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## **The Relation of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers in Regard to Current Lutheran Debates**

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### **I. The Priesthood of All Believers in Christ**

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in Christ is presented fully by Christ's Apostle Peter in the second chapter of his first letter. "Coming to Him [Christ] as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2: 4-5; 9-10).

On the basis of these and other words of our Lord, Martin Luther clearly taught the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in Christ. For example, in his 1535 exposition of Psalm 110, Luther said: "In His own person Christ is indeed the only High Priest between God and us all. Nevertheless He has bestowed this name on us, too, so that we who believe in Him are also priests, just as we are called Christians after Him. . . . The Pope has usurped the term 'priest' for his anointed and tonsured hordes. By this means they have separated themselves from the ordinary Christians and have called themselves uniquely the 'clergy of God,' God's heritage and chosen people, who must help other Christians by their sacrifice and worship. . . . Every baptized Christian is, and ought to be, called a priest, just as much as St. Peter or St. Paul" (Luther's Works, Vol. 13, pp. 329-330).

Having the name of priest, Christians also are able to function as priests, as the Apostle Peter indicates. Luther says: "Each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from Him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God's Word and publicly to confess it" (Luther's Works, Vol. 13, p. 333).

The Theses "Concerning the Ministry of the Keys and the Public Ministry, " adopted by the Church of the Lutheran Confession as its confession, do not use the expression "priesthood of all believers" but maintain the identical teaching by saying: "The ministry of the keys, which is the ministry of the Word, has been committed to the holy Christian Church-therefore to each Christian man, woman and child. Christians are to be personally active in this ministry in every possible way which is not in violation of God' s will and ordinance" (Thesis I). The Scripture passages presented as evidence are Mark 16: 15; Matt. 28: 18-20; John 20: 21-23; 1 Cor. 3: 21-23; 1 Pet. 2: 9.

The commentary that follows in Concerning Church and Ministry (pp. 25-28) explains the priesthood of all believers in Christ in these well-chosen words: "Scripture teaches that those who receive the Gospel as a personal, inward possession by faith do in and through that very experience become preachers of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit, who always accompanies the Gospel, not only creates faith by means thereof but in that very act also makes witnesses of those whom He enlightens and sanctifies. Thus Peter expressly assures believers that they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a peculiar people in order that they may announce abroad the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2: 9). God so fashions His Christians that from within their new hearts they proclaim the Gospel; this is an inherent function of the new life within them. "

Concerning Church and Ministry goes on to mention some of the specific activities carried on by the priest-witnesses of the Lord: growing in understanding of the Word; teaching and admonishing one another; judging doctrine; avoiding false teachers; singing hymns; confessing Christ in the church services; making liturgical responses. "In principle there is no duty of the ministry of the keys from which any person is personally excluded" (pp. 27-28).

## **II. The Public Ministry and Its Relation to the Priesthood of All Believers in Christ**

Before we go any further, we should no doubt clarify what we mean by the word "public. " Does it mean that the priests of Christ, that is, the Christians, must restrict their witnessing to their own homes and families, whereas the public ministers are the only ones who can speak out in public, that is, in the world? Not at all! Note this statement from Concerning Church and Ministry (p. 29): "The Gospel ministry is one and indivisible; and they who are charged with its duties, namely all Christians, perform them without regard to times, seasons or circumstances. "

The word public, therefore, as we use it in our discussions of this topic, does not mean public, out in the open or in the world, as opposed to private or hidden or behind the scenes. No, the word public as referring to the ministry means, as our confession makes clear, that ministry which is carried out by a Christian, not as an individual person, but as a person called by God to serve in behalf of other Christians. "Those who serve therein function, not only in their own right as disciples of Christ, but in behalf of, in the name of, and by request of, their fellow-Christians" (Concerning Church and Ministry, p. 29).

The New Testament clearly indicates a distinction between the Christian priesthood and this public ministry. For example, the Apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy and in his letter to Titus speaks of "the position of a bishop" or spiritual overseer, also called an "elder, " and then also of "deacons" (both men and women, in my opinion, although most translations opt for "wives" in 1 Tim. 3: 11 rather than "women"). It is clear that not all Christians are qualified to be such spiritual overseers or their assistants. Taking care of the church of God is a very special responsibility not assigned to every Christian, but rather to those Christians, whom God has gifted for this work, and who are called, or at least accepted by, the Christians among whom and for whom they do this spiritual work.

"God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? " (1 Cor. 12: 28-30).

"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4: 11-12).

The apostles themselves were a unique gift given by Christ to His Church, since Christ personally and directly called them to their work. The other spiritual overseers of public ministers in the early Church were called by the Lord indirectly, perhaps some appointed by the apostles and approved by the Christians; others, it seems, chosen by the Christians and approved by the apostles, as was definitely the case in the choosing of the seven helpers in Jerusalem (Acts 6: 1-6). Whatever the method that was used in their selection, we need to remember what the Apostle Paul said to the elders of the Ephesus congregation: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20: 28). Those called by Christians into the work of the public ministry have a divine call.

As strongly as Martin Luther emphasized the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in Christ, he nevertheless clearly pointed out the distinction between that priesthood and the public ministry. We return to his 1535 exposition of Psalm 110:

We must make a distinction between the office or service of bishops, pastors, and preachers, and the general status of being a Christian. . . . The priestly office is the common property of all Christians. However, we deal with a different matter when we speak of those who have an office in the Christian Church, such as minister (Kirchendiener), preacher, pastor, or curate. . . . The Scripture calls them "servants" or "bishops," that is, overseers; the apostles speak of them as presbyters, that is, elders. The best, most mature men, well-trying, learned, fit, and experienced, were chosen for this office. . . . Before anyone becomes a preacher or a bishop, he must first be a Christian, a born priest. No pope or any other man can make him a priest. But having been born a priest through Baptism, a man thereupon receives the office; and this is what makes a difference between him and other Christians. Out of the multitude of Christians some must be selected who shall lead the others by virtue of the special gifts and aptitude which God gives them for the office (Eph. 4: 11-12).

For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.

This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests. . . .

Every Christian has and practices (such) priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion. If everyone were to preach to his neighbor or if they did things for one another without orderly procedure, it would take a long time indeed to establish a congregation. Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed in behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians. But this is more than enough on this. (Luther's Works, Vol. 13, pp. 329-334)

In keeping then with the words of Scripture and in agreement with Luther's understanding, our Thesis II "Concerning the Ministry of the Keys and the Public Ministry" reads as follows: "It is God's will and ordinance that Christians provide for the public administration of the keys. This is achieved through the calling of qualified individuals who are thus placed in charge of the public administration of Word and

Sacrament and perform this task in behalf of their fellow-Christians (von Gemeinschafts wegen). Such service is referred to as the public ministry; and its duties are to be exercised only by those who are properly called to it by the Church. This public ministry is God-ordained and not a product of historical development. " Scripture passages listed are Acts 1: 23-26; Acts 6: 5-6; 1 Tim. 3: 1-5; 1 Thess. 5: 12-13; 1 Tim. 5: 17; Tit. 1: 5-9. Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession is also quoted: "Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. "

### **III. Historical Background of Current Lutheran Debates on the Public Ministry.**

Thesis III "Concerning the Ministry of the Keys and the Public Ministry" indicates the position of the Church of the Lutheran Confession with reference to the historical controversy between the adherents of the so-called "Old Missouri" position and the adherents of the "new" WELS position. Thesis III: "The office of the public ministry is not limited to any divinely fixed form as such, for example, the outward form of the 'Pfarramt' or pastoral office. In Christian liberty, as circumstances require and as the Lord supplies diversity of gifts, operations and ministries (1 Cor. 12: 4-6, 28) the Church may separate the various functions of the public ministry of the Word and apportion them to whatever number of qualified persons it may choose to call. It is essential that each call thus extended shall specify the area of responsibility and the type of duty thereby assigned, and that each laborer abide by the terms of his call. " The Scripture passages listed are Acts 6: 1-4 and Phil. 1: 1.

The commentary that follows in Concerning Church and Ministry lists the pastorate, Christian day school teachers, professors, elders, and deacons as examples of the public ministry in our time.

If we compare this Thesis III with the official position of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), we find no difference at all. Point D6 of the 1970 WELS Theses on the Ministry states: "There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry. The one public ministry of the Gospel may assume various forms, as circumstances demand. Acts 6: 1-6. The specific forms in which Christians establish the public ministry have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church. It is the Holy Spirit who through the gift of their common faith leads the believers to establish the adequate and wholesome forms which fit every circumstance, situation, and need. Various functions are mentioned in Scripture: 1 Tim. 4: 13; Eph. 4: 11; 1 Cor. 12: 28; Rom. 12: 6-8; 2 Tim. 2: 2; John 21: 15-17 (feeding); Acts 20: 28 (watching); 1 Tim. 3: 2; 4: 11; 6: 2 (teaching); 1 Tim. 3: 5; 5: 17 (ruling). In spite of the great diversity in the external form of the ministerial work, the ministry is essentially one. The various offices for the public preaching of the Gospel, not only those enumerated above, e. g. , in Eph. 4: 11 and 1 Cor. 12: 28, but also those developed in our day, are all gifts of the exalted Christ to His Church which the Church receives gratefully and with due regard for love and order employs under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the spiritual body of Christ; and all of them are comprehended under the general commission to preach the Gospel given to all believers. "

The Antithesis is then stated briefly: "We hold it to be untenable to say that the pastorate of the local congregation (Pfarramt) as a specific form of the public ministry is specifically instituted by the Lord in contrast to other forms of the public ministry. "

These confessional statements of the CLC and the WELS were carefully drawn up after many, many years of debate and controversy and Scripture study among Synodical Conference Lutherans. On January 25-26, 1988, Bryan Gerlach presented a paper to a WELS California Pastoral Conference in Belmont, California on "The Difference Between the WELS and LC-MS on the Doctrine of the Holy Ministry. " Included in his paper is a chronology of the church and ministry controversy. I am reprinting his chronology here as a brief reminder of all the history that led up to the WELS and CLC statements printed above.

#### **CHRONOLOGY WITH COMMENTARY**

1840 - Grabau' s romanizing Hirtenbrief

1841 - Altenburg disputation, clarifying issues after the Stephan incident.

- 1851 - Walther' s Theses
- mid 1880 - Synodical Conference pastors and teachers in the Manitowoc/Sheboygan area begin a "real exegetical and historical analysis of [ministry] questions . . . that was destined to have its repercussions. "
- 1892 - J. P. Koehler reports questioning of a Hoenecke paper which "attached the teacher' s call to the pastorate in the usual way . . . It becomes necessary, since the Word of God does not specifically mention the parochial school teacher, to incorporate this office in some way into the pastorate . . . This was questioned, even as at Manitowoc: Why detour thru the office of the pastor in order to establish the divine character of the teacher' s call . . . ? [The teacher also ' labors in word and doctrine' Acts 6: 2-4] why then should not Acts 20: 28: ' The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers over the flock' apply to teachers as well as to pastors . . . ? Prof. Hoenecke acknowledged the comment as novel and worthy of careful study. "
- 1899 - Cincinnati Case: initial discipline. Missouri suspends Trinity congregation for its judgment that a teacher had become self-excommunicated.
- 1904-9 - Cincinnati Case: appeal to Wisconsin Synod and debate.
- 1909 - Prof. Schaller (Wauwatosa, post-Hoenecke), on the basis of Acts 6, delivers an essay which describes all offices other than the pastor as "auxiliary, not ordained by God but branched off from the pastoral office . . . "
- 1909-18 - "The doctrine of the Church and Ministry was threshed out by the faculty over against the muddled and erroneous ideas that had been current for thirty years or more . . . "
- 1929 - August Pieper' s essay: "Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Synod and its Discipline. " Southeastern Wisconsin District; Minnesota District, Quartalschrift.
- 1932 - Thiensville Theses. "2. It is furthermore the will and ordinance of God, revealed in the Scriptures, that such local congregations have shepherds and teachers who on behalf of them, and in their midst administer the office of the Word. " These were never ratified by the respective synods but were ratified by Synodical Conference in 1952. The Floor Committee report to this 1952 convention commented in part: ". . . there had been a great deal of misunderstanding among members of the Synodical Conference concerning differences pertaining to the doctrine of Church and Ministry, where unity of doctrine actually existed. [But these theses] do not resolve all the difficulties that still exist . . . [A lack of agreement exists] when these basic concepts . . . are translated into the practical life of the Church . . . " In 1965 A. T. Kretzmann wrote ". . . the real position of both church bodies on Church and Ministry is found in the practical position which both churches have followed, and which is identical; however, I hold that the theoretical position taught in the Missouri Synod, which differs from the practical position in the same Synod, is one which cannot be supported from Scripture and should therefore be given up. " He also indicated that Professor Siegbert Becker, while teaching at River Forest, taught the Wisconsin position. Kretzmann later explains that if Missouri followed its theory, local congregations couldn' t have delegated church work to, e. g. , mission boards.
- 1932 - Brief Statement (old-Missouri, but no mention of auxiliary offices)
- 1948 - Interim Committee of Synodical Conference. "A Thorough Study of the Question of Church and Synod . . ." (old-Missouri)
- 1951 - Concordia Theological Monthly article by H. G. Brueggemann. "It is a mistake to identify the pastorate with the ministry or to speak of other church offices as auxiliary offices to the pastorate. To assume that the pastorate is the one divinely instituted office and that all other offices flow out of the pastorate is a misapprehension. The ministry of the Word is the one divinely instituted office, and the pastorate is a branch of that ministry, just as other church offices are a branch of the same ministry. " Mueller' s remarks above under Titus 1: 5 are the opposite view (response?) from the same year.
- 1952 - Synodical Conference convention ratifies the Thiensville Theses and calls them "soundly biblical; " but they "do not resolve all the difficulties that exist among us. "
- 1953 - "Report of a Committee on the Status of the Teacher, " LC-MS
- 42nd convention, Houston. "The teacher is not a layman, he is a clergyman. " And from that same convention: "Because the parochial school teacher performs a basic and very important part of the public ministry of the Word, he belongs to that class of elders who labor in Word and doctrine and

who are to be accounted worthy of ' double honor' (1 Tim. 5: 17). " Recall Koehler' s similement above.

- 1962 - An amendment to the constitution allows men other than parish pastors to be ordained. The LC-MS constitution had previously read: "A candidate for the ministry may be ordained only when he has received a legitimate call from and to a certain congregation . . ." The change expands ordination to include any candidate to whom "A call shall have been extended by a congregation or a proper board expressing preference for a particular candidate to be assigned to the function of pastor or other synodically approved office." Nehrenz comments: "The ' public ministry' was now expanded to include all those men who perform public-ministry functions for any group of Christians gathered together to further the work of the Gospel." That sounds like a pretty fair rendition of the WELS position!
- 1970 - WELS adopts "Theses on the Church and the Ministry." See appendix.
- 1970 - Lutheran Churches of the Reformation declare WELS position divisive of church fellowship.
- 1980 - ELS adopts position like Wisconsin' s
- 1981 - CTCR document: "The Ministry." This had been branded by some as an apology for the Wisconsin position, but it still makes a distinction between "The Office of the Public Ministry" and "Auxiliary Offices." The document is old-Missouri in a statement like this: "There is only one pastoral office, but the office which we formally refer to as ' the office of the public ministry' has multiple functions, some of which are best handled by another, e. g. , the parochial school teacher who is performing that function of the pastoral office." The document is closer to the Wisconsin position with this statement: "District presidents who are charged with the oversight of the overseers of the flock, or professors who are charged with the oversight of the men who are preparing to be the shepherds of the church . . . [or campus or military pastors] . . . can be properly said to be serving in the office of the public ministry of the church."

Under "Theses 3. The church establishes facilitating offices," we find this about elementary teachers: "A Christian teacher . . . is not merely a Christian who teaches but a servant of Christ and the church who, at the call of the church, is helping the called pastor to fulfill his mandate to teach the Gospel." At the recent Free Conference Professor Marquart, in response to a question about this statement, commented that it might be better to derive this teaching responsibility from parental rather than pastoral responsibility.

The document expresses a different understanding about vicars: "Vicars and interns are students . . . They are not in the office of the public ministry. They may be placed by the whole church for the sake of order. They are not ' called.' " Compare the first paragraph in The Shepherd under Christ under vicar: "The Lord has not defined or limited the form which the public ministry is to have . . . The Gospel creates its own form as circumstances and special needs require. Therefore, although Scripture does not use the term ' vicar,' the vicar' s office is a proper form of the New Testament ministry." Old-Missouri obviously is distressed by the CTCR document. Consider the following from Wilhelm Oesch, old-Missouri' s overseas spokesman: "The admiration for German scholarly theology is an important factor in the Missouri Synod CTCR' s surrender of the LutherWalther doctrine of the ministry and therewith also of their doctrine of the church, according to the CTCR report of September 1981." Does this explanation find any parallel in the WELS which has avoided added scholarly training?

- 1986 - "Concord" Document in Affirm

#### **IV. Current Lutheran Debates in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod**

The previous discussion on historical background has made it clear that there is at present no universally held position on church and ministry in the LC-MS. The CLC has its position, the WELS has its position, and the ELS seems to be in agreement with the WELS position. The so-called "Old Missouri" position seems to be held firmly by the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (LCR), the Concordia Lutheran Conference, the Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations (FLC), and most likely also by the Illinois Lutheran Conference (ILC), which is in fellowship with the LCR, and the Evangelical Lutheran Federation (ELF). As representative of the "Old Missouri" position, the LCR confession on ministry is presented here, as submitted by an LCR member to Christian News and printed in the May 25, 1987 issue:

While the Lord Jesus has commanded all Christians to spread the Gospel in their personal witnessing, He has also instituted the Office of the Public Ministry which is the highest office in the Church and equivalent or synonymous to the Pastoral Office. The Public Ministry (Pastoral Office) is the only Divinely commanded office of service in the New Testament Church. It is a continuation of the Prophetic Office of Jesus Christ (Lk. 10: 16), the first incumbents of which were the Apostles (Mt. 10; John 21). The Apostles were succeeded in this office of shepherding and fishing of men (evangelistic outreach) by ministers who were given various titles (reflecting the functions of the office) but who held the one divinely instituted office. These "ministers" (servants) were "stewards" (caretakers) of the "mysteries of God" (Word and Sacraments, 1 Cor. 4: 1). The "elders" (Acts 20: 17) were also called "bishops" (overseers, Acts 20: 28 & Titus 1: 5, 7) and "shepherds" (pastors, 1 Peter 5: 1-4) and "teachers" (Eph. 4: 11) and "angels" (messengers, Rev. 1-3) and "laborers" (Mt. 9: 38) and "evangelists" (2 Tim. 4: 5). The qualifications for the Public Ministry are exactly listed (1 Tim. 3: Titus 1). The Apostles considered themselves fellow "elders" of the parish pastors (1 Pet. 5: 1; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1). These elders are to be respected and obeyed when they teach God's Word (1 Tim. 5: 17; 1 Thess. 5: 12; Heb. 13: 17) and supported by their congregations (1 Cor. 9: 14; Gal. 6: 6-7; 1 Tim. 5: 18). The local pastor holds all the functions of the Public Ministry though these may be delegated or branched off into auxiliary offices created in freedom by the congregation (Acts 6) but under the supervision of the bishop or head pastor (Acts 20: 28). Auxiliary offices within (day school teachers, SS teachers, church officers or "deacons," assistant pastors) and without (synodical officials, professors, missionaries) are permissible and may be God-pleasing but they are not commanded to exist in Scripture as is the pastor's office (Titus 1: 5). The Public Ministry is instituted by God (1 Cor. 12: 28; Eph. 4: 11) in contrast to all other offices in the Church which are humanly instituted. Christians are commanded to call pastors (Acts 14: 23) in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Jer. 23: 3-4) but need not set up other secondary and derived offices. Synodical officers are merely servants of the congregations and assistants to the pastors who brought them into existence and may also freely abolish them.

This "Old Missouri" viewpoint is still held by a minority in the Missouri Synod. One of the champions of this position in the Missouri Synod is a lay theologian by the name of Clyde Nehrenz, several of whose statements and letters have been published in Christian News. I cannot recall seeing any of his writings in the last few years, and therefore I am not sure he is still a member of the Missouri Synod. But this is part of what he wrote back in 1984 in an article entitled "The Missouri Synod and Its Churchless Ministry" (Christian News, June 25, 1984):

The commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) . . . has joined in the abandonment of the scriptural doctrine, embracing in its place the rationalistic doctrine of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods. This last has so thoroughly permeated the whole synodical structure that it is unlikely today that anyone could be appointed to any synodical position or accumulate the prestige necessary to acquire elective office in it if he held to the scriptural position of our forebears.

Mr. Nehrenz then presents the Old Missouri doctrine, chiefly on the basis of the theses of C. F. W. Walther (English translation in Walther and the Church by John M. Drickamer). He derives from Walther's theses the following three principles:

"1) Only a local (particular) congregation can establish the ministry of the Word (office of the ministry; pastoral office). " In elucidation of this principle Mr. Nehrenz states: "Actual practice confirms this position of the Missouri Synod. No synodical official, whether elected or appointed, was considered an incumbent of the office of the ministry. In case of professors at our seminaries, local congregations were encouraged to consider calling them as assistant pastors. . . . Presidents of Synod and District Presidents were required to hold the office of the ministry in a local congregation. And if a service of Holy Communion were offered during the course of meetings of any synodical organization, including pastor/teacher conferences and even synodical conventions, it was required that a local congregation sponsor the service. Why all this? Because Synod is not a church. . . . It therefore has no authority, indeed no reason, to establish the office of the ministry. The establishment of a local congregation, as we have seen, is a divine ordinance. God has commanded nothing about a synod; it is a human arrangement. "

"2) The office of the Word (pastoral office) is the only office which Christ Himself established. All other offices in the church flow from this office and are auxiliary to it. " Again Walther' s theses are quoted. Mr. Nehrenz claims that a synod can help congregations in carrying out auxiliary functions. "Never, however, can a congregation empower Synod to administer the Office of the Keys or authorize it to establish an office of the ministry. "

"3) Ordination is nothing more than the public confirmation of the divine call into the office of the ministry or pastoral office. " . . . "It was the congregation that ordained, not Synod. . . . For this reason it was required that the ordination service take place in the presence of the calling, ordaining congregation. "

As we might expect, Mr. Nehrenz has nothing good to say about the so-called "new" doctrine of the WELS. Concerning the WELS statement of 1970 he says: "The document finally produced is a marvel of dichotomous double-talk designed to accommodate a bevy of opinions and to ease the squeamish consciences of those who endorse it with one eye closed and the other eye squinting. "

Mr. Nehrenz claims that in the 1962 Missouri Synod convention a change in the Synod' s handbook indicated "that it has adopted the false notion of the Wisconsin Synod that organizations other than a local congregation can establish the office of the ministry. " Moreover, he claims that the CTCR report on "The Ministry" of 1981 was almost entirely in agreement with the Wisconsin position, differing only in this, that the WELS view of the source of the public ministry is the ministry of the keys committed to all Christians, whereas the CTCR view is that the apostolate is the source of the public ministry.

I know from personal experience how difficult it is for one who has imbibed "Old Missouri" teaching on church and ministry to accept the WELS and CLC position as Scriptural. Even though the LC-MS may now be adopting WELS language and practice, remnants of the old view will remain for some time and may even revive and be restored to a predominant position. The LCR, for one, is not about to change its position. The Spring 1994 issue of *The Faithful Word* is devoted to a spirited defense of the LCR position over against the WELS position.

As far as I know, there is no treatment of the ministry aspect of this issue that is as thorough as Arnold Mueller' s 1964 book entitled *The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher*, CPH, now unfortunately out of print. In his introduction Dr. Mueller says (pp. 11-12): "Two views of the ministry have been propounded among us, and they are mutually exclusive; it is an either-or. According to one view, the pastorate is the one divinely instituted office; all other positions in the ministry stem from the pastorate and are auxiliary offices to the pastorate. According to the other view, which I believe is the Biblical one, God has instituted the office of the ministry, that is, He has commissioned His church to proclaim the Gospel and administer the sacraments, but He has not prescribed the forms in which the church is to fulfill the commission. All forms of the ministry, including the pastorate, stem from the one divinely instituted and all-embracing office of the ministry. "

In an autobiographical note in his introduction Dr. Mueller states (p. 16): "The wrong concept of the ministry was so deeply ingrained in my thinking that for months I was unable to find my way through the plethora of materials to a clear understanding of the ministry as presented in this book. In view of my experience I have said repeatedly that the person who has been brought up to think of the pastorate as the one divinely instituted office will have to go through an evolution in his thinking before he will be able to see just what the Scriptures say and what they do not say about the ministry, and why men like Luther, Chemnitz, and Quenstedt were careful not to identify the one-man pastorate as the one divinely instituted form of the ministry. "

Besides the Old Missouri view held by some in the LC-MS, other views are also seeking to be heard. Mr. Nehrenz, in a letter to *Christian News* of December 12, 1985, refers to the various views held by members of the Ft. Wayne faculty as follows: 1) the WELS view, held by Robert Preus and defended in the CTCR document of 1982; 2) the view of Wilhelm Oesch, held also by Eugene Klug, that only the local congregation can establish the office of the ministry but a synod can too by right of transfer from the congregations; 3) the view of David Scaer, that ordination is not an adiaphoron; 4) the view of Kurt Marquart, that



is somewhere between Old Missouri and the WELS position. All of these matters are in current debate. One could add the question of lay preachers, and, of course, the question of the ordination of women, which is perhaps the hottest topic of all right now. The Church Growth movement, which is particularly strong in the LC-MS, has certainly also had an impact on the doctrine of the ministry.

### **Wilhelm Oesch:**

Wilhelm Oesch, the German theologian, has taken the position that "the congregation is the only external form where the command of Christ to teach all that He commanded, baptizing and administering the Lord' s Supper and the office of the keys, is actually carried out and therefore the only form to which a believer can and must belong to be under the full sway of the Gospel and himself do what it commands" (An Unexpected Plea, p. 66). From this he concludes that only the pastor who is involved in preaching and baptizing and administering the Lord' s Supper is an incumbent of the holy ministry. But why must one do everything involved in the Gospel ministry in order to be a minister of the Gospel? On this basis Christian day school teachers and professors in Lutheran colleges are not really ministers of the Gospel because they do not baptize or administer the Lord' s Supper. Says Oesch: "Only the congregation is directly and fully identified and authenticated by the public Means of Grace in use, functioning in their aspect as public, God-given MARKS, to be the entity which Scripture calls Church. . . . Scripturally speaking according to the MARKS they (synodical offices, professors) are auxiliary offices serving the interests of the divinely ordained congregations and their pastorates" (An Unexpected Plea, pp. 76-77).

### **David Scaer:**

David Scaer doubts that ordination can be considered an adiaphoron. Apparently he has difficulty agreeing with the Brief Statement of 1932, which says: "Regarding ordination we teach that it is not a divine, but a commendable ecclesiastical ordinance" (#33). Reference is made to the Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops, #70.

We quote from Dr. Scaer' s treatise, "Ordination: human Rite or Divine Ordinance" (pp. 1-12). He believes that the Bible (1 Tim. 4: 14; 5: 22; 2 Tim. 1: 6) teaches that ordination is a "ceremony through which persons are admitted into the office of pastor. " He believes that a "charisma, a gift or endowment, is given to the recipient. " He believes that this gift is "given through the laying on of hands" and that "God is the Giver of the gift" and the "gift given is the Holy Spirit. " Moreover, Dr. Scaer believes that the gift "exists continually within the recipient, " and although it "may fall into disuse, " it can "be revitalized by its possessor. " He believes ordination is apostolically commanded, since "Paul enjoins Timothy to continue" the rite. Dr. Scaer concludes: "I personally find it very difficult to designate as a human rite or adiaphoron any ceremony in which" all of the above take place.

Clyde Nehrenz, for one, sees in Dr. Scaer' s view of ordination an Episcopalianizing and Romanizing of the Missouri Synod, and in this particular matter I think we can agree with him. Says Mr. Nehrenz: "The position espoused in this paper is a popish position which by some accounts is gaining adherents at the Ft. Wayne seminary" ("The Missouri Synod and Its Churchless Ministry").

In another article ("Ordination: The Continuing Crisis, " published in Christian News, June 30, 1986) Mr. Nehrenz claims that in the last twenty years "ordination was being ' puffed' with a fury. Candidates were permitted to be ordained in their home congregations and the ceremony became a solemn and sentimental affair comparable to baptism. Pomp and circumstance became the order of the day with the clergy resplendent in glowing attire and all of it captured on film for the local newspaper. The recognition that ordination is nothing more than a public confirmation of a congregation' s conferral of the office of the ministry was all but lost. A candidate' s request to be ordained in his home congregation was directed to the district president; no one even thought about getting permission from the calling congregation. " In fact many had come to the conclusion "that a pastor is a pastor by virtue of his ordination. " This notion was abetted by an answer of a Fort Wayne faculty committee to a group of seminary students, indicating "the Call is not consummated until the ordination/installation of the candidate" (quoted by Clyde Nehrenz in "Ordination: The Continuing Crisis").

Dr. Scaer' s opinion concerning the WELS position on church and ministry is evident from an article appearing in the January 1993 Logia. He accuses August Pieper and John Schaller of being adherents of the German theologian Höfling and says: "What we could not tolerate in Hoefling, we tolerated in Wisconsin. " Dr. Scaer quotes ELS author Erling Teigen of saying "that Francis Pieper' s critique of Höfling (Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III, p. 445) may have really been directed toward brother August. " Dr. Scaer even accuses the WELS of legalism on this issue, for he says: "Making political decisions (even those made by legally constituted bodies) on matters set forth in the Scriptures is legalism. The Wisconsin decision to ordain male parochial school teachers is the logical conclusion of the practice of permitting them to celebrate Holy Communion, which is ultimately derived from the theology of Schaller and August Pieper. I hesitate to raise the question of how Missouri could live with Wisconsin when division on such an important matter existed. Theoretically there can now be no valid reason for Wisconsin not to go ahead and ordain women, or at least give them supervision over the Holy Communion. "

Dr. Scaer would not even like the topic of this paper, for he says: "We are forever adjusting the two issues of the universal priesthood and the ministry. The New Testament does not place the two issues together. " His view is that the ministry comes from Christ Himself through the apostles. "We belong to the ministry originating in Jesus and exercised by him and his apostles. We should concern ourselves not about obtaining an apostolic succession from the Anglicans as our friends in the ELCA desire, but we should commit ourselves to a Christological succession as his representatives. "

### **Kurt Marquart:**

Since Kurt Marquart has written a 1990 book on church and ministry (The Church, Vol. IX in the "Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics" series edited by Robert Preus), we have a wealth of information available for our study of his position. It is clear that Marquart is not in full agreement with the Old Missouri doctrine. He does not teach that the local congregation is the only divinely instituted form of the church, nor that the pastoral ministry is the only divinely instituted form of the ministry. Marquart shows that C. F. W. Walther and even F. Pieper did not deny that a synod or larger church body is church (pp. 221-222). Theodore Graebner, a much later LC-MS theologian and a Statementarian as well, is credited or blamed for the teaching: "We can say, synod, territorial church, a formation like EKID belong to Christendom, are a part of it, but are not church" (quoted on p. 221). In his review of Marquart' s book John Brug (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Fall 1992) summarizes Marquart' s position as follows: "In contrast to the narrower version of the Missouri position, Marquart maintains that synods very clearly are churches, but he would apparently exclude other types of cooperative groups formed by Christians which carry out duties and exercise rights of the church. "

As to what is all included in the office of the public ministry Marquart is willing to include those offices that deal directly with the Word of God (although not necessarily with the administration of the sacraments, as is Oesch' s view), but not those offices where the Word of God is not so directly involved. Brug summarizes: "Marquart does not limit the one office only to the parish pastorate. According to Marquart, seminary teachers, for example are serving in the divinely instituted ministry of the Word. . . . Marquart grants that teachers in institutes of theological training and possibly some catechists may be within the one public gospel ministry, but asserts that Christian day school teachers whose main work is to teach secular subjects are not. " Marquart emphasizes this quite strongly in his book. On Pages 142-143 he says: "The Large Catechism derives the schoolmaster' s office from that of the father, not from the ministry of the Word (Fourth Commandment, #141). The church has no ' cultural mandate' to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. To speak with Walther' s much enlarged edition of Baier' s theological Compendium, it belongs rather to the ' offices of parents' to see to it that their children ' are educated in all piety, sciences, and arts.' Bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is also the parents' obligation (Eph. 6: 4), not that of pastors. Moreover, the schoolmasters' right to apply physical discipline can only be derived from parents, not from pastors, who have no such powers. "

This opinion of his is certainly worthy of study and discussion, but we need to realize that it differs from the thorough study of Arnold Mueller on this subject, The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher, as well as from our own confessional position set forth in Concerning Church and Ministry. Perhaps we all need to reeducate ourselves in the educational principles of the "Wauwatosa" theology, where there is no strict

separation between sacred and secular but all things are studied and taught in connection with Christ and His Word. For example, our Northwestern College course on ancient history was taught as one subject together with Biblical history. So also how can the social sciences or literature or physical science or art or even geography and mathematics be taught without reference to God' s Word? We want our students to have a Christian Weltanschauung with respect to all knowledge and not to divide information into two compartments, sacred and secular, as though one, for example, could believe Genesis in his "sacred" compartment and accept evolution in his "secular" compartment.

Perhaps it would not be out of place for me to quote a few sentences from J. P. Koehler' s *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, at the same time encouraging the reading of larger sections that deal with Christian education. "Missouri considered the teacher' s calling to be an auxiliary of the pastor' s office and hence subordinate to it, but as such also divine and subject to the same obligations. At Watertown it was held to be an auxiliary to the parent' s office, not endowed with the peculiar divineness of the ministry, hence more like any secular calling and with no greater obligations. " Koehler, as pastor and professor, had urged, over against both, the right conception that the teacher' s entire work is supposed to be integrated with the Gospel, and hence, without any dogmatical detours through the pastor' s office or the parental home, his calling is directly divine for the simple historical reason of life and the Scriptures that "he labors in the Word. "

Along these same lines Koehler says on the same page (p. 187): "The public school ideology is a religion, and cannot be otherwise, since there is no education that does not impart some kind of religion, even down to the three Rs. Preaching and teaching are virtually the same functions, and the Lord has said, ' He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth' (Lk. 11: 23). The public school is antichristian, even without the teaching of Evolution, through the mere fact of its making a fetish of education and by its making a gospel of democracy."

As far as our own confession is concerned, *Concerning Church and Ministry* concludes with these words: "We hold that in Christian liberty the Church may and does exercise the functions of the Public Ministry when it calls qualified persons into the pastorate, into the work of Christian Day-school teaching, into a professorship at its High Schools and Colleges, or as elders and deacons who are to assist pastors and teachers in their ministry. We believe that each and all of these offices are administrations of the Public Ministry, that their duties are such as are prescribed by the Lord for the Gospel ministry, and that their respective form is governed, not by divine decree but by terms of the Call as issued by the Church. "

Let us return to Kurt Marquart and his book on the church. It is clear that Marquart is taking aim against all those in his own synod and elsewhere who advocate and emphasize lay preaching and lay ministry and thereby, in his opinion, undermine the Scriptural distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the public ministry. In fact he even rises to the defense of the King James punctuation of Eph. 4: 12, namely: "He gave some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. " He enlists such exegetes as G. Stoeckhardt and H. P. Hamann on his side, but he has to admit "that Luther' s construction is the same as that of the new English translations" (*The Church*, p. 106). The New King James Version, for example, omits the one comma and understands the three phrases not as coordinate but as progressive, in keeping with the views of most students of the Greek construction. "He gave some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. " The question, of course, is: Who is spoken of as ministering or serving here, the pastors and teachers, or the saints? In this passage it seems clear that God' s pastors and other gifts as well are to train the Christians in general to carry out a certain kind of service or ministry. Marquart objects to this, because then every Christian becomes a minister and the distinction between the priesthood of believers and the public ministry is wiped out. I believe, however, that Marquart resolves this issue himself by saying: "The interpretation of Eph. 4: 12 which ascribes a ' work of ministry' to Christians generally would, ~~trifle~~, be untypical. . . . The reference must be to this general mutual helpfulness or ' ministration' (NIV: ' works of service' ), not to the ministry of the Gospel. " In other words, the Apostle Paul is not saying that every Christian is in the public ministry, but that every Christian has his or her work to do in the service of the whole group, that Christ' s body may be built up. Every Christian is a minister or servant in this sense, but not in the sense of the public ministry.

In 1985 at the General Pastoral Conference of the CLC Pastor Norbert Reim delivered a paper on Ephesians 4, in which he presented the comma-less version of Eph. 4: 12. As I recall, no one objected to the omission of the comma, much to Pastor Reim's surprise. The point of his paper was to show that, among many other things, "it is our job as clergy and teachers to prepare others for the work of serving. " How can Christians serve? How can we public ministers equip them to serve? Pastor Reim mentions several things we can do: thorough indoctrination so that our members know God's Word and can therefore pass it on to others; helping people learn how to evangelize, for certainly every Christian is involved in the spread of the Gospel through personal testimony; housekeeping-taking care of the physical plant, etc. ; and finally helping others in need, both our fellow-Christians and others as well.

Marquart sees a distinct problem with all this emphasis on equipping the saints for ministry. He says: "There is a priesthood and there is a ministry. They are not the same, yet both are God-given, and there exists between them a contrapuntal relationship. This organic equilibrium is wrecked by the leveling slogan: ' Everyone is a minister. ' In that case the distinction between priesthood and ministry vanishes. . . . The whole topic has turned in recent decades into a veritable nest of confusions. . . . Along came the modern Bible translations, and rendered Eph. 4: 12: ' for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. ' That ' repunctuated ' of the text became the rallying cry of the populist/activist program to make ' everyone a minister. ' Since then discourse about ' the ministry ' in many Lutheran quarters has fallen into a confusion of tongues, in which ' pastoral, ' ' lay, ' ' ordained, ' ' commissioned ' and other such ' ministries ' swirl about each other without much theological rhyme or reason. Any semblance of order must then be supplied bureaucratically, that is, arbitrarily. The rise of that utterly oxymoronic locution, ' laypastor, ' signals the loss of all categories" (The Church, pp. 104-105).

Then in a footnote he adds: "The priesthood of believers is something very active. But it is a mistake to imagine that the more the so-called ' laymen ' are involved and activated with church tasks, the better for the realization of the priesthood of believers" (a quotation from Heuback, Das Priestertum). "Far greater and better than all the ' religious ' good works of modern, pietistic or bureaucratic forms of monasticism, is faithfulness in the ordinary duties of daily life, at home and at work, according to the Ten Commandments" (The Church, p. 108).

I think we can sense here that the danger is in going too far in either direction. It is hardly spiritually healthy for a pastor to do all the spiritual work in a community while the congregation is content to "pray, pay, and obey. " Some of our members in the past may have not felt qualified to do anything in the way of service except perhaps serving as ushers or counting money, believing that the pastor was to do all the witnessing, teaching, and preaching that had to be done. Surely this is not the picture that comes to us from the book of Acts or the letters of the apostles. Read Evangelism in the Early Church by Michael Green. "Christianity was from its inception a lay movement, and so it continued for a remarkable long time. . . . It was an unselfconscious effort. They were scattered from their base in Jerusalem and they went everywhere spreading the good news which had brought joy, release, and a new life to themselves. This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls. They went everywhere gossiping the gospel; they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently, they were taken seriously, and the movement spread, notably among the lower classes" (p. 173).

On the other hand, we can also see the danger in having a called servant of the Word such as a pastor neglect the work he was trained for and called to do, such as preaching the Gospel, training the young, comforting the sick, admonishing the weak, rebuking the impenitent, and absolving the penitent, and instead busying himself with administrative duties and attending out-of-town seminars while the real Gospel work is being done by others who are either inadequately trained or who do not have sufficient time to do a good job. Let every servant of the Word look at his call from time to time and see what he has been asked to do in behalf of the Christians who called him. Let him not neglect his call under the pretext that he is equipping the saints to do his work.

We do not generally use the terms "lay-preacher" or "lay-pastor. " But what is to prevent a Christian congregation from calling a non-seminary-trained individual who is especially gifted in one area or another

for the purpose of having him carry out some function of the ministry for which he is qualified, such as teaching a Bible class or reading or presenting a sermon or calling on shut-ins? In what way does such a practice tend to break down the distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the public ministry? Whoever has been called by Christians to carry out some function of the ministry is at the moment of his carrying out that function a public minister, even though he is unordained, has no college or seminary training, and his call is limited to a short term. Marquart would see this as confusing, and Nehrenz would consider it an abomination, but what is wrong with it? Even seminary students can be called (on a one-time basis or more frequently) to administer the Lord's Supper and pronounce absolution and baptize as well as preach the sermon. Ordination certainly is no requirement for the carrying out of such duties. But there must be a call.

On the question of the ordination of women, Marquart plainly says: "According to the revealed will of God, women cannot occupy the office of the Gospel ministry." This, of course, is going too far, for Christians can certainly call women to serve in the Gospel ministry, as long as that Gospel ministry does not involve them in the teaching of men or the exercise of authority over men (1 Tim. 2: 12). My understanding of 1 Tim. 3 is that both men and women were eligible to serve as helpers (deacons and deaconesses) in the Gospel ministry; Marquart himself says that Phoebe (Rom. 16: 1) served the Church as a deaconess. Marquart, however, considers that something less than the public ministry. Brug's comment on this is enlightening. "We certainly have no quarrel with Marquart's assertion that women may not be ordained to the pastoral ministry which serves the whole congregation. We would have to disagree, however, with his statement, 'Women cannot occupy the office of the Gospel ministry,' since it is a reflection of his narrower view of Gospel ministry which excludes Christian day school teachers and other forms of service by women which are not in conflict with the scriptural principle of submission. His position takes on a bit of irony in light of the LCMS' s recent successful lawsuit to gain government recognition of its women teachers as ministers of the church for tax purposes. This is just one of many indications of the division within the LCMS on this doctrine" (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Fall 1992, p. 314).

Indeed there is a division in the LCMS on the question of women's service in the church, and this division goes back to long before 1969, when the LCMS first officially approved of woman suffrage. Since then, the push for more and more involvement by women has intensified to the point that the CTCR of the LCMS has in recent times approved, seemingly at least, of women as teachers in their seminaries and as presidents of their congregations under certain circumstances. According to the Christian News of December 12, 1994, the CTCR statement included the following remarks: "The Holy Scriptures clearly exclude women from the divinely instituted office of the public ministry. . . . We are aware that in recent years some congregations have designated by the term 'elders' positions which do not involve assisting in the distinctive functions of the pastoral office. In such cases it is not contrary to the Scriptures for women to serve as such 'elders.' . . . In those congregations where duties of the chairman (or president) or vice-chairman (or vice-president) permit these officers to function in capacities involving public accountability for the functioning of the pastoral office, women cannot serve without violating the Scriptures. Where this is not the case, there are no Scripture prohibitions against women serving in this way. . . . Unless the qualifications for district and synodical boards and commissions require that an incumbent to such offices or membership be a pastor or that he perform the distinctive functions of the pastoral office, all such positions ought to be open to women." Christian News apparently understands this as allowing the calling of women to teach theology in LCMS seminaries. Christian News has also publicized the disagreement between ex-president Ralph Bohlmann and current president Alvin Barry on this issue. It does not look as though this issue will go away for a long time, and of course we in the CLC are not immune from this on-going struggle and debate. May God keep us faithful to His Word so that we may hold the line on woman suffrage in the church (the exercise of authority over men) and women pastors (the teaching of men).

But in this struggle we do not want to use false arguments, such as that women cannot represent Christ to others or that women cannot be ministers of the Gospel or even that women cannot be ordained. What would be unscriptural about ordaining both our male and our female teachers, for example? They already have calls into the public ministry. What would be wrong in ratifying such calls openly by a ceremony of ordination? We don't do it, and we don't recommend doing it, but not because it is theologically wrong, but because it would be widely misunderstood.

Finally let us take up as the last of the current debates in the LCMS that relate to church and ministry the impact of the Church Growth movement. To some extent we have covered this ground already by our discussion of lay ministry. Let us hear first of all from K. Hunter, one of the gurus of church growth. In his book, *Foundation for Church Growth* (p. 65), Hunter says: "The pastor is the called shepherd of the royal priesthood, but he is not there to do ministry for the sheep. Shepherds don't reproduce sheep, anyway. Sheep reproduce sheep! Mission and ministry belong to the people. The pastor is there to be the trainer, the equipper of the people. The pastor is like a playing coach. He does ministry himself, but his primary responsibility is to train Christians to do this ministry."

In response to this Marquart says: "As if Christ had said not, 'Feed My sheep,' but, 'Organize My sheep into work-brigades, to do the "real" ministry themselves'! If the task of the ministry is not the distribution of Gospel treasures but something else, then it is no longer an evangelical institution in the sense of Augsburg Confession Art. V, but a legal and legalistic one. Furthermore, the evangelical ministry is not manipulative. It relies totally on God's own working through His holy means when and where He pleases' (Augsburg Confession, Art. V)-not when and where human surveys, strategies, and 'goal settings' may predict or prescribe. The humble pastor of the famous prayer which adorns many Lutheran sacristies (from Luther's Works, Vol. 5, p. 123) is a far cry from the strutting modern religious entrepreneur, whose mastery of 'scientific' technique guarantees ~~hix~~per cent of statistical success for y percent of 'effective' effort" (*The Church*, p. 123)

Do we set goals in our churches? Do we have five-year plans and twenty-year plans? Do we believe that our efforts will result in church growth if only we use the right techniques or methods or work hard enough? Let our only goal be this, that we remain faithful to Christ and His teaching, and that we diligently use the means He has supplied for church growth, namely, the means of grace. "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. Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as 'new methods,' ~~un~~totally activities, which do not build, but harm, the Church" (*Brief Statement of 1932*, #22).

K. Hunter says: "There are six classes or kinds of workers in the Christian church. . . . Growing, healthy, active churches have a different percentage of workers in certain classes than churches that are inactive and declining. . . . Declining congregations have about 20 percent Class 1 workers, one percent Class 2 workers and 75 percent Class 6 workers. . . . About 40 percent of the members of a healthy congregation are volunteers within the church (Class 1). Class 2 workers, unpaid outreach workers, make up 20 percent. The growing, active church will have no more than about (!) 36 percent of its members as dead wood. With any more than that it could not be healthy."

Marquart's response: "Substantive questions about sound and faithful preaching and sacramental celebration enter such calculations not at all. The intrusion of such secular ideologies even into Lutheran circles is appalling" (*The Church*, pp. 123-124).

Marquart also finds fault with the Church Growth technique of listing the various spiritual gifts mentioned in Scripture and attempting to determine which of these gifts is in ourselves. What he sees as the danger of this is that it suggests "that God's converting power really attaches to that 'gift,' not to the means of grace. All schemes are self-condemned which present 'the gifts' as if they were spiritual 'enzymes' needed to activate the otherwise inert Word and sacraments!" (*The Church*, pp. 132-133). Surely what we need to do is use the Word and Sacraments God has provided in the confidence that God works through such means and will work as He sees fit also when we with our modest gifts use these means. "The whole inflated and overheated rhetoric about 'spiritual gifts' must be regarded as pathological. What it really means to pray for the Holy Spirit and His gifts needs to be learnt anew from a saner, sounder devotion, and one biblically better nourished and therefore more nourishing" (*The Church*, p. 133).

I have not yet had a chance to read Marquart's 153-page book, entitled "Church Growth" as Mission Paradigm, a Lutheran Assessment. This was reviewed by Gregory Jackson in the *Christian News* of July 11,

1994. Marquart' s book was also reviewed by Robert Preus in a recent issue of Logia. Here we have a kind of behind-the-scenes account of the current bitter controversy within the Missouri Synod between Church Growth advocates such as Waldo Werning and Church Growth opponents such as Robert Preus and Kurt Marquart. It makes for interesting reading, but it is sad beyond all words that the LC-MS at present is such a disunified, yet unionistic church body. "The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is again at war with itself, " says Robert Preus. "The CGM will not go away by itself. It is a powerful and successful movement by the world' s standards. And it has won over too many adherents among the leaders in the Missouri Synod for that. . . . So the war will go on in Missouri. "

May we prepare ourselves for this war and all other spiritual warfare by using the weapons our Lord has so graciously supplied. "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6: 11-18).

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## Some Notes On The New International Version

Vance Fossum

In the June 1993 issue of the Journal of Theology, Professor Clifford Kuehne gave a favorable review of a book by Robert P. Martin entitled, Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version: The Primary Criterion in Evaluating Bible Versions. Martin' s book, according to the reviewer, "makes a good case" for placing the NIV into the category of a paraphrase ("dynamic equivalent") rather than a translation ("formal equivalent"). Martin is quoted as stating that "the NIV is not worthy of becoming the standard version of the English speaking world. Its accuracy is suspect in too many ways. "

Whether one agrees with this strong criticism of the NIV or not, it is indeed fast becoming "the standard version of the English speaking world. " More accurate than the pure paraphrases and more "readable" than the "literal" translations, the NIV is regarded as the "ideal" by an increasing number of people in every Christian denomination. In our own church body the NIV is widely used by pastors and people, myself included.

Still, I recommend that people use the NIV "alongside of" the NKJV/KJV or the NASB, particularly in the New Testament. An article in the February 25, 1991, issue of Christian News strongly advised the LCMS convention to direct Concordia Publishing House to discontinue the use of the NIV in its publishing ventures. The CN article charged that the NIV promotes Reformed and Millennialist views by its "mistranslations" of several passages listed. Is this true? In some cases, yes; in others, no. It is hoped that the following examination of some of these charges may prove useful to our readers.

### REGARDING BAPTISM

#### (1) DOES THE NIV "SEPARATE THE WATER FROM THE WORD IN EPHESIANS 5:26"?

GREEK: [τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι](#)

by the washing of the water in connection with (spoken) word

NIV: by the washing with water through the word

KJV: with the washing of water by the word (so also NKJV)

NASB: by the washing of water with the word

All the translations would seem to indicate that the “washing” described in this passage is Christ’s INSTRUMENT to bring about the cleansing of His Church. But they all fail to translate the definite article τοῦ in front of ῥῆματος, while adding an article in front of ῥήματα. The Greek clearly teaches that the “specialness” of “THE WATER” in this instrumental bath is THE water’s “CONNECTION with word (i.e., spoken word—baptismal formula).”

It is not only the NIV that fails to fully convey the close connection between water and word in “the washing.” Perhaps in translating the phrase ἐν ῥήματι as “through the word” or “by the word,” it may be said that the NIV, KJV, and NKJV “separate” the water from the word. That the NIV exhibits a Reformed bias in this passage cannot be said with certainty.

(2) DOES THE NIV SEPARATE WATER BAPTISM FROM HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM IN TITUS 3:5?

GREEK: διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου

through a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit

NIV: through a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

KJV: by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost

NKJV: through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit

NASB: by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit

Again, the original is clear: The Holy Spirit is the agent or source of BOTH the regeneration and the renewal, even as the “washing” brings about BOTH a regeneration and a renewal performed by the Spirit. It is difficult to see how the NIV translation “separates” water baptism from Holy Spirit baptism in this passage. In fact, the comma in the KJV edition quoted above is a greater “threat” in this regard.

(3) DOES THE NIV RAISE DOUBT BY ITS TRANSLATION OF ACTS 2:38 THAT THROUGH BAPTISM ONE RECEIVES THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS?

GREEK: Πέτρος δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς, Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν, καὶ λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος:

Peter replied, “Repent, and let each one of you be baptized on the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

NIV: Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ ~ your sins ~ be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

KJV: Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

NKJV: Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

NASB: And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The phrase “εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν,” has long been the subject of controversy between Lutheran and Reformed exegetes. Robertson, for example, wants to make εἰς into ἐπὶ (“on the basis of”) so that he may translate: “on the basis of the forgiveness of sins. . . .” Then he goes on to explain that “the basis” of forgiveness is “the repentance” that has already taken place before baptism. Thus, one is to be baptized because of the forgiveness he has already received. But εἰς is never used in the NT in this way. εἰς looks ahead, not behind; it indicates aim or purpose with the accusative. The NIV rendering—“so that your sins may be forgiven”—*may* indicate that forgiveness is the aim of repentance and baptism. However, “FOR forgiveness” is the most accurate rendering of εἰς ἄφεσιν and more certainly states the connection between baptism and forgiveness of sins.

Whether βαπτισθήτω (aor. pass. imper.) is considered hortatory or not, repentance and baptism are a unit—both repentance and baptism are to be done on the basis of the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And yet, the sacramental nature of baptism is surely emphasized by the construction of this verse. The period placed after “forgiven” by the NIV translators is unnecessary, and could leave the reader thinking that the gift of the Holy Spirit will come some time after, rather than in and with repentance and baptism. Finally, we believe that “shall receive” is the preferred rendering of λήμψεσθε in this context, for the NIV’s “will receive” does not tie the gift of the Spirit so immediately and certainly to repentance and baptism.



(4) THE NIV TRANSLATION OF COLOSSIANS 2:11-15 (esp. v. 12) OMITTS THE CLEAR PRESENTATION OF THE POWER OF BAPTISM TO “RAISE UP” THE BELIEVER UNTO THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

GREEK: ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in connection with the putting off of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through the faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.

NIV: In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Apparently, the NIV translates ἐν ᾧ . . . συνηγέρθητε as ‘raised with him’; or the phrase ἐν ᾧ is not translated at all! But the phrase ἐν ᾧ refers to the baptism—”in which you were also raised with Him (αὐτῷ understood) through the faith. . . .” So the reader could understand from the NIV that although baptism brings about (or symbolizes?—Reformed) a spiritual burial with Christ, it is only through the believer’s faith that he is actually raised spiritually with Christ.

Without the correct translation of ἐν ᾧ in verse 12, the connection between baptism and the forgiveness of sins mentioned in verse 13 is hidden. The parallel statements of verses 12 and 13 ought to be clear:

v. 12  
‘having been buried  
with Him in baptism’  
‘in which (baptism) you also were  
raised with Him through the faith  
in the working of God . . .’

v. 13  
‘and you being dead in  
your trespasses and the uncircumcision . . .’  
‘He has made you alive to  
gether with Him, having forgiven  
(xapl.aal!£vo;) us all trespasses’

The ‘raising with’ Christ involves ‘the faith’ in the work of that God Who raised Him from the dead, but this raising took place “in” baptism as the objective means of applying Christ’s death and resurrection-life to the individual. What the sinner receives IN baptism through faith is both a death with Christ and a resurrection with Him unto a new and spiritual life. ‘IN’ baptism “all trespasses” have been graciously forgiven (v. 13b)—the ‘body of the flesh’ has been ‘put off’ (v. 11) and spiritual life is given (vv. 12,13).

All of this is in keeping with what Paul says about baptism in Romans 6:2ff. and may be read in the NASB, KJV, NKJV and BECK, but not in the NIV. Further, the NIV incorrectly places a period after the words, “God made you alive with Christ” in verse 13, as if this making alive is not connected with what follows, namely, ‘having forgiven us all trespasses (χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα).” Thus it is nearly impossible to determine from Colossians 2: 11 -14 in the NIV that baptism brings the forgiveness of sins and spiritual life to a person through faith.

Before leaving the Colossians 2: 11-14 passage, let us take up the charge that in verse 11 “THE NIV TEACHES THAT WE LOSE OUR SINFUL NATURE.” The implication of this charge is that by translating, “In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature,” the NIV is teaching a form of perfectionism. ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός = ‘in the putting off of the body of the flesh.’ An alternate reading of τοῦ σώματος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν (*of the sins*) τῆς σαρκός, is found in the Koine and other witnesses. But τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν is probably a copier’s insertion in reference to Romans 6:6-“the body of sin.” Lenski is undoubtedly correct when he says that such an insertion has no place in Paul’s logic at this point. Paul is saying that whereas the Judaizers were emphasizing the value of cutting off a little foreskin in circumcision, through baptism the entire body of the flesh is ‘put off’! Of course, Paul should not be understood to say that the “flesh” or “sinful nature” is totally destroyed but that it no longer has control of the physical body—the Christian no longer has a body that is controlled by the fleshly nature. The NIV need not and ought not to have interpreted the simple Greek here. By interpreting ‘the body of the flesh’ to be ‘the sinful nature,’ the NIV fails to convey the powerful logic of Paul’s argument against the Judaizers and leaves room for misunderstanding.

(5) THE NIV TRANSLATION OF 1 PETER 3:21 IS INCORRECT AND GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT THE BENEFIT OF BAPTISM IS OF THE NATURE OF A ‘PROMISE’ TO GOD.

NIV: And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the ~ of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand -with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (vv. 21-22).

GREEK: ὁ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σώζει βάπτισμα, οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ῥύπου ἀλλὰ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν, δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Ἐριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ, πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν, ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων.

It is perhaps not so difficult to get Peter’s meaning: The flood waters were an antitype of baptism which now also saves us-not by removing dirt from the body (outwardly), but by providing (inwardly) a clean conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, etc. But the translation and understanding of the hapax legomenon, ἐπερώτημα, is a problem that begs attention.

The NIV chooses “pledge.” But according to *Webster’s Thesaurus*, a pledge is “something given or held as a *sign of one’s good intentions*.” In common usage a pledge is really no more than a vow or a promise. The NIV rendering would surely have been approved by the Southern Baptist, A. T. Robertson, who held that ἐπερώτημα is an “avowal of consecration to God after inquiry, having repented and turned to God and now making this public proclamation of that fact by means of baptism (the symbol of the previous inward change of heart)” (*Word Pictures*, Vol. VI, p. 120, Baker). Beck’s AAT is a surprise at this verse, and a disappointment:

In the same also, baptism now saves you-not by washing dirt from the body but by promising God to keep one’s conscience clear-by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (emphasis added)

In his commentary on 1 Peter 3:21, P. E. Kretzmann also speaks of baptism as a “pledge, a contract of a good conscience before God.” But then he defines the “pledge” of baptism as something God does for us, rather than a “promise” we make to God:

It guarantees to us that we may have, by virtue of its application, a clean conscience before God, thus being enabled to lift up our eyes to Him without the slightest trace of fear. This is true because the spiritual gifts and blessings which are the result of the resurrection of Christ. . . are transmitted to the believer in baptism. (*Popular Commentary*, NT, Vol. II, p. 534)

We like Kretzmann’s understanding of “pledge” as a “guarantee” from God; but one doubts that the bare word would be so understood in the context of this verse. Luther has “*der Bund eines guten Gewissens mit Gott durch die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*” (the covenant of a good conscience with God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ). To further demonstrate the difficulty of translating ἐπερώτημα, etc., the RSV and NASB have “an APPEAL to God for a clear conscience”; and the KJV and NKJV translate, “the ANSWER of a good conscience toward God.”

One thing is certain: ἐπερώτημα is not “answer.” This noun is built on the verb ἐρωτάω (to ask on equal or familiar terms; distinguished from αἰτέω, the asking of a beggar or one of lowly position). The prefix, ἐπί, intensifies the asking; and the suffix, μα, tells us that our word is not the making of a question or inquiry, but the inquiry itself. The construction of the word itself leads one to conclude that ἐπερώτημα = an intense inquiry or appeal made on an equal or familiar basis. According to W. E. Vine, ἐπερώτημα was “used by the Greeks in a legal sense, as a demand or appeal” (Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 61, Revell, 1981).

Of all the words considered to be preferred translations of ἐπερώτημα, I would choose “an APPEAL.” The following translation of 1 Peter 3:21,22 is offered:

Which (water) is also an antitype, now baptism saves you-not a removing of dirt from flesh, but an appeal to God from a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities, and powers having been made subject to Him!

**REGARDING CONVERSION, REPENTANCE AND THE DEPRAVITY OF THE SINFUL NATURE OF FALLEN MAN**

(1) THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV MAKES CONVERSION THE WORK OF MAN BY ITS ‘MIS-TRANSLATIONS’ IN JOHN 3:11,32,33. AND GALATIANS 1:9. IS INCORRECT.

The statements of Jesus— οὐ λαμβάνετε (John 3: 11), οὐδεὶς λαμβάνει (3:32); as well as the statement of the Baptizer— ὁ λαβὼν (3 :33), refer to the response of those who hear the testimony concerning Christ. So also in the Galatians 1:9 passage. The Greek verb λαμβάνω (“to take” or “to receive” - Vine, NT Vol., p. 254) in these verses is translated “receive” by the KJV, NKJV , and the NASB, while the NIV has “accept.”

We do not believe that by translating λαμβάνω with “accept” in these passages, one is either mis-translating or promoting the error of the Reformed regarding man’s part in his conversion to Christ. We say so for the following reasons:

a) If it is maintained that “accept” is a suspicious rendering because the NIV is largely the work of translators from the Reformed camp, we note that the Lutheran, William Beck (AAT) also translates λαμβάνω with “accept” in the John passages. (Beck p refers “received” in Gal. 1 :9.)

b) If the NIV translation is devoted to the promotion of the Reformed error by its translation of λαμβάνω as “accept” in reference to man’s response to the gospel, then we would expect that in all such contexts λαμβάνω would be so rendered by the NIV. But this is not the case. In Matthew 13:20, Mark 4:16, Luke 8:13, Acts 11:1, and 17:11, all of which deal with man’s response to the gospel, the NIV translates λαμβάνω with “receive.”

c) The other Greek word that is most often translated “receive” is δέχομαι. Vine points to a “distinction” between λαμβάνω and δέχομαι “in that in many instances λαμβάνω suggests a self-prompted taking, whereas δέχομαι more frequently indicates ‘a welcoming or an appropriating reception’ (Grimm-Thayer).” Vine does add the qualification that this distinction was “more pronounced in the earlier, classical use” (NT Vol., p. 256). The Arndt-Gingrich lexicon speaks of both an “active” and a more “passive” use of λαμβάνω, while defining δέχομαι as a “taking” or “receiving” of persons (welcoming), and the “approving or accepting” of things. A review of the many passages where these two words are used reveals that, while they are often synonymous in the original Koine, the distinction noted by Vine, as well as the versatility of both verbs (and their compounds) may be recognized by the translator.

We believe the NIV translates within these guidelines in Acts 8:14-17 where λαμβάνω appears three times:

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted [so also Beck!] the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive [NKJV=receive] the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received [NKJV=received] the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 the NIV translates δεξάμενοι (aor. mid. part.) as “welcomed” (NKJV=received)—“. . . you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” The NIV translation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13 is worthy of note, since παραλαμβάνω and δέχομαι are distinguished thus: “. . . when you received (παραλαβόντες) the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted (ἔδέξασθε) it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God which is at work in you who believe.” The NASB agrees with the NIV in this verse, while the AAT uses “accept” for both Greek verbs! The NKJV has “received” and “welcomed,” respectively, while the KJV uses “received” for both.

It is apparent from the foregoing that the NIV as well as the AAT (Beck) have often rendered both Greek verbs with “accept,” not because of pre-conceived and erroneous theological convictions, but because of contextual consideration. When the point of the passage is that the “word of God” (or the gospel, testimony of Christ, etc.) was not only delivered or “gotten,” but “taken” to heart, both the NIV and the AAT prefer to use the word “accept.” This is consistent with the meaning of both λαμβάνω and δέχομαι.

d) Finally, the usual understanding of the words “accept” and “receive” in our day must be considered. A court of law may “receive” testimony (i.e., “hear testimony”), but it will not always “accept” what it hears as true or trustworthy. Does the man on the street respond favorably to what he is told by saying, “I receive your word”? Or would he not be more likely to say, “I accept your word”? Our Lord was not saying in John 3: 11 that the people did not “hear” the testimony brought to them; He was indicting them for not “accepting” the testimony by faith.

(2) THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV TRANSLATION OF JOHN 1:13 REMOVES “THE INJUNCTION OF GOD’S WORD AGAINST MAN’S FREE WILL IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS” CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED WITH CERTAINTY.

GREEK: [οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.](#)

NKJV:

NASB who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the

RSV flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

(KJV)

AAT: They have been born, not of the blood of parents or of a sexual desire or of a man’s desire but of God.

NIV: children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

Obviously, both the NIV and the AAT translate the original more freely than the older translations. One could even say that these later translations actually interpret the Greek for us. Although P. E. Kretzmann does not offer his own translation in his *Popular Commentary*, he does give this interpretation of John 1: 13:

This process of becoming children of God is now contrasted with the corresponding process of physical birth. The children of God are produced in a wonderful way, unlike that of natural procreation and birth. In nature children are formed out of **body and blood substances of human flesh and by an act of the will of man**. But this birth does not make a person a child of God.

The children of God are born of God. (NT, Vol. 1, p.407, emphasis added)

Perhaps Kretzmann would have preferred the AAT or even the NIV translation today. Or is his interpretation of this passage unfaithful to the Greek? Evidently, he did not understand the original to be saying anything at all about the will of man in spiritual matters! It is possible that the NIV translators also interpreted the meaning of John as comparing the natural physical birth of children from man to the spiritual birth worked by God. It would seem that the NIV recognizes the two phrases, each headed by the negative conjunction [οὐδὲ](#), as being parallel-joining them between commas. Thus both “human decision” and “**husband’s will**” may have been intended by the translators to refer to nature’s way of producing physical children. If, in fact, it can be shown that in this passage either [θελήματος σαρκὸς](#) or [θελήματος ἀνδρὸς](#) must refer to the depraved spiritual will of fallen man, then the NIV and the AAT could be faulted. But this writer has not found such proof.

We may translate and understand the verse in this way: Those born not of blood [i.e., natural descent—No claim that one is a physical descendant of Abraham will do!], nor of the will of the flesh [i.e., the depraved will of natural man], nor of the will of man [i.e., the male’s decision to “make a baby”], but of God.

Or we may understand the [θελήματος σαρκὸς ... θελήματος ἀνδρὸς](#) as together referring to human sexual desire (Arndt-Gingrich, p. 355). Whichever translation one prefers, an interpretation of this verse of Scripture is necessary; only the interpretation must not contradict the clear teaching of God’s word in other places.

(3) THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV TRANSLATION OF JER. 31:18-19 “MAKES UNCLEAR WHO DOES WHAT IN CONVERSION/REPENTANCE” MAYBE OVERSTATED.

שְׁמוֹעַשְׁמַעְתִּי אֶפְרַיִם מִתְנוּדָד יִסְרַתְנִי וְאָוֹסֵר פִּעְנָל לֹא לָמַד הִשִּׁיבֵנִי וְאַשׁוּבָה כִּי אֶתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי כִּי־אֶחְרִי שׁוֹבֵי נַחֲמֵתִי וְאַחֲרֵי הַדּוֹדָעִי סַבְקַתִּי עַל־יַדְךָ בַשִּׁתִּי וְגַמְזַנְקְלִמְתִּי כִּי נִשְׁאַתִּי חֲרַפְתָּ נַעֲוִירִי

NIV: I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: “You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.”

The NIV mistranslated the niphil infinitive in verse 19. הַדּוֹדָעִי ought to be rendered “**I was instructed**” (Luther: *nachdem ich gewitzigt bin*-after I am made wiser), which implies the agency of God in bringing His people to their spiritual senses by means of His chastisements. The AAT also misses the



niph form of the verb in this verse. Yet, in our opinion, the overall translation of this passage in both the NIV and the AA T does not necessarily make it “unclear who does what in conversion/repentance.” The NIV’s “You disciplined me . . . and I have been disciplined,” as well as “Restore me, and I will return,” speak clearly of the agency of God in working conversion and repentance.

(4) THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV “LESSENS THE DEPRAVITY OF OUR SINFUL NATURE” BY A “MISTRANSLATION” OF GALATIANS 5:17 IS NOT JUSTIFIED.

GREEK: ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμῆι κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός: ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοισ ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

NKJV (KJV): For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

NIV: For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

The NIV translates ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμῆι κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος: “For the flesh **desires what is contrary** to the Spirit.” We fail to see how this rendering in any way “lessens the depravity of our sinful nature.” In fact, the continual opposition that exists between the flesh and the spirit (or Spirit), may be more clearly understood by some from the NIV than from the older versions. Both the NASB and the AAT are closer to the NIV than to the KN-NKJV, in that neither translates ἐπιθυμῆι as “lusts”; instead we find “desires” (NASB) and “wants” (AAT).

**REGARDING THE LORDS’ SUPPER AS THE NEW TESTAMENT/COVENANT IN CHRIST’S BLOOD, THE UNION OF THE TWO NATURES OF CHRIST, AND THE PRESENCE OF BOTH NATURES IN THE LORD’S SUPPER**

(1) THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV “MISTRANSLATES” διαθήκη IN MATTHEW 26:28 AS “COVENANT” RATHER THAN “TESTAMENT” IS INCORRECT.

The word διαθήκη (from διατίθημι = to thoroughly set in place) refers to a legal “disposition.” If the translator were to derive the biblical meaning of διαθήκη exclusively from its usage in Hellenistic times; he might insist on the rendering, “last will and/or testament,” which is the primary meaning indicated in Arndt-Gingrich (also Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, p. 250; and Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 214). However, the translators of the LXX chose διαθήκη as the preferred rendering for the Hebrew ברית which means **covenant** as derived from the verb ברה (to cut, divide in pieces), referring to the custom of validating an agreement by dividing or sacrificing a victim, as in Genesis 15:10 and Jeremiah 34: 18.

How then shall we translate διαθήκη when it appears in its NT contexts-last will/testament, or covenant? A study of several pertinent passages (notably, Heb. 8:1-13; 9:11-22; 10:15-18; Exod. 24:18; Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Gal. 3:15-18) has led this writer to the following conclusion: Whenever διαθήκη is used in reference to an agreement of God with men as validated and based on blood-sacrifice, “covenant” is the preferred translation; but διαθήκη may also be rendered “will” or “testament” where the emphasis is on the inheritance or promised gift conveyed by the blood-covenant of grace.

Hebrews 9:11-22 is an important passage in this regard. The KJV consistently translates διαθήκη with “testament” in this entire section. But the RSV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and even the Lutheran AA T (Beck) translate “covenant” in verses 15, (18), and 20, while opting for “will” or “testament” in verses 16 and 17. The reference at the end of verse 15 to “the promise of the eternal **inheritance**” ( τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν . . . τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας) would seem to determine the translation of διαθήκη as “will” or “testament” in verses 16-17.

But the main argument of the holy writer ever since the beginning of chapter 8 is that the “new” covenant made by God with men is “better” than the “first”/ “old” because a better sacrifice establishes the new. Whereas the old was established by “gifts and sacrifices” of many high priests (8:3a; 9: 18-20), the new is established by the sacrifice made by The High Priest (8:3b); and whereas the sacrifice of animals established the old covenant, the sacrifice Christ made “with His own blood” established the new (9: 12); and whereas Moses ministered in an earthly tabernacle, “mediating” according to a covenant of law (8:4-5; 9: 19-22), Christ entered “heaven

itself' by His one-time self-sacrifice for sin (9:24-26), and has become "mediator of a better covenant established on better promises" (8:6)-a covenant of grace.

That [διαθήκη](#) in this whole section of Hebrews is to be primarily understood in the sense of "covenant" (blood -based agreement) rather than last will or "testament" is clear from the direction given by Jeremiah 31 :31-34, quoted at 8:8-12 and again at 10: 16. We do not normally speak of a "last will" or "testament" as being "made with" anyone. Yet the Lord speaks of His "old" [διαθήκη](#) as having been made "with the fathers" ([τοῖς πατράσιν](#)—8:9). He speaks the same way about his "new" [διαθήκη](#): "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel . . ." ([τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ](#)—8: 10).

In both the old and the new covenant agreements of God with men, God determined and established the sacrifices which validated and sealed His covenants (note: "My covenant"-Heb. 8:9). He sealed the law covenant by the animal sacrifices He commanded: "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, . . . sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you" (Heb. 9: 19-20; Exod. 24:8). However, in validating and establishing His "new" and "better" covenant of grace, God the Father sacrificed His own Son—"The Lamb of God." Therefore in the institution of His Holy Supper Jesus says: "This is MY blood ([τὸ αἷμά μου](#)) of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28 Note: [καινή](#) may be a textual insertion in the Matt. 26:28 and Mark 14:14 record; but Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25 leave no doubt that Jesus spoke of the [καινή διαθήκη](#) — 'the new covenant'). ". . . Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). So Christ had to shed His holy precious blood in order to establish the new covenant of grace.

The charge against the NIV translation of [διαθήκη](#) as "covenant" in Matthew 26:28 appears to have been justified by the idea that, since the Lord's Supper is a "gift God gives to penitent sinners," one must translate "testament." But it is just this very characteristic of the "new" covenant of grace which distinguishes it from the "old," namely, that the old agreement required a "mediator" to offer prescribed sacrifices on behalf of the people for the forgiveness of sins, while the new agreement established by Christ's blood sacrifice freely gives forgiveness-without obedience or sacrifice of any kind on the part of the people.

There is also a "participatory" aspect in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper which seems to justify our translating [διαθήκη](#) as "covenant" in Matthew 28:26. C.P. Krauth points out that sacrifice is the "inseparable constituent" in the OT covenant idea. In closing this discussion of [διαθήκη](#) in Matthew 26 we quote at length from Krauth:

The idea of sacrifice under the Old Dispensation sheds light upon the nature of the Lord's Supper. 'Without the shedding of blood is no remission.' The slaying of the victim by shedding its blood, by which alone its death could be effected, was properly the sacrifice. After the sacrifice was made, two things were essential to securing its end: first, that God should receive it; second, that man should participate in it. The burning of the sacrifice by fire from heaven was the means of God's accepting it on the one side; and eating of it, the means of man's participating on the other. The truth is, that the sacrifice of the Old Testament resolves itself into the very elements which we find in the Lord's Supper. The Altar was the Table of the Lord, and the whole conception of sacrifice runs out into this, that **it is a covenanting Supper between God and man.**

The sacrifice, through the portion burnt, is received of God by the element of fire; the portion reserved is partaken of by men, is communicated to them, and received by them. The eating of one portion of the sacrifice, by the offerer, is as real a part of the whole sacred act as the burning of the other part is. Man offers to God; this is sacrifice. God gives back to man; this is sacrament. The oblation, or thing offered, supplies both sacrifice and sacrament, but with this difference, **that under the Old Dispensation God received part and man received part; but under the New, God receives all and gives back all:** Jesus Christ, in His own divine person, makes that complete which was narrowed under the Old Covenant by the necessary limitations of mere matter. But in both is this common idea, that all who receive or commune in the reception of the oblation, either on the one part as a sacrifice, or on the other as a sacrament, are in **covenant**; and in the light of this alone is it, that not on Calvary, where the sacrifice was made, **but in the Supper, where the sacrifice is applied, the Savior says: "This is the New Testament (new covenant) in My blood."** (*The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, p. 591, Augsburg; all emphasis added)

(2) THE NIV DOES NOT NECESSARILY “TEACH A CHRISTOLOGY WHICH SEPARATES CHRIST’S DIVINITY AND HUMANITY” BY ITS TRANSLATION OF COLOSSIANS 2:9 AND 1 TIMOTHY 3:16.

GREEK (Col. 2:9): [ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς](#),  
NIV: For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,  
NKJV (KJV): For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;  
AAT: In Him, that is, in His body, lives all the fullness of the Deity.  
NASB: For in Him all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form,

GREEK (1 Tim. 3:16) ... [ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί](#)  
NIV: He appeared in a body,  
NKJV (KJV): God was manifest in the flesh,  
AAT: He appeared in flesh,  
NASB: He who was revealed in the flesh,

[σωματικῶς](#) in Colossians 2:9 means “bodily,” corporeally. We fail to see how the NIV translation, “bodily form,” is incorrect, or somehow expresses a separation of Christ’s divine nature from His human nature. Is there an essential difference between “bodily” and “bodily form”? Do some suggest that “bodily form” allows for something less than the true and permanent union of the divine and human natures of Christ? We do not see the logic of such an argument.

Perhaps there is greater reason for concern over the NIV translation of 1 Timothy 3:16. “**Who was REVEALED** ([ἐφανερώθη](#)= aor. passive) **in flesh**” is preferable to the NIV’s “Who appeared.” A temporary “appearance” in the flesh of man on the part of the Divine might be read into the NIV translation, especially if one is mindful of the largely Reformed background of the NIV translators. We also wonder at Beck’s (AAT) translation of the passive verb!

(3) THE NIV TRANSLATION OF ACTS 3:21 IS INCORRECT AND COULD INDEED BE USED TO “DENY THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL PRESENCE” SINCE IT SPEAKS OF CHRIST AS IF HE WERE CONFINED TO HEAVEN.

NIV: **He must remain in heaven** until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

The NIV’s “He must remain in heaven” is certainly a mistranslation of the Greek: [ὃν δεῖ οὐρανὸν μὲν](#) δεξασθαι (“Whom the heavens must **receive**”). The verb [δέχομαι](#) does not have a static sense anywhere in the NT. [δέχομαι](#) is a dynamic verb which means to receive with deliberate readiness, and is translated at other places in the NIV as “receive” (Luke 8:13; Acts 11:1; 17:11), “accept” (Acts 8:14; Jas. 1:21), and “welcome” (1 Thess. 2:13). Only in Acts 3:21 does the NIV use “remain” as a translation of [δέχομαι](#)!

A comparison of the KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB, AAT, and Luther shows that the NIV stands alone. There seems to be little question that the NIV has not translated this verse but interpreted it with a prejudice that violates the original Greek and is rejected by the Formula of Concord (SD VIII: 119).

**REGARDING NIV PROMOTION OF MILLENNIALISTIC ERRORS CONCERNING THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND TWO PHYSICAL RESURRECTIONS; AND THE CALVINIST-REFORMED ERROR OF DOUBLE PREDESTINATION:**

(1) THE NIV’S TRANSLATION OF [θλίψις](#) AS “TRIBULATION” IN REVELATION 7: 14. AND IN NO OTHER NT PASSAGE WHERE THIS WORD OCCURS. IS SUSPECT.

[θλίψις](#) (from the v. [θλίβω](#)) is a “pressing,” or “pressure.” It is rendered by our English translations variously as “tribulation,” “trouble,” “affliction,” “anguish,” “distress,” “suffering,” etc. There are many pressures in our fallen world—many situations and conditions which oppress us—and [θλίψις](#) is used 44 times in the NT to describe the difficulty of these times and conditions.

The KJV, RSV, NKJV, and NASB all translate [θλίψις](#) with “tribulation” in Revelation 7: 14, like the NIV. However, unlike the NIV, all these translations use “tribulation” very often in other NT passages, for example: Matthew 13:21; 24:9,21; Acts 14:22; Romans 12:12, 2 Corinthians 8:2. **Only once**

out of 44 NT appearances of the word [θλίψις](#) does the NIV render “tribulation,” and that is in Revelation 7:14.

In all fairness to the NIV translators we might point out that the Greek construction in Revelation 7: 14 is unique among all the other passages where [θλίψις](#) appears. Whereas Matthew 24:21 and Acts 7:11, for example, have [θλίψις μεγάλη](#) (great tribulation, great trouble or affliction), and Acts 14:22 has [πολλῶν θλίψεων](#), only Revelation 7:14 has [τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης](#)—“the tribulation, **the** great one.” The AAT ignores the article. But the definite article is used with the adjective in order to sum up and “totalize” life on this earth for Christians as that of affliction and tribulation. They have not escaped the great affliction but have endured all for Jesus-being “faithful unto death.” They are seen as “ever coming ([ἐρχόμενοι](#)) out from the great affliction”—through death to life eternal—by the cleansing power of Christ’s blood.

Although we may recognize that Revelation 7: 14 speaks of [θλίψις](#) with a specificity unique among the many passages where the word occurs, this does not justify the NIV translating “tribulation” at this place and nowhere else. A translation such as “the great affliction,” or “the great distress” is just as specific as “the great tribulation” and better understood by today’s readers. We are suspicious of the NIV translators’ intentions in this verse.

### (2) BY ITS MISTRANSLATION OF REVELATION 20:4-5 THE NIV TEACHES THAT THERE ARE TWO PHYSICAL RESURRECTIONS FROM THE DEAD.

NIV: They **came to life** and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did **not come to life** until the thousand years were ended.)

GREEK: [καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Ἐριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη. οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔζησαν ἄχρι τελεσθῆ τὰ χίλια ἔτη.](#)

There can be only one translation of the aorist verb [ἔζησαν](#) in this verse. “They **lived** and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were ended.)” The NIV translators have rendered [ἔζησαν](#) as if it came from [ἀναζάω](#), which means “to live again” or “come alive from the dead.” But [ἔζησαν](#) is from [ζάω](#), which means simply “to live.” John did not see the bodies, but the “souls” of the martyrs and all those faithful to Christ unto death. These souls are not said to have died and lived again; but the “lived and reigned with Christ” for a “thousand years,” which represents the New Testament period. What John sees in this vision is not two bodily resurrections from the dead, but the fulfillment of Jesus’ wonderful promise in John 11:26: “Whoever lives and believes in Me **shall never die**”!

The NIV translation gives the impression that there are two bodily resurrections from the dead separated by 1,000 years. Millennialists have consistently ignored the fact that John saw souls on thrones, not bodies. The NIV translators may have allowed such an interpretation to influence their translation of this verse.

### (3) REGARDING THE CHARGE THAT THE NIV TIES “THE NAME OF GOD” TO A THEOLOGY OF DOUBLE PREDESTINATION BY TRANSLATING HIS NAME AS ‘SOVEREIGN LORD’ (Isaiah 25:8; 40:10; and passim: see also 1 Peter 2:8).”

We consider first the NIV translation of [יהוה יצרא](#) as “Sovereign LORD” in all its frequent appearances in the OT (Gen. 15:2; Exod. 34:23; Isa. 25:8; 28:16; 40:10; etc.). The preface to the NIV offers the following explanation for its translation of this compound name of God:

In regard to the divine name YHWH, commonly referred to as the TETRAGRAMMA TON, the translators adopted the device used in most English versions of rendering that name as “LORD” in capital letters to distinguish it from ADONAI, another Hebrew word rendered “Lord,” for which small letters are used. Wherever the two names stand together in the Old Testament as a compound name of God, they are rendered “Sovereign LORD.” (NIV, p. ix, ~ 1978, New York International Bible Society, Zondervan Corp., Jan. 1979 printing)

The NIV stands alone in this rendering of [יהוה יצרא](#) — The KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB, and AAT translate “Lord GOD.” One might argue against translating [יצרא](#) as “Sovereign” on the grounds that whereas [יצרא](#) is a noun and title in the Hebrew, the word “sovereign” is an adjective in English. We might further argue that [יצרא](#), “a special form of the word [יצר](#), a word which signifies Master” (Girdlestone, *Old Testament Synonyms*, p. 34), or “Lord, . . . where God is submissively and reverently addressed” (Gesenius, p. 13, 1882 ed.), is a designation of the **office** or **position of ruler**, whereas the word “sovereign”



speaks of **free, self-determined and absolute power**. Finally, we could argue that “Sovereign” is not so well understood by the general reader today as “Lord” or “Master.” We might well prefer to render [יהוה](#) [יְהוָה](#) as “Lord Jehovah.”

Still, it is this writer’s opinion that no strong objection would be raised against the NIV translation “**Sovereign LORD**,” were it not for the emphasis placed on the word “sovereign” by the Calvinist Reformed in support of so-called “double predestination” (i.e., that God not only chose some in eternity to be saved, but that He also chose and predestined the remainder to eternal damnation). In his book, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Loraine Boettner, leading Reformed apologete, supports his error with a chapter on “The Sovereignty of God.” The Reformed understanding of divine sovereignty is stated by Boettner in this way:

It has been recognized by Christians in all ages that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that . . . He is the ultimate source of all the power that is found in the creatures.

**Hence nothing can come to pass apart from His sovereign will;** . . . Even the sinful actions of men can occur only by His permission. And since He permits not unwillingly **but willingly**, all that comes to pass—including the actions and **ultimate destiny of men—must be, in some sense, in accordance with what He has desired and purposed.** . . . All things without exception, indeed are disposed by Him, and **His will is the ultimate account of all that occurs.** (pp. 30,31)

The NIV had its beginning in 1965, “after years of exploratory study by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals” (NIV preface, p. vii). While a list of all the participants in the work includes translators from many Christian denominations, the Reformed are most heavily represented. To the mind of the Calvinist Reformed student of the NIV, “Sovereign LORD,” certainly calls to mind “a theology of double predestination.” Let us beware of the potential danger to every student of the NIV!

The concern is expressed that 1 Peter 2 : 8b—[οἱ προσκόπτουσιν τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες, εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν](#)—as “mistranslated” by the NIV teaches the “double predestination” error of the Calvinist Reformed. The NIV translates this verse “**They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.**” The casual reader of this translation could easily get the impression (whether intended by the NIV or not) that the Jews were “destined” to “disobey the message” of the gospel. But the phrase introduced by [εἰς ὃ](#) refers back to [ὅτι προσκόπτουσιν](#), **not** to the explanatory or causal [τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες](#). We ought to translate: “They stumble—being disobedient to the word—to which they were also appointed.” Or as the AAT has it: “When they disobey the word, they stumble over it; that’s the end appointed for them.” Disobedience to the gospel was not appointed by God to the Jews, but their “stumbling” over Christ was appointed by God because of their disobedience to the gospel.

The KJV, NKJV, NASB, and AAT all translate “**appointed**.” We wonder at the NIV’s choice of “destined” for the aorist passive [ἐτέθησαν](#) only in this passage. For in 1 Timothy 2:7, where Paul refers to his apostleship saying, “[εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη](#),” the NIV has correctly rendered, “to which I **was appointed**.” The same aorist passive form of the verb is “destined” in 1 Peter 2:8b, but “appointed” in 1 Timothy 2:7! Clearly, the NIV propounds the double predestination error in the former passage, teaching that the Jews were “destined” to disobey the gospel of Christ.

Is “destined” a mis translation of [ἐτέθησαν](#)? Most certainly! For “destined” is synonymous with pre-destined, pre-determined—it is a word that denotes a “fixing beforehand.” There is only one Greek verb that means “predestine”—[προορίζω](#). Contrariwise, [τίθημι](#) (and its forms), as far as we have been able to determine, is **never** used in the NT to speak of a putting, laying, placing, or appointing that took place in the pre-dawn counsels of God. It is always used of action in time. (Even the reference in Hebrews 1:2 to Christ’s being **appointed** “heir of all things” does not speak of an appointment in eternity. For a careful look at Hebrews 1:1,2, and 4,5, along with Acts 13:33,34, shows that God appointed His Son to be the “heir of all things” according to His **human nature** when He raised Jesus from the dead. See also Psalms 2 and 8.

Note: Before leaving the subject of the NIV’s mistranslations which seem to favor a double predestination theology, it would be well to give brief attention to Romans 9:22-23, an important passage in the predestination controversy. Surprisingly, none of our most common English translations, including the NIV, is guilty of a gross mistranslation of this passage.

In these verses, two different verbs are used to speak of the “vessels” of God’s wrath and the “vessels” of God’s mercy. The verb [κατηρτισμένα](#) is a perfect passive participle (not middle or reflexive as rendered in the AAT), indicating a completed act with on-going implications—“already prepared (or suited) for destruction.” The point is that God tolerated (“bore” - [ἤνεγκεν](#)) what had been already and “completely suited” for destruction for a long time. This readiness for destruction had been completed in time or in the lifetimes of such vessels (e.g., Pharaoh).

However, the *προ* of [προητοίμασεν](#) (“prepared beforehand”—from *προετοιμάζω*) takes us back to eternity for the divine preparation of the “vessels of mercy,” as the only other NT use of *προετοιμάζω* (Eph. 2:10) clearly shows. Furthermore, the third person singular ending of [προητοίμασεν](#) reveals that “HE,” namely God Himself, is the One Who prepared the “vessels of mercy” beforehand, i.e., in eternity (v. 23), whereas [κατηρτισμένα](#) (“already prepared for destruction”) in the previous verse refers to the “vessels of wrath” in the **passive** voice—no agent is identified.

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## The Role Of Law And Gospel In Evangelism

Stephen C.F. Kurtzahn

### I. The Biblical and Confessional Foundation

In the last chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, because of His authority as the exalted Son of God and Savior of the world, Jesus commanded His disciples of all time: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28: 19). How would this be accomplished? By both “. . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ” and “. . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19, 20).

The “all things” would be recorded by the apostles in the New Testament Scriptures as the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” and bring to their remembrance everything Jesus said to them (John 14: 26). Paul says concerning the writings of the apostles: “. . . When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2: 13). Along with the Old Testament scriptures this word was “given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3: 16). These “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1: 21). Our Lord tells us that this “word is truth” (John 17: 17).

It is through this word that the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who forgives us all our sins:

“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6: 63).

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10: 17).

“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3: 15).

“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth” (Jas. 1: 18).

“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1: 23).

There are two main teachings of the Holy Scriptures. The word can be rightly divided into law and gospel:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2: 15).

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17).

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3: 23, 24).

The law shows us our sin:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3: 20).

But the gospel shows us our Savior who forgives our sins:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son . . ." (John 3: 16).

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5: 19).

This gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Christ also comes to us through Holy Baptism as the word is connected with the water. It comes as well in the Lord's Supper, where the word is connected with the bread and wine and Christ gives us His body and blood:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2: 38, 39).

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26: 28).

Based upon the clear and unmistakable word of God, our Augsburg Confession declares: ". . . For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel . . ." (Footnote: AC, V, Triglot p. 45).

And Martin Luther writes in the Smalcald Articles:

"Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments" (Footnote: SA, VIII, Triglot, p. 497).

The reformer also said:

We treat of the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But He has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper or sacrament. There He has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the Gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once and for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continuously, before and after, from the beginning to the end of the world.

Christ on the cross and all His suffering and death do not avail, even if, as you teach, they are "acknowledged and meditated upon" with the utmost "passion, ardor, heartfeltness." Something else must always be there. What is it? The Word, the Word, the Word. Listen, lying spirit, the Word avails. Even if Christ were given for us and crucified a thousand times, it would all be in vain if the Word of God were absent and were not distributed and given to me with the bidding, this is for you, take what is yours. (Footnote: Quoted by Kurt Marquart, Church Growth as Mission Paradigm: a Lutheran Assessment, p. 12).

In order to share the forgiveness of sins earned for all by Christ on the cross, we need to proclaim God' s word, where we behold "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2: 2). As we do we need to make a very clear distinction between Law and Gospel. The Lutheran dogmatician John Gerhard said, "The distinction between the law and the gospel must be maintained at every point" (Footnote: Quoted by C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, p. 37).

Our own Formula of Concord also declares:

As the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a special brilliant light, which serves to the end that God' s Word may be rightly divided, and the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles may be properly explained and understood, we must guard it with especial care, in order that these two doctrines may not be mingled with one another, or a law be made out of the Gospel, whereby the merit of Christ is obscured and troubled consciences are robbed of their comfort, which they otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached genuinely and in its purity, and by which they can support themselves in their most grievous trials against the errors of the Law. (Footnote: FC, TD, V, Triglöt p. 951).

So we are to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15). We are to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4: 2). ". . . Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations . . ." (Luke 24: 47).

## **II. The Law and Gospel Distinction versus Modern Missiological Principles**

The sharing of the word with its law and gospel emphasis is particularly Lutheran and flies in the face of those modern Missiological principles that can be classified under what has been called the Church Growth Movement. By now we should all be familiar with the history and tenets of the Church Growth Movement.

The Church Growth Movement is based on Reformed/Calvinistic theology. It is a mistake to think that the Church Growth Movement is simply a methodology into which you can plug your own theological tenets and make it work for you. The Church Growth Movement knows nothing of the law/gospel distinction. Listen to a recent Lutheran author as he speaks about this very matter:

The literature of the Church Growth Movement is almost silent on the matter of God' s forgiveness. In those instances where forgiveness is mentioned, it is relegated to one of the blessings of renewal, rather than the basis for it. "Knowing Christ" or "having a personal relationship with Christ" is about as far as the literature goes in defining Christianity. Almost all emphasis is on the empirical results in a person' s life, if he or she submits to Christ as Lord and serves him.

The only conclusion one can come to about the Church Growth Movement' s understanding of the gospel is that it is the good news that God will renew his life. Anyone who reads the Lutheran understanding of the gospel into Church Growth literature is fooling himself. (Footnote: Robert Koester, *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry*, p. 117)

Law and gospel. Sin and grace. Our guilt which condemns us before God and Christ' s righteousness which justifies us before His face. This is the heart and core of our message from the pulpit, in the classroom, on the street, in the jungle or out in the desert. We have been warned in the past that we dare not make the doctrine of church fellowship and separation the heart and core of our proclamation. We dare not do it either with the doctrine of mission work and evangelism. Let us explain.

What did Peter proclaim to the masses on Pentecost? Missions? Or maybe the gifts of the Spirit? No. Peter proclaimed a marvelous law and gospel sermon focusing on Christ (Acts 2: 14-29). It was the message of the Savior that moved the 3, 000 to go home and share law and gospel with their families and communities.

The southern Baptist preacher likes to try to strengthen faith in his hearers by always talking about faith. But what really strengthens the Christian's faith is the message of the cross and the empty tomb. To strengthen faith we don't preach only about faith. How can we then increase in our people a real, genuinely scriptural and God-pleasing zeal for sharing the word with others? It is not done by constantly harping on missions, missions, missions, and comparing how we have fallen short in this endeavor to other denominations. But this desire to share Christ with others comes from the faithful proclamation of law and gospel. It has been suggested that "evangelism and mission work" cannot be classified as a doctrine (such as the "doctrine of the means of grace," "the doctrine of creation," "the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ," etc.), but that "evangelism and mission work" are part and parcel of the gospel itself. The gospel, however, is the message of how God has earned for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ. The gospel deals solely with what God has done for us. Period. Whatever deals with what we do or are supposed to do must be properly classified under the law, if it is to be listed under anything. (Some may like to use the term "evangelical admonition," if that term is understood properly.) To say that our work and our action to proclaim the word is in and of itself "gospel" is to confound the proper distinction between law and gospel. ". . . the Gospel is properly the promise of the forgiveness of sins and of justification through Christ . . ." (FC TD V, para. 27). ". . . The law tells us what we are to do. No such instruction is contained in the Gospel. On the contrary, the Gospel reveals to us only what God is doing. The Law is speaking concerning our works; the Gospel, concerning the great works of God. In the Law we hear the tenfold summons, 'Thou shalt.' Beyond that the Law has nothing to say to us. The Gospel, on the other hand, makes no demands whatsoever" (Walther, Law and Gospel, p. 9).

May we ever and only teach "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" to a world lost in the darkness of sin, guilt and unbelief!

Knowing Thee and Thy salvation,  
Grateful love dare never cease  
To proclaim Thy tender mercies,  
Gracious Lord, Thy heav'nly peace.  
Sound we forth the Gospel tidings  
To the earth's remotest bound  
That the sinner has been pardoned  
And forgiveness can be found. TLH 498:4

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## ROBERT DAVID PREUS, 1924-1995

On November 4, 1995, death came to one of the most controversial figures in modern American Lutheranism, Dr. Robert Preus. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which he had once identified as a unionistic and heterodox church body, seemed willing at long last to recognize many of the contributions which Preus had made to its history. In a virtual explosion of grief, "conservatives," "moderates," and "liberals" within the LCMS spoke words of tribute to their beloved, tolerated, or detested former professor of theology and president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. If one were to try to get an honest view of Preus from all these sources, it would be impossible because of the widely differing opinions held by the various groups, even within his own church body.

That Preus possessed tremendous intellectual gifts there is no doubt. They were demonstrated early on and increased as he matured. Sad to say, however, his spiritual strength demonstrated itself early in his career to a point that it did not have in his later life. I am referring to the Spirit-led awareness and conviction that compelled Preus to leave the liberal Lutheran church body of his youth to affiliate with and to be theologically trained in the then orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Synod (affectionately called the "Little Norwegian Synod"). It was an act of courage and sacrifice, for the ELS had little to offer in the way of earthly recognition, advancement, or financial remuneration.

I first knew of Robert Preus when I came, in 1949, to Mankato, MN, to teach at Bethany Lutheran College, the ELS high school, junior college and seminary. He had graduated from the seminary department two years earlier, in 1947, and was serving as an ELS pastor. Some time later he left the active parish ministry and began his studies leading to the reception of a Ph. D. from the University of Edinburgh in 1952. It was in 1952, as Preus was doing research for his doctoral thesis in the library of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Mequon, WI, that I, a senior student at the seminary, had the opportunity to spend many hours with him. We were both in our twenties at the time. I soon recognized the deep awareness Preus had of the troubled situation in Lutheranism in general and in the Synodical Conference in particular, and I shared his expressed convictions that the Synodical Conference could not serve much longer because of the unionistic practice of the LCMS.

It was no surprise when the two Preus brothers, Jack and Robert, a few years later took leadership roles in the movement within the ELS to seek to correct the LCMS in its heterodox and unionistic practices and, when the LCMS did not heed such admonition, to suspend fellowship relations with the LCMS. This, too, required great spiritual strength, supplied through the clear Word of God. It is unfortunate that the ELS did not in fact carry out its own resolutions, but, instead, joined with the WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) in the erroneous profession that termination of fellowship is called for (only) when one comes to the conviction that admonition is of no further avail. Nevertheless, the Preus brothers made it clear that they were convinced at that time that the LCMS was a heterodox church body.

It was a shock, therefore, to learn that both Robert and Jack had made the decision to accept calls into the LCMS. I, for one, have never understood how it was possible for them to betray the very principles for which they had already endured hardship. In his piece on Robert Preus in Elwell's HANDBOOK OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS, Prof. Kurt Marquart seeks to justify the Preus brothers' defection by intimating that only small minds refuse to change their opinions and by claiming that they did not regard the situation in the LCMS as hopeless as they had originally thought. However, the trite adage and LCMS' s hopelessness or not do not serve. Whether or not a church body is in a "hopeless" state is beside the point and beyond our ability to judge. The real question is: IS IT CAUSING DIVISIONS AND OFFENSES CONTRARY TO THE TRUE DOCTRINE? The other Missourian mentioned in Elwell's book, Dr. Franz Pieper, had the right answer: NO FELLOWSHIP, and certainly not accepting calls into a unionistic and therefore heterodox church body.

One should and does rejoice whenever true testimony in accordance with the pure Word of God is expressed, and therefore I thank God for His granting to Robert Preus the gift of such true testimony in his many writings, particularly in regard to the doctrine of Justification, and his volumes on post-Reformation theology. May what he wrote find great success in convincing his readers of the truth of God confessed therein. The praise and glory for Robert Preus' gifts and ability are the Lord' s!

Pastor Herman Otten' s CHRISTIAN NEWS of November 13, 1995, was replete with that periodical' s usual hyperboles: "A Great Hero of the Faith, " "The Greatest Theologian of this Generation, " "One of the greatest theologians of the Twentieth Century, " "What a great theologian! " The Rev. Jack Cascione had gushed in CHRISTIAN NEWS: "More students of Robert Preus are able to correctly divide law and gospel than of any other Lutheran seminary, " as though that will ever be revealed before the Last Day! - I have not known Robert Preus in the years of his career in the LCMS, but the Robert Preus I knew when we were both in our "salad days" would have been highly amused by all the adulation. Requiescat in pace!

*John Lau*