistent in his demonstration of the gospel as he sees it now, he can not very well entirely deny what he so determinedly had said before. He falls, alas far too often, into the actual conditioning of the gospel, by making declarations like this: “But if you are ready to give up your sinful life, then the forgiveness of sins is your portion,” and lo, he has made the gospel dependent on man, and plunged his devout hearers into the blackest despair, unless in mercy God has given them better knowledge than the preacher himself possesses.

It is simple enough to see how this ingenious snare of the devil so readily succeeds. To some extent it lies in this that we are so doctrinally inclined and also feel secure in having the true doctrine. But alas, the human mind is very proud and rejoices in its dialectical abilities, which then proceed to curse him. The very setting together of the so-oft-repeated words *Sin and Grace* have, through the pride of reason, become the stumbling block. For though the two have both their place, also in the preaching of the gospel, they never are on the same plane, as this juxtaposition seems to make them to be. And having doctrinally separated the two and then placed them on the same level, small wonder that the gospel is beclouded then and spoiled, conditioned by sin in man, and then alas, is nothing new at all, but still the old heathen religion of despair.

It is also so often created, this conditioning by sin, in that the preacher thinks of the short-comings of his flock. He bids them find in themselves a certain *degree* of willingness to serve before they dare to think themselves Christians, thus denying the very heart of the gospel, which claims for itself the honor, that God, the compassionate, works both justification and sanctification, and He alone. Neither my sins as a burden of guilt, nor my sinful, incomplete life, can ever set a boundary to the infinite grace of God. If that were not sure and true, all hope were lost.

Indeed that is despair, the darkest, blackest despair, if it should still depend upon my willingness to turn away from sin; darkest despair, if at any moment or any hour it should be true that the old hopelessness of man still rests upon me. Thank God this is not so. We turn again to our delightful task as the heralds of God, who are to proclaim His wonderful works, which He has performed and finished to the end for all the wretched sinners in the world. Against the vile background of the helpless state of man we paint in glowing words the truth that all the burden and all the guilt, all the condemnation has been removed for Jew and Gentile, for small and great, regardless of anything in man, in men, though their sins be as scarlet. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds, abounds in such a measure that the darkness of sin has been entirely dispelled by the brightness of His redeeming light.

(To be continued)

The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians

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PART III

Chapter II

After Paul, in the last part of chapter one, has pointed out that he was acknowledged by the congregations in Jerusalem and Judaea, he now proceeds in chapter two to show that he had been acknowledged also by the twelve apostles. As proof of their complete acceptance of his apostleship he details the division of the apostolic fields of labor. vv. 1-10.

Verse 1. Two questions of chronology must here be answered namely, (1) which journey to Jerusalem is here referred to? (2) when did Paul make this trip?

(1) From the book of Acts we learn that after his first journey to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 9 (Gal. 1:18) Paul made another trip to that city as recorded in 11:30. A third journey is reported in Acts 15 which tells of a meeting of the apostles. Then in Acts 18 we hear of a fourth journey. This was the journey from Corinth to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. Finally we have in Acts 20 the report of a fifth trip to Jerusalem for the purpose of bringing the collection which had been gathered in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor people in that city (Rom. 15:25ff.). The journey mentioned in our passage could not have been this last-mentioned trip, since it was at that time that Paul was imprisoned by Claudius Lysias and taken to Caesarea and from there to Rome. A few interpreters have referred it to the fourth journey, but this cannot be defended, for this trip was not undertaken for the purpose here recorded. The fourth journey was a trip to the festival which Paul wanted to observe in Jerusalem. If Paul was here referring to this trip, he would be passing over a more meaningful journey in favor of one with less importance. One could not judge that the question about circumcision would need to be considered in this fourth journey to Jerusalem. This question had been settled at the meeting of the apostles recorded in Acts 15. This leaves us with the second and third journeys to choose from. The second one is defended by Bleek, Ebrard, Meyer, Hilgenfeld et al. They especially find this reason in the word

"again" in 2:1, arguing that this is the journey taken after the one mentioned in 1:18. They maintain that Paul could not pass over any of his trips. In answer to this it must be said that the word "again" does not support this view. The particle simply says that something that took place before, happens again. It could indeed be referring to any of the later journeys to Jerusalem. Another word would have to be used if the reference were to designate the second journey. Neither can there be any support for their view from the argument that Paul would not pass over any of his journeys. The context shows that Paul is not here giving an account of his trips to Jerusalem, but refers to his journey as a proof to show that he had been **acknowledged** as an apostle. If this becomes clear to us then we understand that Paul did not have to speak of all his trips to Jerusalem nor was there a need to set down a chronological sequence of his journeys. There is nothing that requires us to identify this trip with the one recorded in Acts 11. Such an identification is impossible. The chronology argues against it. Paul made the second journey in the year 44. However one wants to take the *επειτα*, "then," which stands at the beginning of chapter 2, it is clear that the reference to 14 years later does away with the contention that we are here speaking of the year 44. This required an answer. Therefore there have been those who substitute *τεσσαρων* for *δεκατεσσαρων*. But this is much too arbitrary.

Furthermore, in the trip recorded in Acts 11, Paul could not have spoken of the fruits of his mission work among the Gentiles as he does in vv. 7-9. We are reminded that he went out on his first great missionary journey in the year 45, therefore after the trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 11.

Finally, in chapter 2:2ff. it is recorded that the topic of circumcision was considered in Jerusalem this time. But if this is the journey of Acts 11, then we cannot understand why the question of circumcision should come up again as a new topic for the meeting of the apostles in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. In view of all this we must conclude that the journey of 2:1 is the apostle's second trip to Jerusalem. In favor of this view we have many points of resemblance: (a) Paul takes Barnabas with him on this second journey (cf. Acts 11:30). In his third journey he had others with him according to Acts 15:2. Among them was Titus (2:1). (b) The apostle's record of his preaching among the Gentiles (Acts 15:4,12) agrees with what he has written in this epistle (cf. 2:2,7). (c) According to both

accounts the circumcision was the chief topic at this meeting in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:5 and Gal. 2:3,4). The result of the apostolic discussions on the subject (Acts 15) agrees completely with this, "not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised" (v. 3).

There are no apparent contradictions which cannot be easily reconciled. That Titus is named in Galatians 2 but not in Acts 15 is no contradiction. Paul did take him along. He did accompany him in the same manner as Barnabas. But Acts reports that there were others with Paul besides Barnabas (cf. Acts 15:2) and among these Titus was included. The most seemingly apparent contradiction is the record in Acts which says that Paul went up in fulfillment of a resolution of the congregation in Antioch, while Galatians says that it was in accordance with a revelation. But this difference is not a contradiction. It is easy to understand that Paul had no desire to submit to the weakness of the Christians in Antioch in undertaking this journey. With his sharp intuition he could quickly understand what his opponents would make of this. It could look as though by this step he was giving the impression that he was undecided in this matter and that he bowed to the decision of the twelve as the highest authority over him. It seems that the opponents were interpreting the journey in this way. They have indicated that if Paul were a true apostle he would not need to refer a doctrinal matter to the twelve as a forum which would make a decision in the matter. If he were an apostle he should be able to make a decision on his own. Here then God had to break in by revelation to solve the difficulty. The explanation is simply this: in the book of Acts we are told of the external motive for the journey, namely the controversy in Antioch on the necessity of circumcision, but in this epistle Paul himself lays out the inner prompting motive, God's charge given by revelation. Acts and this epistle have different approaches. Luke writes as a historian. As such he restricts himself to the objective facts and from these he takes the parts which are of importance to his plan. Paul writes not as an objective writer of history, but with a subjective apologetic goal. Paul thus serves to supplement the record of Acts. Now we can also understand why Paul reports this journey. At the same time that he has opportunity to prove that his apostolic standing has been acknowledged by the twelve, he can now also place his journey into its proper connection and refute the opponents' suspicions.

Some have pointed out that Paul does not report the apostolic decree which is so strongly referred to in Acts 15. But

this is no contradiction. Paul does not report this decree because it has no relevancy to the matter which confronted him: acknowledgment of his apostolic standing. Besides, it could be assumed that the decree was now well known.

(2) The next question that must be dealt with is: from what place did Paul set out for Jerusalem? In other words, to what does *επειτα*, "then," in v. 1 refer? V. Hofmann believes that the 14 years must be numbered from the first trip to Jerusalem. Thus also Starke, Wieseler, Zoeckler et al. Siefert maintains that they must be counted from the stay in Syria and Cilicia and that therefore *επειτα* in this verse must be referred to *επειτα* in 1:21, likewise to *επειτα* in 1:18, thus also Philippi. Other interpreters say that the chronological point of departure is the conversion. Bugge also accepts this view.

It is not easy to come to a definite conclusion here. There are arguments pro and con that can be cited. As an argument for his conversion as the point of departure it may be cited that Paul, from 1:11 and on, pursues this goal to prove that right from his conversion he was a full-fledged apostle just as the twelve. Then in several places he seems to consider the conversion as *terminus a quo* for his chronology, thus with *ευθεως* (1:16), *μετα τρια ετη* (1:18), and *παλιν* (2:1) referring back to the first trip to Jerusalem which is introduced by *επειτα*. It cannot be denied that *επειτα* in 2:1 can be referred to the conversion. Meyer correctly calls attention to the fact that we have *δια* and not *μετα*, as in 1:18. But this is not a disproof. *μετα* with the accusative of time says that something happens after the designated time has expired; *δια* with the genitive of time, that something happens after the designated time has been passed. Thus in the classics, also often in LXX and the NT (cf. Winer Andoverudg., p. 380).

As support for the view that the stay in Syria and Cilicia is set up as *terminus a quo*, it can be declared that it was now not so important for Paul to set the time of his conversion as the point of departure as it was in 1:18, which was so closely connected with his call. . . . The only value of finding an answer to this question is the setting of the time of the apostles' meeting. Therefore it cannot be said that it is of much importance since it doesn't matter whether the date of the meeting is the year 50 or 52 or 53.

But why does Paul make mention of the 14 years? Indeed he thereby wants to draw attention to the fact that the record that now follows took place years ago in his ministry as an

apostle. From his account of the first journey he wants the readers to know that it was not undertaken for the purpose of receiving instruction from the apostles. Now he would emphasize that the apostles after so many years of service accepted him in the same acknowledged office as did the congregations in Judaea in earlier days. Therefore it is for emphasis that he places the numeral *δεκατεσσαρων* before the *ετων*, while the opposite is true in 1:18 according to many good manuscripts.

δια does not here refer to something that took place within the time period of 14 years. *δια* can indeed be used in this way indicating something which stretches out over a period of time or, more often, to indicate something that is repeated during that time period. Here, however, this would be absurd. *δια* here, as frequently, means: "after the expiration of 14 years." This prepositional phrase refers to the number of years of his apostolic service. The thought which he advances is that after so many years of apostolic service he went up to Jerusalem. *συμπαλαβων*, "I took Titus with me," as assistant. Titus is the same person who was later to set in order the things that were lacking in the congregations in Crete. According to v. 3 he was a Greek, born a Gentile and uncircumcised. He was converted to Christianity by Paul but continued to be uncircumcised. By taking him along on this journey, he showed the people in Jerusalem that circumcision was not necessary for a Christian in order to obtain life and salvation. Titus was to be a practical example to show that circumcision was no longer necessary.

Verse 2. *δε*, "but," indicates a progression in the record. Here he wishes to show what the true inner motive of the trip was. The situation was not such as the opponents claimed. He was not summoned by the apostles. It was not his own idea to make the trip. He went up by revelation which he does not here describe any further. It was simply a case of obeying God. He stood there in an immediate dependence upon God Himself.

"And communicated," *ανατιθεσθαι*, is the Latin *proponere*, *exponere*, *conferre cum aliquo*, "to present or deliver something to another." *αυτοις*, "to them," refers back to *Ιεροσολυμα*, namely, the inhabitants of the city (cf. Matt. 4:23; Acts 20:2). From the context it is clear that this does not refer to all the inhabitants but to the Christians there, namely, the congregation. Upon the apostle's arrival a congregational meeting was convened. This meeting naturally included the apostles who were present and the elders. "The gospel which I preach." The

present indicates that this was the gospel which he continued to preach among the Gentiles. His preaching was always the same, not one gospel at one time and another at another time or place. This was his gospel as he proclaimed it, salvation by grace alone through faith without the deeds of the law; this was the gospel *χωρὶς περιτομῆς*, as Chrysostom says. That he so plainly and openly presented it to the whole congregation shows how fully convinced he was that he had the truth on his side. He did not have anything to hide because of fear. He who is founded in the truth may lift up his head freely. This also shows his conviction that his doctrine was in full agreement with that of the mother congregation and that of the apostles. There is no hint that the congregation raised any objection and this because the congregation as such found no reason to disagree. True it is (Acts 15:5) that certain of the sect of the Pharisees rose up and said "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." But this opposition was raised only by a minority of the congregation. The congregation as such did not favor this opposition which presumably died out as the result of a little discussion.

"Privately to those who were of reputation," *κατ' ἰδίαν δε τοῖς δοκοῦσιν*. Here must be supplied, "I preached the gospel" . . . *κατ' ἰδίαν* is the Latin *seorsum* = *privatim* (cf. Mark 4:34; 9:28; Matt. 17:19). *οἱ δοκοῦντες* is, according to classical usage, *nobiles, aestumati*, "the esteemed." This does not refer to esteemed church members nor to the apostles or the elders, though it might seem so, but more evidently to the apostles who were in Jerusalem at that time, namely Peter, James, and John (cf. v. 9). The other apostles were very likely out on their travels. Paul therefore must have met with them privately after the regular meeting of the congregation. Luke has no report in Acts of such a private meeting since it did not involve matters of concern to the congregation in Antioch. It was of a personal nature. And it did not involve any change in the existing agenda. If the result had ended in a rejection of the apostleship of Paul, then this would have been a new move which Luke would have recorded; but, since this was not the case, this private meeting was not of the moment and did not fit into the plan of his book. To conclude from the silence on the part of Luke that he had no knowledge of it would be unjustified. *μη πως* as a particle of purpose equal to *ὡς να μη*, "in order that not," is the translation of current versions. But this will not do, for *εδραμον* is ind. aor. of *τρεχω* and in sentences in-

dicating purpose only, the indicative is of historical time, when the chief or relative clause expresses something unreal. Paul here does not only say that it was possible that he had worked in vain, but he assumed that it was so (cf. Siefert). The sentence must be taken as being a question and *μη πως* as a particle indicating a question = *nam forte* (cf. 1 Thess. 2:5). Thus Grimm: *μη πως* indicates that a negative response is expected, like *μη* in a direct question. In the very form of the question it is shown that Paul expects a negative answer. *τρεχω* - the present tense after *ανεθεμην* indicates continuing action in the present time period. It is indicated from direct discourse. We must translate: "Do I run or have I run in vain?" Paul likes to use the picture of a race. In a number of passages Paul compares the Christian life to a race (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24ff.; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 12:1). Here he uses the picture to describe his apostolic ministry (cf. Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7). *εις κενον*, the *εις* of result, "had my apostolic ministry missed its mark so that it had been in vain?" This would be the case if his gospel had been wrong. Together with Besser, V. Hofmann and others, it would be best to adopt the view that Paul presented his gospel at the meeting of the congregation and then in private discussed the question in a private meeting with the apostles. This did not take place because he was uncertain about his doctrine or because he was in doubt about what kind of response he would get, but in order to get a declaration which would stop the mouths of the opponents who were regularly seeking support for their doctrine from the apostle. Now Paul wanted a definite declaration from them.

Verse 3. Here Paul tells of the favorable outcome of his conference with the congregation and the apostles in Jerusalem. Of course he does not report all the resolutions that were adopted but he calls to mind a couple of indications to show how they regarded him.

αλλα refers to the question of whether or not his ministry had been in vain. "Not even my companion and assistant (cf. *συν εμοι*, 1:2) was compelled to be circumcised." There could be no more striking proof for the acceptance of his doctrine and work as apostle to the Gentiles than this. If (as the false teachers insisted) the Jerusalem congregation and apostles had required circumcision as necessary to salvation and if they had found that Paul preached a false gospel by proclaiming that a man is justified without the deeds of the law and without circumcision, then they would have been forced to require the cir-

cumcision of Titus. But now it is a fact that Titus returned from Jerusalem as uncircumcised as when he had come. *ηναγκασθη* with reference to a literal meaning can be taken in three ways: (1) he was not forced nor insistently commanded (cf. Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45; Luke 14:23) to be circumcised; (2) with a subjective interpretation: he refused to be circumcised (Thus Bengel, Meyer and others); (3) he was not compelled or placed in the position of submitting to circumcision by a possible solicitation (cf. Acts 28:19; 2 Cor. 12:11). In this connection the foremost exegetes take the passive form as being the correct one, for this verse is proof for the complete agreement between the preaching of Paul and the apostles. Only in this way can v. 3 be placed in the proper connection with v. 2 as an answer to the question introduced with *μη πως*.

Verse 4. Here the apostle calls to mind his experience with the false brethren which sets forth the attitude of the congregation and apostles in Jerusalem toward him. The apostle introduces this thought with the particle *δε*. The grammatical construction here is not easy or apparent. *δια τους παρεισακτους* does not have a verb. Many interpreters connect the verse with the preceding verse, separating it with a comma. Thus Tischendorf, thus already S. Schmidt, giving this translation: *id fiebat autem propter* ("But this happened because"), thus also our translation [ed. NKJV]. In this case *τουτο* or *εγενετο* are supplied. But then we would expect that verses 4 and 5 would follow verse 2 and not follow the complete sentence in verse 3. We have here an anacoluthon. This is not unusual for Paul and this is not strange when we consider the frame of mind that Paul was in when he wrote this. He was describing the conduct of the false brethren, slaves of the law. They were the ones who had caused the disturbance, the controversy in Antioch. They were also the ones who here in Jerusalem sought to stir up an opposition which would make the law and circumcision compulsory. Thus the apostle begins as though he would have written: *δια δε τους παρεισακτους ψευδαδελφους ουκ προς ωραν ειξαμεν*: "But with reference to the false brethren we did not yield even for an hour." But now Paul immediately gives a characterization of these false brethren by a parenthetical expression and continues with another construction. We might expect that he would continue: *δι' ους* or *δια τουτους ουν*, but instead we have *οις* in v. 5. These Judaizers here referred to insisted on circumcision. They very likely called themselves Christians. But though they called themselves Christians, they were Jews at

heart. They were falsely called brethren. He called them "false brethren." In reality they did not belong to the congregation, for the church is a communion of believers, but they were not believers. They didn't believe that they were justified and saved by faith alone, for faith corresponds with grace, but they insisted on circumcision as necessary, because they believed that they had to contribute to their own salvation. *παρεισακτους, clam seu subdole introductos* ("introduced secretly or by stealth"), from *παρεισαγω*. They had come in secretly, unlawfully, through the back door. They had not come in through Christ, by faith in Him who is the only way to salvation. Here we are not talking about entrance into the congregational gathering which was being held in Jerusalem, nor into the congregation in Antioch, but into the Christian brotherhood, into Christendom. With the article *τους* it is indicated that they were known. *οιτινες* is the Latin *quippe qui*, "who are such as." Here is given the reason for describing them as *παρεισακτοι ψευδαδελφοι*.

παρεισηλθον, the aorist of *παρεισερχομαι*, "to enter in secretly," stands with pluperfect meaning: they had come in by stealth, namely, into the Christian congregation. *κατασκοπησαι* is the infinitive of purpose. They had come by stealth to spy, to bring into bondage. They are compared to spies who sneak into a city with the purpose of later overthrowing it. And the city which they were spying out was *ελευθερια ημων*, "our liberty." This freedom is the freedom from the law, as a condition for salvation, "as exponent for conduct between God and us" (cf. 5:1). *εν Χριστω Ιησου*, not *per Christum*, but in the power of the union with Him who has purchased this freedom for us with His death, the freedom that is ours as Christians (cf. Rom. 10:4). This freedom from the bondage of the law was the city which these false brethren wished to invade. And what was the purpose of it all? To make us slaves under the law. *καταδουλωσουσιν* is the intensive of *δουλωσουσιν*, "to make us slaves completely." Tischendorf's reading with future indicative must be regarded as correct, for it is easier to accept that the rarer construction with the indicative after *ινα* is changed to conjunctive rather than the opposite. In later Greek, and among the church fathers, *ινα* appears with the indicative future, but not so in ancient Greek. The indicative future indicates that the spies continually expected to reach their goal: to overcome the city. There is also a reading with the middle: *καταδουλωσωνται*; but that would have the meaning that they wanted to make us their

slaves. *ημας* includes us Christians, not just Paul, Barnabas and Titus.

Verse 5. *προς ωραν* is a frequent designation for a very brief length of time similar to our "moment" (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8; Philem. 15). Sometimes the expression used is *προς καιρον ωρας*. *ειξαμεν* is the aorist of *εικω*; the Latin: *cedo*, "yield, give in." The dative *τη υποταγη* is similar to the ablative and is not much different than *εν υποταγη* (cf. Winer § 31,4). *υποταγη* means submission, yielding, obedience. The article designates the fixed submission which the false brethren, the false teachers, required of us. They demanded acknowledgment of their doctrine regarding the necessity of the deeds of the law and circumcision, and as an assurance of this they required the circumcision of Titus. But we did not yield, says the apostle; we, I, and Barnabas and Titus. We stood fast and that not from stubbornness or human obstinacy, "but that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." The genitive *του ευαγγελιου* is the genitive of apposition: the truth contained in the gospel. *διαμεινη* is the present conjunctive. It designates a steady adhering, *permanere*. *προς υμας*, "with you." That which was applicable to all congregations Paul here applies in an individual sense to the Galatians. The Galatians were for the most part Gentile Christians. These Galatian Gentile Christians were now in danger of losing the truth of the gospel, being deceived by the false teachers. The apostle and others with him stood fast in the controversy in order that they might remain in the truth and that the truth might remain with them. The gospel proclamation was at stake. The truth which was to be preserved was the teaching that salvation is by grace alone without the deeds of the law and thereby also the liberty in Christ. If concessions had been made regarding the doctrine of circumcision, the truth would have been falsified by human doctrine. Thus Paul seeks to bring the Galatians to reflection step by step. One must not with Wieseler draw the conclusion from the *υμας* that Paul had at that time already preached the gospel when he was in Jerusalem for the meeting with the apostles.

Verse 6. Here and in the following verses up to verse 10 we have the apostle's report of the private meeting held with "those who seemed to be something." The pillars in the church in Jerusalem had found no fault with his doctrine and position as an apostle. On the contrary, Cephas, James, and John, convinced of his apostolic fairness, made common cause with him and divided up the apostolic field with him.

Also here difficulties in grammatical construction are apparent. A. Calov says that the difficulty will most easily be solved if one take *απο* with the meaning: "with reference to, regarding." For this meaning of *απο* he finds support from Glassius. But the examples from Glassius do not prove the point. We cannot therefore accept Calov's easy way of slipping away from the difficulty. We have here another anacoluthon which had already been recognized by Luther. The apostle begins as though he would desire to write: *απο δε των δοκουντων εμοι ουδεν προσανετη*: "from those who seemed to be something no objection was raised against me"; but he wanted to add something to the *δοκουντων* to avoid a misunderstanding, as though by calling them "to be something" he implied that they had authority over him and that he had to bow to them. He simply wanted to indicate their position in Jerusalem. Having said this he gets back to the previous statement leaving that *απο*, etc. standing by itself. With *εμοι γαρ* a new beginning is made with a new construction in the active, not the passive, voice, introduced with the *γαρ* indicating proof. The new expression serves as a subordinate phrase giving the foundation for the latter contributing phrase. The apostle is now taken up with the new beginning (cf. Winer, Andover edition, p. 568). *απο*, "from their part," a meaning, which *απο* seldom has in ancient Greek (cf. Grimm). *οποιοι ποτε ησαν . . .* is parenthetical. The occasion for this and the intention for it is shown in the *απο των δοκουντων*, the indicated overestimation of the older apostles in certain circles at the expense of Paul's dignity as an apostle. Paul knew very well that he had a low standing in the eyes of the opponents, but now he wants them to know the attitude toward him on the part of those who had some standing. Bengel says: *esse aliqui apud eos, qui Paulum non ita aestimabant* ("to be someone among those who did not thus esteem Paul"). *οποιος* is the Latin *qualis*, "how much," *ποτε* has been taken by many to designate a statement of time, *olim*, "formerly," and so to refer to their pre-Christian time either as sinners (thus Augustine), or as lay people and fishermen, or to the time when Jesus was with them in the days of His flesh. But *ποτε* after a *οποιος* or after a direct or indirect word of interrogation is the intensive *cumque*. *οποιος ποτε* is the Latin *qualiscumque*, ("any whatever"). *ησαν*, "were,"—Siefert and Philippi take this as referring back to Paul's presence in Jerusalem, but Wieseler and others believe it refers to the earthly sojourn of Jesus. At that time Paul had no standing, for he was

a blind Pharisee. And the Judaizers preferred the twelve just because they had personal association with Jesus when He sojourned on this earth (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1) and were called by Him in the days of his flesh. But Paul suffered no disadvantage even though he received his apostleship later. His call was as immediate as theirs. The spiritual reality and essence was the same. He therefore rejects the opponents' assertion that the authenticity of the call of the twelve was greater than his. This, he does by saying: *ουδεν μοι διαφερει, nihil mea refert, id nihil curo equidem*, "this does not concern me, it makes no difference to me, it has no significance for me." Here he also clearly shows that he sought acknowledgment from the apostles not for his own sake, but for the benefit of the readers. *προσωπον λαμβανειν* is the Hebrew (אָנַחַן שׂוֹמֵן). It is used in the O.T. both in a good and evil sense, either to be gracious and to hear prayer as in Gen. 19:21, or to let one's personal advantage be the determining factor in one's behavior, acting in a partial manner as in Lev. 19:15; Deut. 10:17. In the NT the Greek form of expression is used only in the bad sense as, for instance, *προσωποληψια* (cf. also *προσωποληπτης, προσωποληπτειν*). In Jude 16 we have *θαυμαζειν προσωπα*. This is essentially no different than *βλεπειν εις προσωπον ανθρωπων*, "God shows favoritism to no man, nor do I" (cf. Rom. 2:11). *εμοι γαρ . . .* gives the basis for this. Meyer is correct in saying: "It is my experience that God does not show favoritism." The fact that the apostles made no negative remarks in my case shows that God is impartial. If God had been partial, He would have seen to it that the apostles would not have accepted me as equal with them. *ουδεν προσανεθεντο*: they did not communicate with me (cf. 1:16); they made no remarks regarding me and my doctrine as shown by the whole context.

Verse 7. "But on the contrary." Far from taking any negative move against me, they rather gave palpable proof of their approval. *ιδουτες*, "when they saw," and *γινουτες*, "when they perceived" (v.9), indicate motivating proofs of their attitude towards Paul. *ιδουτες* points to the first spontaneous impression which they got from what Paul could tell them concerning his apostolic activity and its fruit among the Gentiles. *γινουτες* points to the acknowledgment they had made as a result of closer deliberation which served to strengthen the impression previously received. There were three things which they saw and perceived, namely, (1) that the gospel which Paul preached was the same gospel which the twelve proclaimed; (2) that this

gospel had been entrusted to Paul as it had been to Peter and the other apostles, that he was therefore their co-worker on equal level with them; (3) that the same Lord who had committed Israel to Peter's care had sent Paul to the Gentiles (cf. Besser). *πεπιστευμαι* is the perfect tense indicating continuity, *con-creditum mihi habeo* ("I have entrusted to me"). *πεπιστευμαι το ευαγγελιον* has the same meaning as *πεπιστευμαι εμοι το ευαγγελιον*. With reference to the mode of expression cf. Winer, Andover Edition, p. 229 and 260; and with reference to the time, p. 271. It was entrusted to him by God. *ακροβυστια* and *περιτομη* are the abstract expressions for the concrete uncircumcised and circumcised, *ακροβυστοι* and *περιτετημενοι*, often thus used by Paul (cf. Rom. 2:26; 3:30; 4:9; Eph. 2:11; Col. 3:11). The genitives *ακροβυστιας* and *περιτομης* are possessive genitives; those with a foreskin or uncircumcised and the circumcised possess the gospel; that is, the gospel which should be proclaimed to them. *καθως*, "likewise," indicates equality. Paul was not a disciple of the apostles, as the false teachers set forth. Peter is here named as representative for the twelve, as *primus inter pares*, the first among equals. Even he did not lord it over me, Paul says.

Verse 8. This is a parenthesis, providing proof for the chief thought of v. 7, in which he stated that the gospel had been entrusted to him. That God had worked effectively in Peter and Paul, in the latter as well as in the former, in the apostolic ministry shows that the office had been committed no less to the last-named man than to the first. The words that bear the emphasis in this verse are *ενεργησας* and *ενηργησεν*. *ενεργησω* is the transitive word meaning "work," "to effect" something (cf. Matt. 14:2; Mark 6:14; Eph. 2:2). The subject of *ενεργησας* is not Christ, but God; for even as the apostolate has its origin with Him (v. 7), so also the effective working. *Πετρω* is not through Peter nor in Peter, for the dative is not dependent on the *εν* in *ενεργησας*, for in such case it would have to be repeated; but the phrase must be translated for Peter. The dative is the dative of benefit. He who worked effectively for Peter and thus equipped him and prepared him for the ministry to the circumcised also prepared me and worked effectively for me in my ministry to the Gentiles. *της περιτομης* (abstract for the concrete) is the objective genitive. *εισ τα εθνη* is an abbreviated form for *εισ αποστολην των εθνων*. Philippi says: "*In εισ αποστολην ist mehr der Begriff der Ausruestung zur erfolgreichen Virksamkeit, in εισ τα εθνη mehr letzere selbst*

hervor gehoben" ("In *εισ αποστολην* there is more of the concept of equipping one for successful works, in *εισ τα εθνη* the emphasis is more on the last themselves [the heathen]."). History shows that what is said of Peter and Paul in connection with Jews and Gentiles is not to be understood in an exclusive sense.

Verse 9. *και γινοντες* places this verse alongside the *ιδοντες* in verse 7. This *γινοντες* is not just a matter of knowing, but of acknowledging after a period of investigation and careful thought. *χαρις*, "grace," here refers both to the apostolic calling and the equipping for the high office, as well as to the rich fruit as a result of the ministry (cf. *πεπιστευμαι*, v. 7; *ενεργησας*, v. 8; and the fruit which they saw and perceived). James is the same person named in 1:19 and here in verse 12, namely, James the Younger, the Lord's brother, not James the Elder as Augustine claimed; for he was already dead at this time (cf. Acts 12:2). He is named first because he was head of the congregation at Jerusalem at this time. Besides, he was especially honored by his contemporaries, even by the non-Christians, because of his strict, righteous life; he was called "James the righteous." However, in a number of latinized manuscripts Peter is named first. The more emphasis given to the primacy of Peter in the Catholic Church the more noticeable it is that James has here been given first place. So here we see a change of position. Cephas is the Chaldaean (כֶּפֶז), the Hebrew (כֶּפֶז), the Greek *πετρος*, rock man. John was the disciple whom the Lord loved. These three are presented as representatives of the twelve; the twelve dealt in and through them. These three are called *στυλοι*, "pillars." Earlier all the apostles were called "those who seemed to be something," now the three are called *στυλοι*, "pillars." We have here a metaphor common to all languages. *στυλος* is the Hebrew (טֵמֶלֶךְ), the Latin *columna*, a column. It pictures their high standing in the congregation. The real "pillar" or column of the church is, of course, Jesus Christ or the truth concerning Him (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). These pillars now gave Paul and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship." Both *δεξιας* and *κοινωνια* lack the article since the quality is to be emphasized. Besides, *κοινωνια* is parted from *δεξιας*, since the following is determined by it, being grounded on the *κοινωνια*. The genitive *κοινωνιας* is genitive of relationship and designates what the right hand means. The giving of the right hand was a symbol of the pact. The pillars did not lay their hands on them, did not ordain them (which the Jews in a ways would have tolerated), but gave them their right hand as a token of

apostle conference, this we know from Acts 11:29ff.; that he did the same after the writing of this epistle, of this we also read (see Acts 21:17ff.; 24:17; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 15:27). He must also have made a collection in the intervening time. *auto touto* is not the German "*deswegen*" ("on account of"), but an emphatic explanation of the relative *o*: "the very thing." "The very thing which I also was eager to do," says the apostle. There is no way that I would neglect my people Israel, because I am apostle to the Gentiles. I have them very much upon my heart.

A third proof to show forth the equality of his apostleship with the twelve follows in 2:11-14. Paul has fearlessly dared to assert his apostleship even over against Peter on an occasion when he had taken a distorted, suspicious position toward the truth of the gospel. Here is progression of thought in the three proofs that Paul was an apostle, without Peter, with Peter, against Peter, as Philippi so strikingly remarks.

The incident recorded in this section took place after Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch subsequent to the meeting of the apostles in Jerusalem. According to Acts 15:35 Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for a while after their return.

In the ancient church there arose controversies on individual points in this period. It was thought that it was a shame that Peter erred and had to be corrected by a fellow apostle. After a beginning was made to consider Peter as Christ's representative on earth, an attempt was made to remove this blot on his honor. Clemens Alexandrinus insisted that this was not the apostle Peter, but another person with the same name, perhaps one of the 70 disciples. Jerome opposed Clemens by saying that it made no sense to identify this occurrence with a certain Peter. But Jerome sought to explain away this incident, but in another way. He says that the whole process of correction took place for the sake of appearance, just a *secundum speciem* ("according to the appearance"). It took place as an arrangement by common consent so that Paul would have an occasion to punish Peter. But it is easy to understand that this kind of a game would be unworthy of both men. Augustine attacked Jerome's explanation. He wrote two letters to him, in the second of which he vigorously demanded that he correct the error in attributing to Paul a *mendacium officium* ("an official lie"). Jerome backed off and changed his position in the matter. But we find approximately the same error coming from Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact.

But not only have pious Christian teachers found this record a cause for attack. Also enemies of Christendom have here taken the occasion to scoff at God's holy men (cf. Luther's exposition of the letter to the Galatians). Luther makes the observation that the matter does not concern Paul's worthiness but God's honor, His Word, and the chief article of the Christian faith, namely how a sinner is justified before God and saved.

Verse 11. "But when Peter had come" - Paul is not concerned with any more definite identification of the time when this took place. The important thing was the subject matter. "I withstood him to the face." *κατα προσωπον* is the Latin *coram*. Paul did not talk behind his back, but fearlessly withstood him in a face-to-face encounter. *αυτεστην* is second aorist of *ανθιστημι*, "I confront him." Why did Paul oppose Peter so sharply? The answer is: *οτι κατεγνωσμενος ην*. Our version has "because he was to be blamed." The vulgate has *quia reprehensibilis erat*. Bugge translates: "*fordi han var dadlet*" ("because he was to be blamed"). Thus a number of others. Luther has, "*denn es war Klage ueber ihn kommen*," for accusation had been raised against him. Grimm agrees with Luther and renders *καταγνωσκειν* with "accuse, condemn" (cf. 1 John 3:20ff.). The classical Greek often renders the word thus. The matter involved the following: The Gentile Christians in Antioch had been offended by Peter's conduct, which is more closely defined in the following. In their conversation about him they had made accusing remarks and had very likely called this to Paul's attention that he might upbraid him. His whole behavior was highly offensive.

Verse 12. As proof we now hear what wrongdoing Peter had involved himself in. "Certain men came from James." If we combine *απο* with *ελθειν* then the meaning would be that these men were sent by James on an errand which is not here revealed, or if we combine *τινας απο Ιακωβου* then these would be designated as Jacobites, special adherents of James (thus Philippi). But there is no mention of Jacobites elsewhere. Besides *απο* with *ερχεσθαι* has the meaning of coming from someone (cf. Mark 5:35; Matt. 26:47). Before these men came, Peter ate with Gentiles, that is to say, Gentile Christians (cf. v. 13,14). He had been at the table with them and the imperfect *συνησθειν* says that this happened repeatedly. He kept company with the uncircumcised as he did with the circumcised. He made no difference between them. On an earlier occasion he had fellowshiped Cornelius in his house (Acts 10) and had defended himself when he

was charged because of it (Acts 11:3ff.). He had been along with others at the meeting of the apostles in passing a resolution regarding the Gentile Christians (Acts 15). Yes, Peter was the first to take the floor to state that there should be no difference between Jews and Gentiles. His first activity in Antioch was in complete harmony with his earlier word and practice which could be considered as a seal upon the resolution passed by the apostles. But when these "certain men" came from Jerusalem, a change took place. He began to fear them and not only them, but all "who were of the circumcision," that is to say, the Palestinian Jewish Christians as a whole, members of which were those "certain men." They had not fully agreed with the resolution passed by the apostles at the aforementioned meeting. They had the idea that the resolution could be good enough for the Christians of Gentile descent for whom it was intended, but that the Jews should continue to observe the customs of the fathers also after becoming Christians. We will take note that these certain men from Jerusalem were not characterized as false brethren or as the false teachers in the Galatian congregations. But Peter was afraid of the opposition which he would meet in Antioch and when he came back to Jerusalem. It is possible that his fear was ungrounded; but it is there and this strong hero of faith was overcome by his fear of man which had overtaken him on a previous earlier occasion. "He withdrew and separated himself." The imperfects indicate a continuing situation, not just a slip, as some have taken it. Here we have an example showing how even one of the high apostles may commit sin, as Luther says. This can serve both as a warning against security and as a comfort for those who grieve over their weakness.

Verse 13. "And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him," i.e., the Jewish Christians. Peter also played the part of a hypocrite on this occasion. In what way? By withdrawing himself from the Gentile Christians he presented himself as one who believed that it was not right for a Jewish Christian to associate with the Gentile Christians, while at the same time he held to the conviction that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. In his heart, then, he did not think it wrong to associate with the Gentile Christians. He dissimulated a faith which he did not have and that is hypocrisy. But that hypocrisy had destructive results. The Jewish Christians in Antioch joined him in his hypocrisy. But not only they, but Barnabas was also dragged along. *wote* with the finite verb in-

dicates the facticity of the results (Winer, Andover Ed., p. 301). συναπηχθη, aor. 1 pass. of συναπαγω, *abripior*, he was carried away from his earlier conviction. τη υποκρισει is the instrumental dative, through or by their hypocrisy (Winer l. a., p. 216).

Verse 14. "But when I saw that they were not straightforward." *ορθοποδεν* (from *ορθοπους* - *ορθος* and *πους*) is the Latin *recto pede incedere*, "to walk straight ahead." With this one exception this word does not appear in Greek literature. Otherwise we have only *ορθοβατειν* and *ορθοπους*. The present in such dependent clauses with a striving after a direct form of expression is typically Greek (cf. Winer § 40, 2c). *προς* does not here refer to upholding or spreading the truth (thus Philippi and others); nor does it give the direction but, as Grimm, Wieseler, and Wims emphasize, it is equal to the Latin "according," *secundum* (cf. Winer l.s., p. 405). They were not walking straight forward according to the truth of the gospel, that is, the evangelical truth that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Their entire conduct should be a praising of this truth of the gospel which lays no stress on circumcision (cf. Rom. 10:12). "I said to Peter before them all," *εμπροσθεν παντων*. It is possible that Paul's confrontation with Peter took place when the congregation was gathered for a meeting. This public error had to be publicly dealt with. On a later occasion he advised Timothy to take the same action as he took on this occasion (1 Tim. 5:20). *ει συ*, "If you." Thereby Paul does not present the case as problematic and undecided, but the "if you" simply introduces the point at issue. It is the so-called argumentative *ει* equal to "as surely as." When this is the case, which cannot be denied, then we must accept it as factual (cf. Rom. 5:10, 15, 17; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9, 11 and other passages). If you being a born Jew are not ashamed to follow Gentile ways, eating and associating with them, declaring yourself free from Jewish binding laws according to which it was not permitted for a Jew to enter a Gentile house and to eat with them (Acts 11:3), how is it that you force (namely, by your separation from Gentile Christians) them to live as Jews to be bound to a law which they didn't have, a law from which you declared yourself free? What you do not require of yourself, a Jew, you demand of others, Gentiles at that (cf. 1 Cor. 7:17-20). This was a sad inconsistency, a great injustice on the part of Peter.

The adverbs *Ιουδαϊκως* and *εθνικως* must be understood as being restrictive, as required by the context: within the Christian fellowship *εθνικως ζην*, to live as Gentiles, is not to be understood in an absolute sense. What is here referred to is the outer form of life. *Ιουδαζειν* here refers to accepting the Jewish specific characteristics, provided it did not run counter to Christianity. *ζης* is the present tense and shows that it was not only here in Antioch that Peter lived *εθνικως*, according to Gentile ways, but under similar circumstances he follows the same custom, something which he here, from fear of men, separated himself from (cf. his conduct in the house of Cornelius). *πως*, "why," with what right, for what reason. *αναγκασεις*, "do you compel." It was here a forceful command *auctoritate et exemplo* ("by authority and example"), as Winer puts it. When the Gentile Christians saw that they were regarded by the Jewish Christians and even by Peter as unclean, they must have been so upset that they felt the need of being circumcised in order to maintain the fellowship with the Jewish Christians which they desired. It was a moral persuasion which Peter and others held over the Gentile Christians to be circumcised and live accordingly. But he who permitted himself to be thus forced, thereby also declared that faith in Christ was not enough for salvation. One must also accept the Jewish custom and thus add a plus to grace and faith. Therefore it was that also here the doctrine of justification was at risk.

Whether or not Paul said anything more to Peter at this time we do not know. But we can imagine that it did not take many words to prove to the basically sincere Peter that he had erred and that repentance was in order for the wrong step he had taken out of fear of what men would say. We must also understand that his error was in reference to practice and not to doctrine. He would remain true to the Christian confession. Therefore there was no need for an extensive didactic lecture.

Here we learn that we must put all other things aside when the preservation of the truth is at stake. Jesus has said that he who loves father and mother more than Him is not worthy of Him. Friends and relatives must be dear to us, but the truth is dearer. No friendship should close our eyes to danger of false doctrine. We also learn from this occurrence that brotherly admonition does not conflict with love. The greatest love that we can show towards our friends is to minister to their souls.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, by Edward C. Fredrich. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1992; available from the CLC Book House. 314 pages, cloth, \$16.99.**

The History of the Wisconsin Synod by J. P. Koehler (The Protestant Conference, 1970) takes the story to the 1930s. This new history by the Wisconsin Synod's veteran teacher of church history summarizes the years comprised in the earlier history and carries the story up to the present day.

The subheading, "A History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger," gives the outline of the three phases of Wisconsin Synod history. The first eight chapters give the history of the single synod. In those years, from 1850 to 1891, the Wisconsin Synod was a separate entity and was not organizationally tied to the Minnesota Synod or to the Michigan Synod. The most interesting feature of this early history is how, under God's grace, a unionistic church body became a confessional Lutheran church body.

In the years from 1892 to 1917 the Wisconsin Synod, the Minnesota Synod, the Michigan Synod, and the Nebraska Synod (after 1904) worked together in a federation. During this time each separate synod had its own president, and the federation had its president also. The federation enabled the member synods to work together in publication, missions, and worker training. The mission project of the federation was work among the Apaches in Arizona. Chapters nine and ten tell the story of the federation.

The third section begins with the merger of 1917 that united the member synods into one synod with six districts: three in Wisconsin, and the others in the three other states involved in the merger: Michigan, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Chapters 11 through 23 trace the history from 1917 to the present time.

The chapter headings indicate the material covered: for example, chapter 13 - "Focus on Education"; chapter 14 - "Protestant Controversy"; chapter 15 - "Missions Old and Missions New." Chapter 18 is entitled, "Break with Missouri," and summarizes the events from 1938, when Wisconsin's big sister synod, the Missouri Synod, first began to change its doctrinal position, until 1963, when the Wisconsin Synod finally withdrew from the Synodical Conference and thus broke its fellowship ties with the Missouri Synod.

Chapter 18 is of special interest to us because it was during this time that the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) came into being. Not much space is given to the controversy between the Wisconsin Synod and the CLC. The probable reason for this lack is found in the last paragraph of chapter 18: "While this is being written, prolonged discussions are going on with the CLC. All in the Wisconsin Synod fervently hope and pray that this separation may be ended by a reunion in doctrine and practice of former allies in the struggle to maintain the Synodical Conference on its old foundations." The hoped for reunion in doctrine and practice did not take place. See the September 1992 *Journal of Theology*, pp. 22-30, for more insight into why the separation continues even to the present day.

It is unfortunate that the author of this volume, Edward C. Fredrich, still presents the difference between the Wisconsin Synod and the CLC as mostly a difference in timing rather than as a difference in principle. For example, at the very beginning of chapter 18 he asks the question: "Was Wisconsin's action in 1961 and 1963 hasty or was it tardy? A viable church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, came into being on Wisconsin Synod turf basically because it opted for the latter answer." This sounds as though the only real issue the CLC has against the Wisconsin Synod is tardiness, and this, of course, is not the case.

In a later paragraph the controversy is dealt with more fully in these words: "What few discussions there were (between Wisconsin and the CLC) usually broke off over the issue of admonishing an erring church body. The CLC contended and still contends that this can only be done, once the error is marked, outside the framework of fellowship. Wisconsin always contended and still contends for the duty to admonish the brother that is erring as a weak brother while that is possible. The necessity to break when such admonition is no longer possible confronted the Wisconsin Synod in 1961. The members of the CLC judged that to be too late."

This paragraph gets closer to pinpointing the difference between Wisconsin and the CLC. The last sentence, however, again speaks of the difference as a matter of timing rather than as a matter of principle. We do indeed believe that it is wrong to continue to practice fellowship with an erring church body under the plea that there still is opportunity to admonish the erring body as a weak brother. We believe that “suspension of an established fellowship is to take place when it has been ascertained that a person or group is causing divisions and offenses through a false position in doctrine or practice,” on the basis of Romans 16:17-18. “Though the teaching Church is ever an admonishing Church, we reject the opinion that separation from errorists is dependent upon the course of admonition” (*Concerning Church Fellowship*, CLC document of 1961, pp. 41-42). We believe it is wrong to call an erring church body a weak brother. Therefore it was wrong to call the Missouri Synod a weak brother in the years from 1955 to 1961. Thus the CLC difference with the Wisconsin Synod is not that the Wisconsin Synod did the right thing (breaking with Missouri) at the wrong time, but that the Wisconsin Synod did the right thing (breaking with Missouri) for the wrong reason. (See J. Lau, “There is Still a Difference,” a *Journal of Theology* reprint, for a detailed presentation.)

The later chapters of the book show how the break with the Missouri Synod actually led to a rapid expansion in home missions and overseas missions. Other concerns dealt with in these last chapters include education, administration, and the future. Present concerns that get some space include the new hymnal of 1993, the role of women in the church, evangelism, and spiritual renewal.

Since the author of this history is a student and teacher of church history, it is somewhat surprising that he is so optimistic concerning the future of the Wisconsin Synod. Of course, we do not disagree when he points out the blessings showered by our God on the Wisconsin Synod in the past. But will the future be like the past? On the last page of his history he says: “On the larger Lutheran scene, it seems, the years ahead will not bring all that much change for the Wisconsin Synod. The Synod will remain a small minority of the Lutherans in the land. Its theological position of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions will keep it in that minority position.”

Someone might have said similar things about the Missouri Synod in 1932. But think how quickly the departures from Scripture occurred when once the first doctrinal deviation took place. Think also how quickly the congregations of the American Lutheran Church deteriorated from their conservative position as taught by such leaders as R. C. H. Lenski to their present condition as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), arguably the most unChristian synod in history bearing the Lutheran name.

Don’t say this can’t happen to the Wisconsin Synod or to the CLC, for that matter. Of course it can, because none of us is orthodox or confessional or Scriptural by nature. Our observations of the Wisconsin Synod from the outside indicate that a change in attitude has already begun to take place. There is a tendency now to want to be noticed by the world and to make an impression on the world rather than to be humbly obedient to Scripture. This tendency is in the CLC as well, but if and when it takes hold, we can say good-bye to confessional Lutheranism as we have known it in the past. May God graciously prevent it!

- David Lau

***Michigan Memories | Things Our Fathers Have Told Us*, produced by the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1985, in observance of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Michigan Synod. Milwaukee: Northwestern; available from the CLC Book House. 319 pages, paper.**

This is a good book to read together with *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* by E. C. Fredrich. The Michigan Synod has a very interesting history of its own both before and after its association with the Wisconsin Synod.

More than half of the 319-page paperback is devoted to the letters of the Michigan missionary Friedrich Schmid, translated from German to English by Emerson Hutzler. Thirty-eight letters in all are printed in this collection, all of them addressed to the Basel Mission Society, which had trained and sent Friedrich Schmid as a missionary to Michigan. The first letter is dated June 7, 1833, and the last February 5, 1879.

Through these letters we get a good understanding of the conditions of the Lutheran church in this country in those years. One impression made on me by these letters was the difficulty in finding good, confessionally sound, faithful pastors. Many of the colleagues with whom Pastor Schmid worked proved to be bitter disappointments. Another disappointment for Pastor Schmid was the lack of enthusiasm by his fellow-Germans for mission work among the American Indians. But we can learn also from these letters that Pastor Schmid himself was not a confessional Lutheran but a unionistic Lutheran, just like the founders of the Wisconsin Synod.

The second section of the book is a translation of a history of the Michigan Synod published in 1910. Here we read about the work of pioneer Pastors Friedrich Schmid and Christoph Eberhardt, the founding of the Michigan Synod in 1860, the membership of the Michigan Synod in the General Council from 1867 to 1888, the founding of Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw in 1887, and the problems connected with the attempt to work together with the Minnesota Synod and the Wisconsin Synod in a federation.

The third and fourth sections of the book were written by historian E. C. Fredrich, the author of *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. The third section discusses the split in the Michigan Synod that began in 1895 and was not healed until 1910. The fourth section is a history of Michigan Lutheran Seminary during the years of its long-time director, Otto Hoenecke, 1910-1950.

Edgar Hoenecke, the well-known Wisconsin Synod promoter of overseas missions, is the author of the fifth section entitled *The Michigan Spirit*, which he characterizes as a special zeal for mission work.

The sixth and last section was written by James P. Tiefel, who served for nine years as a pastor in Saginaw and is now a teacher at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. Of special interest to us in this chapter is the break from the Missouri Synod as it was carried out in Michigan. One of the difficulties in the break was caused by the fact that the Michigan congregations of the Missouri Synod had a tradition of much stricter confessionalism than the congregations of the Wisconsin Synod. Professor Tiefel repeats “the story of a Missouri pastor who announced to his Board of Elders in 1961 that the Wisconsin Synod had severed fellowship with Missouri because of Missouri’s false doctrine. To a man the Elders guffawed! For years these Elders had been excommunicating members who belonged to the lodge | and for years the local WELS congregation had been taking them immediately into membership!” Under such conditions one can understand why it was difficult for the Michigan congregations and pastors of the Wisconsin Synod to break fellowship with the Missouri Synod.

As far as our own church body is concerned, Professor Tiefel says only this: “These voices of patience (of Michigan District pastors not wanting to break with the Missouri Synod) . . . drove several district pastors who had very sensitive consciences to bolt from the synod in frustration and to join a reactionary group which eventually called itself The Church of the Lutheran Confession.” Those closer to the scene will have to determine whether this is an accurate way of describing the actions of men like Pastors Ralph Schaller and Otto J. Eckert and those who agreed with them.

I found it interesting and somewhat amusing that Professor Tiefel uses the same word “reactionary” to define the so-called “Michigan Spirit.” He says: “In this author’s opinion, the ‘Michigan Spirit’ has nothing to do with progressivism or conservatism at all. Its essence is rather reactionism.” Then, after more discussion of “reactionism,” he concludes: The “Michigan Spirit” “refuses to be satisfied with pat answers, searches for trends behind every action, yells loudly but means it lovingly, and reserves its right both to support and praise and to question and cajole.”

No doubt many people think of history as rather dull and unimportant. But surely understanding the past is helpful in understanding the present. “That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

- David Lau

***Power Religion | The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, ed. Michael Horton. Chicago: Moody, 1992.**

Michael Horton is acquiring a reputation as a critic of present-day trends in Protestantism. He is the founder and president of Christians United for Reformation (CURE). This group in the past few years has been publishing a periodical called *Modern Reformation*, which finds fault with much of what is going on in the Christian world today and calls us back to the Biblical theology of John Calvin and Martin Luther.

Michael Horton has also edited *The Agony of Deceit*, exposing the false doctrines of present-day “televangelists,” and is the author of *Mission Accomplished, Made in America*, and *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*.

In the two volumes we are considering on these pages Michael Horton is joined by such prominent theologians and church leaders as J. I. Packer, James M. Boice, Charles Colson, R. C. Sproul, and Missouri Synod Lutherans Rick Ritchie, Rod Rosenblatt, and Don Matzat, the author of *Christ Esteem* in response to the self-esteem movement.

Power Religion zeroes in on the varied Christian groups in our land that seem to be obsessed with the idea of power: power politics, power evangelism, power growth, power within, power preachers, and power switch. In fact these are the six sections of the book. Thus the subjects discussed are Christian activism, the charismatic movement, the church growth movement, the self-esteem movement, humanism, and the lack of interest in the true Christian gospel. Each section has a negative portion exposing the dangers of the movement in question and a positive portion indicating “a better way.”

A book like this helps a person keep up with fast-changing developments in the religious world. I was particularly drawn to the third chapter, which discusses the so-called Vineyard Movement under the leadership of John Wimber. This movement is also known as the Third Wave. The emphasis is on miraculous signs and wonders, deliverance from demons, and immediate revelations from God through alleged present-day prophets, such as Paul Cain. It seems obvious that a movement like this has no use for the means of grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ in Word and Sacraments, which is God’s real power at work in the world. The Word works too slowly and too quietly for these people. They want dramatic confrontations, immediate results, visible manifestations of the Spirit, and clear evidence of the supernatural at work.

Power Religion says on p. 82: “Others have attended Vineyard conferences hoping to find clear references to the cross, at least in evangelistic services, but in the midst of all the displays of power such references did not occur. . . . Vineyard leaders and writers go to great lengths to make the point that non-Christians often are healed, slain in the Spirit, and converted without any knowledge of the gospel. Anecdotes abound in which unbelievers came to faith without any communication of the Person and work of Christ.” The Vineyard Movement is the charismatic movement carried to ridiculous extremes; in fact, carried to the point of being altogether non-Christian.

We need to remain with the sober conclusion of the *Brief Statement* of 1932: “There is no other way of winning souls for the Church and keeping them with it than the faithful and diligent use of the divinely ordained means of grace.” The Vineyard Movement’s emphasis on alleged miracles is condemned by our Lord Jesus Himself, who said: “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe” (John 4:48), and again: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

The other volume, *Christ the Lord*, leads us into a discussion of the present-day debate between Zane Hodges and John MacArthur, Jr. on the question of lordship salvation. As we read this book, we are amazed that theologians who claim to be evangelical Christians show little or no understanding of what the *evangelium* or gospel of Christ really is.

Neither Zane Hodges nor John MacArthur teaches justification by faith without the deeds of the law, as the Scripture teaches. Zane Hodges presents faith as a one-time act of intellectual assent to the gospel that seals a person’s salvation forever. The Bible predicates salvation on an act of faith, not on the continuity of faith” (quoted on p. 89). Hodges also makes the astounding claim that a person can be saved by that one-time act of faith in Jesus without ever becoming a disciple of Jesus. “The believer’s basic relationship to God is unaffected by the overthrow of one’s faith” (quoted on p. 91). Thus Hodges claims that discipleship is optional and not necessary for a believer. It is his opinion that we can call Jesus our Savior without regarding Him as our Lord. The book *Christ the Lord* is therefore correct in saying:

“Hodges’s radical separation of faith from any of its fruits is an unbiblical formulation. It is, in fact, a most deadly form of antinomianism” (p. 102).

But John MacArthur is not a pure teacher of the gospel either. In his desire to emphasize the lordship of Christ and refute the antinomianism of Hodges he says: “True faith is humble, submissive obedience. . . . Faith encompasses obedience. . . . Faith is not complete unless it is obedient” (quoted on p. 36). In this way law and gospel become confused, and the Christian is left with the notion that he is saved by his own obedience or by the fruits of faith rather than by Christ alone.

MacArthur also confuses justification and sanctification by his statement that justification means not only that “God declares us to be righteous, based on the satisfying work of Christ, but in Christ he makes us righteous” (quoted on p. 41).

Christ the Lord successfully refutes both Hodges and MacArthur by its references to the Bible and the confessions from the Reformation. But there is one thing that I was unable to find in the volume, and that is the teaching of universal justification. This teaching, of course, was never taught by John Calvin and the reformers who followed him. Nevertheless, it is the teaching of Scripture and Martin Luther and the Lutheran confessions, even though the terminology is not found there. By universal justification we mean that doctrine of Scripture confessed in the *Brief Statement* of 1932 in these words: “Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 4:25.”

Michael Horton and his associates do not seem to see any difference between John Calvin and Martin Luther on the points at issue. It is true that both emphasized the total depravity of man and salvation by grace alone. Thus both reformers are helpful in refuting the decision theology, the Arminianism, of our time. But when it comes to comforting troubled sinners, Calvin’s doctrine of a limited atonement, that is, that Christ redeemed only the elect, falls far short. What is needed to comfort troubled sinners and create faith in Christ in their hearts is the true gospel that God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ.

- David Lau