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+ Carl Martin Thurow +

August 16, 1914 – September 15, 1999

A Miracle of God’s Creation

Psalm 139:13,14,16: “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.”

On August 16, 1914, God blessed Theodore and Emma (nee Keller) Thurow with His special creation of Carl Martin.

Ephesians 4:24: "and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

God created a new man in Carl and delivered him from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God through the gracious washing of baptism on August 30, 1914. He later confirmed his baptismal vow through his own confession of faith on July 1, 1928. The LORD developed and trained His servant through schooling which included 2 years of college at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, and 3 years at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. Carl was ordained into the public preaching ministry and installed as pastor of churches in Shirley and Pine Grove, Wisconsin, in 1941.

Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'"

On December 26, 1943, the LORD God brought to Carl the precious gift of a Christian wife, herself a special creation of God, Dorothea Koch. The Lord Jesus became the Head of the new family and blessed them with the creative gift of five children – Carla, Nona, Theodore, Martin, and Paula.

Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

The LORD not only called Carl to faith by grace. He also graciously instilled in his heart an appreciation for God's grace and a love for His word. In obedience to the word of God, Carl left his former fellowship when it began to defend false teaching and was instrumental in the early years of the Church of the Lutheran Confession and served the synod in a number of ways. In addition to his God-created good works as a Christian husband and father, God prepared him to be a gospel preacher and a Christian gentleman to all. Carl served congregations in Two Rivers, Wisconsin; Lamar, Colorado; Fridley and Austin, Minnesota. He retired from the ministry in 1984 and moved to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where he continued to be God's servant in his life, works, and writings.

Isaiah 65:17-18: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy."

On September 9th Carl Thurow suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. The LORD gave Carl six days of Bible devotions and constant visits from a loving family before taking his soul to heaven on Thursday, September 15th, at the age of 85 years and 30 days. Carl's body was buried September 17th at Prairie View Cemetery in the town of Hallie, where it awaits the resurrection on the Judgment Day.

Carl was preceded in death by his parents; one son, Martin; and one sister, Ardis Thurow.

Ecclesiastes 12:1a: "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth."

Still in the time of grace are: Carl's wife, Dorothea.

Their children:

Carla and her husband, James Pelzl, of Eau Claire WI, and their son;

Nona and her husband, Paul Schaller, of Eau Claire WI, and their three children;

Ted and his wife, Connie, of Eau Claire WI, and their four children;

Martin's wife, Roxann, of St. Paul MN, and their two children;

Paula and her husband, Scott Schwartz, of Chippewa Falls WI, who are expecting a baby in October;

And one great grandchild.

Carl's brothers:

Theodore Thurow and his wife, Virginia, of Milwaukee WI;

Roland Thurow and his wife, Shay, of Georgetown TX;

His sister:

Lenore McEachen of Hermosa Beach CA;

And many, many friends.

Isaiah 61:10a: *‘I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.’*

The Victory Service of Pastor Thurow was held on September 20, 1999. The sermon text was Psalm 71; the theme: “The Lifestyle of the Christian is Simple: 1) All life long the LORD takes care of us; 2) All day long we praise Him.” The hymns sung were 413; 35; 391; 192:1,2,4-6; and 54 (TLH).

- The obituary read in the funeral service of Pastor Carl Thurow.

It is our custom to present in these pages an article previously written by our departed brothers. The following paper was presented by Carl Thurow in 1983. – JL

The Vital Role of Christian Education As a Blessing to Our Synod

[Delivered at the Minnesota Delegate Conference, Minneapolis, Minn. 6-26-1983.]

Carl M. Thurow

In the 22nd chapter of Proverbs the Holy Spirit caused King Solomon to record words of divine wisdom that are indeed precious to us in directing us to a guideline that has as much to do with the earthly future of our Church of the Lutheran Confession as it does with the eternal future of our children. Although we know that passage well, we can never hear it too often: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” That word of God sums up the whole purpose of Christian training. There is only one way to salvation, through the Christ of the Scriptures. That is the one and only way we want our children to go. And the most precious thing we can do for them in this life is to teach them that way so thoroughly that they will not have departed from it before the Lord calls them out of this life. It also follows as a natural deduction that the more Christian training we can give our children, the greater is the hope that they will never depart from God’s way of salvation.

In families where this concern is foremost, that training already begins while the child is sitting in mother’s lap and on father’s knee. This is an important time. These are impressionable years. What children learn during these years they will never really forget. And should they ever wander from the one path later in life, who knows but what the early training of these childhood years may again unite them with their Savior on their deathbed.

But after only too few years of this intimate home training, formal education outside the home begins, and with it come increasing dangers and temptations to depart from the path. Other influence besides that of the parents begins to make itself felt upon the children. Fortunate indeed are those parents who have a Christian day school available. If this is not possible, then parents must be especially alert, following up carefully on everything their children learn in public school, helping them sort out the good from the bad, both correcting them and directing them. At every turn Satan will use the public school philosophy to distort and dilute, yes, to destroy, the truths you parents have taught your children. Humanistic thinking and morality, already surprisingly prevalent in the early years of elementary public education, will do its best to wipe out the saving truths and the morals you have inculcated in your children. Therefore the home must always be the hub and communications center—sifting, filtering and guiding—so that your children continue to see clearly the Way of Life. You want nothing to lead them from that path so carefully impressed upon them in their pre-school years at home.

Even when children are attending a Christian day school, the home remains critical in the child’s spiritual direction. True, the day school serves as a most wonderful aid to the parents. But they

dare never for one moment forget that God's finger points right at the home. He lays the responsibility on father and mother.

In fact, no Christian parents dare ever relax their concern and consider the battle won or their children safe. When parents become negligent, Satan shouts with glee, as Luther says, for that escalates his chances of getting those children to depart from God's way and walk in the devil's way.

These dangers increase sharply as the elementary education is completed and the high school years begin. Children spend more time away from home, at school and with their friends. For some, peer pressure becomes overwhelming, but even the strong cannot escape it altogether. The sinful flesh exerts itself more powerfully; independent thinking begins to make itself felt, often in the form of rebellion against parental authority. Remember how at that age we often thought ourselves wiser than our parents? Times have not changed. At no time is a solid Christian home more important than during these teen years, as the immoral morality of humanism begins to exert itself with full pressure, seeking to convince the child that doing his own thing is doing the right thing. The "situation ethics" taught today knows no ethical code. The student is told that in any situation, whatever it may be, he is to think about it, decide what seems to be the best solution, what will give him the most pleasure, etc., and then his decision will be ethically right—for that time. Next time the answer could be just the opposite, but it would be right because that is what seemed the best answer. God and the moral code of the ten commandments are trampled under foot and supplanted by fickle human judgment.

It is during this time in their children's lives that truly consecrated parents in our CLC give thanks to a gracious God for providing us with two Immanuel Lutheran High Schools, the one at Eau Claire, the other at Mankato. By no means do these schools offer a way by which weary parents can lay upon someone else's shoulders the responsibility for the Christian education of their children. That responsibility remains right where God put it—on father and mother. On the other hand, for those parents who are committed to doing all they can, no better assistance can be found than the influence of these high schools, where God's Word is not only the guide for all moral behavior but is also the chief tool of the dedicated teachers who are devoting their energies to helping the parents establish those teenagers so firmly on the path of salvation that they will never depart from it.

However, at this point we often hear a grave concern being voiced by parents: "Oh, we want so much to send our child, but we really do not see how we can afford it. There just seems to be no way." And so very often this financial concern indeed seems justified. For parents who face this dilemma, I have no practical solution to offer other than fervent prayer. By this time in my life, I have accumulated many years of observation. Not once have I seen it happen that parents who approached this problem with prayerful determination were unable to fulfill their dream of sending their children to a Christian high school and college. When the time came, taking it day by day, they were always able to pay those bills which had looked so staggering when they had been thinking about them a few years earlier. Our flesh plays its part here too. Even for the most disciplined Christians, it is still a matter of planning for our priorities. There are always some plans that can be set aside, some things that can be done without. At any rate, if your desire is for continuing your children's education on the high school and college levels, pray about it with them, talk about it with them, strive for it with them, and then trust that the Savior will bring it to pass.

By the time high school years are finished, many, perhaps most, students have decided upon their vocation. If it is to be a pastor or teacher, they will naturally continue at ILC. If they have chosen another field, then whether they have been attending at Immanuel or a public high school, there is so much Christian training to be gained, and little or nothing to be lost in scholarship credits, by taking the two-year college course at ILC.

Thus by concentrating on Christian education for their children, our dedicated parents have done their best to assure that their God-given offspring will not depart from the path of salvation on which they have established them.

However, in all this we have not yet said one word about that to which the title of this paper points: The Vital Role of Christian Education As a Blessing to Our Synod. In reality, it is not necessary to say much about that. If our concern is for the souls of our children, such concern automatically also serves as a blessing to our synod. Namely, even if our parents are not aware of it, in their desire for Christian education for their children, they turn out a by-product that results in a very

great blessing to our CLC, to all its members, and to those still to be gathered through our mission work. Or it could be said this way: the greater our dedication to Christian education the greater is the hope that our CLC will survive in its present form as a conservative, Bible-oriented church body, clinging to the unadulterated truth and continuing to possess the gospel of salvation as a precious message for successive generations.

In this 500th anniversary year of Martin Luther's birth we would do well to remember that he always saw the grave danger of falling away from the truth and the all-encompassing need to remain a people faithful unto God's Word. As such he always stressed Christian education as the answer. Here is such a statement from one of his sermons:

If this misfortune (of becoming a false church body) is to be prevented, it can be done only by teaching and training our precious youth in the right and Christian manner. Then, when presently we lay down our head and sleep, they will step into our place and will not only set forth right doctrine to the people and impress it with all diligence but will also uphold it against the sectarian churches and false teachers. It is a very great grace when our pulpits and schools are supplied with persons who preach and teach the Word aright and purely. But besides these there must also be lay people who defend the doctrine and oppose heretics, so that the doctrine is not adulterated by them. For this purpose schools must be maintained; from them come the people who can contend for doctrine. (Plass: *What Luther Says*, #2975)

This lays before us a reason, at once practical and also important, for seeing to it that ILC is maintained in our midst. We speak about it often at conferences and Coordinating Council meetings, but do we bring this concern to our people as much as we ought to? We worry about the decrease in enrollment at ILC during the past few years. The cost of operating the school remains about the same, but as tuition revenues decrease our synod's subsidy to the school must increase. That robs precious dollars from our mission program, but we have to maintain ILC. If our synod is to survive it needs ILC; and this is not a statement of pride but a concern for survival. We need to do everything possible to preserve our heritage of the truth for future generations. Luther knew only too well how quickly the gospel pulls stakes and moves elsewhere when a particular area or country begins to take a lackadaisical attitude toward it. When that happens, there may be many churches remaining and much preaching—but no gospel to bring the news of Christ's redemption. The last thing we want is for our CLC to deteriorate into a heterodox church body with nothing of value to offer to our own or to others.

But there is also another reason that makes ILC so vital to the very existence of the CLC: the need to prepare future teachers and pastors to replace those who on account of age continue to leave the scene. Ours is not the only small church body that has been formed by such as left their former association due to doctrinal errors that crept in. There have been many. If such groups do not soon establish their own higher schools and seminary, they gradually disintegrate. Some of these groups have at times sent their young people to schools and seminaries of less conservative churches for Christian training. But history shows this to be disastrous. Either a physical disintegration sets in [If we can go to school there, why should we be separate?], or a gradual slipping into false doctrine takes place. Obviously, we need to do our own training of future workers, yes, and also of future laymen in the church.

As concerns the activity of our lay people in the church, pastors through the CLC generally report a similar observation, namely that people with good Christian training in their youth or with ILC background seem to become the reliable and active members of their congregations, whether it be out of concern for preserving true doctrine, for the many tasks that need doing right within the local congregation, for missions, or for contributions.

As with all such generalizations, there are exceptions and disappointments. But praise be to God, such disappointing exceptions are more than balanced by other exceptions—happy ones. Time and again some member who had little or no Bible training in childhood, or who may have become a Christian as an adult, will be led by the Holy Spirit to show a very joyous dedication to upholding the truth and proclaiming its message.

Nevertheless, the general rule still applies, the greater the amount of Christian training poured into a child during the adolescent years, the more productive will the child be in fruit-bearing during the later years.

Therefore, no matter from which angle we approach the matter of Christian discipline and education, ILC and its continuation is indeed an important and a most necessary blessing for our CLC—a blessing that follows as a result of our dedication to Christian schools. Let us never forget our prayers of praise to almighty God for permitting our small church body to have the wonderful opportunities for Christian education that are to be found within our CLC at every level, whether elementary, high school, college or seminary.

We can think of no more suitable closing statement than another word of wisdom from the pen of Martin Luther:

When schools flourish, matters stand well, and the church is saved. Let them call us doctors and masters if they please, but youth is the seed and the foundation of the church. Where would other doctors and masters come from after we are dead if there were no schools? We are compelled to have schools in the church. God preserves the church through schools. (Plass, #5557)

Truly God has richly showered His grace upon us through our schools and through Christian parents willing to make personal sacrifices in order to send their children to these schools.

“Do All To The Glory Of God”

A Study of the Meaning and Application of 1 Corinthians 10:31

[Presented to the West Central Delegate Conference, Bowdle, SD, June 4-6, 1999.]

Michael Roehl

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” – 1 Corinthians 10:31

[Note: All Scripture quotations are from the NKJV.]

Fulltime or Part-time Christianity?

We see evidence all around us. Christian churches today seem to be made up, at least in part, of men and women who would rather live like part-time children of God. Perhaps the most striking example is seen in the mirror. We cannot help but wonder if it has always been this way, or at least almost always. In the earliest days of the Church things may have been different. Of those days we read, ***“Then those who gladly received (Peter’s) word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”*** (Acts 2:41-42). We note that the precious faith they had found was not just a part of their lives; it was their life. In fact many believe that the Thessalonian Christians were so convinced that Jesus would be returning yet in their lifetime that they for a time did little but wait for His return (Cf. 2 Thess. 2 & 3). Paul pointed out the folly of such a lifestyle and told them to work while they waited. Yet nowhere in the Bible is their single-minded devotion to the Christian life ever condemned. In fact Paul said to those same Thessalonians, ***“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure”*** (2 Thess. 1:3-4).

Perhaps the earliest Christian Church was spared this part-time Christian mentality because of the very real persecutions they faced. One thing we do know: history tells us that the Church's reprieve from the part-time mentality did not last long. More certain still is the fact that it most certainly plagues the Church today.

The Definition of Part-time Christianity

We can define part-time Christianity as the sinful altering of our thoughts, words, and actions from Godly to ungodly as dictated by the situation or surroundings. This can happen from event to event, day to day, or even moment to moment. At church or at church-related events we think, act, and speak one way; the rest of the time we think, act, and speak "normally." Part-time Christianity is therefore the strange misconception that Christianity is a way to act and speak at church but not in our day to day lives. We call it "strange" because Christianity, by definition, means to believe in, follow, and imitate Christ Jesus. Part-time Christianity would cease to be strange only if Jesus acted like Himself only part-time. The very thought is absurd. Scripture certainly never gives that impression:

‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you’ (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

‘I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth’ (Ps. 34:1).

‘Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us’ (Ps. 62:8).

‘For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God’ (Col. 1:9-10).

This list of passages barely scratches the surface of inspired words that make clear to us that God expects fulltime Christians. He expects children who do not try to fit Jesus into their lives but who regard Jesus as their very lives. Jesus is not to be a part; He is to be the whole. But how then do we who fall far short get to the point where Jesus is all in all to us? To answer we turn first to our passage from 1 Corinthians 10:31, ***‘Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.’***

The Law Always Condemns

There is certainly a temptation to regard this passage as an *antidote* to the poisonous perversion of part-time Christianity. It is not, and can never be, an antidote. This passage is law, and the law always condemns. An antidote brings about a reversal or cure. The Holy Spirit's command to ***‘do all to the glory of God’*** aids only with the diagnosis of the problem. It offers no reversal, no cure.

When the Holy Spirit through Paul told the Corinthian Christians to ***‘do all to the glory of God,’*** he used a present active imperative verb (ποιετε) for the word translated "do." When Scripture uses imperatives in God's commands we are not to assume that we are capable of keeping such commands. We are instead to recognize all such divine ordinances as law passages, and law passages should always serve to condemn us. They are the mirrors in which we ought to recognize our own sinfulness and our own utter helplessness.

Martin Luther stressed this exegetical fact when he refuted Erasmus' notion of "free will." Erasmus believed that since God commanded man to keep a commandment, therefore man must possess not only the power to obey but also the free will necessary to choose to obey. Luther writes, *(I n imperative commands) man is admonished of his own impotence, which he, in his ignorance and pride, would not recognize or be aware of without these Divine admonitions... This passage¹ and others like it... declare, not man's ability, but his duty.*² Again he writes, *"...nothing more is signified by verbs in the imperative mood than what ought to be done, and that what is done or can be done should be expressed by verbs in the indicative."*³

This is not to say that when God gives us a command in the imperative He doesn't really expect us to obey it. Nor does it mean that the Christian should give up his struggle to keep such a command. Yet it is not the will of the Holy Spirit but of Satan that we place our hope and confidence in our own keeping of God's commands, rather than in the perfect Son of God who kept the law for us. So too

Luther wrote, *‘Hence, the work of Satan is to hold men so that they do not recognize their wretchedness, but presume that they can do everything that is stated. But the work of Moses the lawgiver is the opposite of this – namely, through the law to lay open to man his own wretchedness, so that, by thus breaking him down, and confounding him in his self-knowledge, he may make him ready for grace, and send him to Christ to be saved.’*⁴

The Law Always, but not Only, Condemns

It is altogether true that every passage of the law serves to condemn us. Yet it is also true that the child of God can use the law as a perfect explanation of the revealed will of God. Because the Christian is made up of both Old Man and New Man, our perfect knowledge of God’s will has been clouded or distorted. When we seek to thank our God for the salvation He has secured for us, His law can serve as the perfect guide. The law can therefore offer no strength or comfort, but it can offer the searching child of God direction as to just what does please our God. All strength, all motivation and willingness must come from the Holy Spirit working through the gospel. ***‘For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure’*** (Phil. 2:13).

The Third Use of This Law

It is with this understanding that we return to our passage and the Holy Spirit’s command to ***‘do all to the glory of God.’*** This passage certainly stands in stark contrast to the philosophy of the world around us. Satan, humanism, and our own sinful flesh all agree: Do all to the glory of self. The prevalent philosophy today is to take care of your own needs and desires first, and if there is any time left over use it in a way that makes you happy – still a service to self. Our standard of living helps Satan to ensure that there will be no time left after we have finished with self.

In contrast to this mentality, Paul tells the Christians in Corinth to ***‘do all to the glory of God.’*** Sinful as we are, mankind has a nasty habit of trying to minimize every law command to the point where he can keep it. This is known as “dumbing down the law.” This our Old Adam loves to do, for if we can dumb the law down far enough, we can convince ourselves that we are capable of keeping the law and therefore of earning the love of our God. Thus we would like to imagine that we have kept the Fifth Commandment if we have never murdered anyone, or the Sixth if we have never been physically unfaithful to our spouse. One of the great truths in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount was that it is not only *possible* but actually *more common* to break the commandments in our hearts, even in the absence of any sinful actions. Stated in opposite terms, obedience is first and foremost a matter of the heart. ***‘You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart’*** (Matt. 5:27-28).

The same tendency to dumb down God’s law is at work in His command to ***‘do all to the glory of God.’*** Our human intellects have trouble understanding just how we can do *everything* to the glory of God. Can we take out the garbage or clean a bathroom to the glory of God? Can we sleep or brush our teeth to the glory of God? The Holy Spirit undoubtedly understood this sinful dumbing-down tendency in us, therefore He left no doubt as to His intentions in this passage by including the words: ***‘whether you eat or drink,⁵ or whatever you do.’*** By actually listing these most common human functions the Holy Spirit made clear that the list was all-inclusive. What should be done to the glory of God? ***‘Whatever you do.’***

In rather specific terms this passage condemns the notion of part-time Christianity. First of all the context very clearly removes it from the area of the worship service. Some of the Christians in Corinth obviously had some reservations about some of the meat sold in the marketplace. The meat came from the sacrifices offered in the pagan temples of Corinth, and there was obviously a division in the congregation about eating it. Paul made it clear that a man could eat any food in good conscience, but that nothing should be done without concern for weak Christians that might be offended by his actions. Since these activities took place outside of the context of the worship service, it is clear that God intended our faith to direct all aspects of our life. God has called us to be fulltime ambassadors.

The very all-inclusive nature of this passage serves as a sobering lesson on the requirements of the law. That is the primary goal of this command. We are hereby reminded of the impossibility of

keeping the law of God perfectly, with the intention that we be driven to see the need for a savior. Who, after all, can possibly do *everything* to the glory of God, no matter how insignificant? Such a thing is beyond us. It is in fact so far beyond us that it drives us to despair of ever coming close to keeping this command.

When this passage has accomplished this monumental task in the proud human heart, then it has accomplished its mission. This law has then crushed us and caused us to despair of self. Then alone is the human heart ready to hear of a savior, *the Savior*, Jesus Christ. Then we are ready to hear that Jesus kept even this command perfectly for us. Our Lord Jesus did *everything* to the glory of God! When the Holy Spirit through the gospel calls the sinner from death to life by creating saving faith in his heart, then a rather wonderful circle is completed. The child of God returns to this same passage, the same passage that had previously crushed him and driven him away in desperation. He returns, however, as an heir of heaven seeking guidance in his one quest to praise, serve, thank, and obey the will of his Savior-God. Now however he seeks no comfort from this law, for he possesses that comfort in fullest measure in his Lord Jesus. Here instead he seeks and finds guidance. He seeks and finds an answer to just how he might now thank and serve the Lord who has rescued him from eternal death. Here the Lord tells us plainly: I want all of you, not just part.

Parallel Passages from Holy Scripture

Nor is this passage alone in its statement of God's will for us. We read also in Matthew 5:16, ***'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'*** 1 Peter 4:10-11, ***'As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.'*** In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus also said, ***'But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you'*** (Matt. 6:33). We are not to understand Jesus' words here to mean that once we get the morning religious obligations out of the way, then we are free to be all about worldly things. He is telling us that we are to be all about the kingdom of God at all times. That is where our hearts should always be centered, our eyes focused. With our efforts directed and focused always on this our all-important purpose in life, the material things that we need will be supplied to us by our gracious and loving God.⁶

Learning from the Master

We can gain great insight into what is meant by ***'do all to the glory of God'*** by examining the life of Jesus. We know beyond question that Jesus kept the will of God perfectly. ***'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'*** (Heb. 4:15). Jesus therefore kept every command perfectly, including this one to do all to the glory of God. We also know that as true man Jesus had to carry out all of the mundane day to day tasks associated with human existence. For the first thirty years of His life He was a layman, working with His hands to earn a living. In fact the belief that He was rather unremarkable in the eyes of society during this period is supported by the reaction of the people in His hometown to His later fame and notoriety. Of Him they said, in disbelief, ***'Is this not the carpenter's son?'*** (Matt. 13:55). Jesus therefore carried out the normal, mundane functions of life, and yet He did all to the glory of God. The emphasis in this command to ***'do all to the glory of God'*** therefore lies not in the action that is being carried out, but in the state of the heart in carrying out the action. Even the most menial or unpleasant tasks carried out with a cheerful, thankful heart are done to the glory of God. On the other hand, any work that is carried out with faithless grumbling or complaining, no matter how outwardly fine and upstanding it may appear, is not done to the glory of God. In Romans 14:23b we read, ***'Whatever is not from faith is sin.'***

It bears repeating that we are not here attempting to reduce the scope or meaning of this command to a point where we begin to imagine that we can or have kept it. In love and thanksgiving we struggle only to discern the will of God as revealed in this passage of Scripture. That will of God, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 10:31, is that we live single-mindedly focused on, and devoted to, the

service of our God. Our God wants every single thing that we do, say, or think to serve as a testament to the glory of Him alone. Though we fail in this endeavor much more often than we succeed, thanks be to our Lord Jesus who has borne the punishment for *all* of our sins and shortcomings on the cross of Calvary. To our Triune God be the glory in all that we say or do or think, now, as in eternity.

NOTES

¹ Luther is here making reference to an imperative command found in the Apocryphal Book Ecclesiasticus.

² *The Bondage of the Will*, by Martin Luther. Translated by J. I. Packer & O. R. Johnston, © 1957 by James Clark & Co. , Ltd., 156.

³ Luther, *Bondage* 159.

⁴ Luther, *Bondage* 162.

⁵ Two linear (present indicative) verbs are used here, indicating the on-going nature of the command.

⁶ For a fine exposition on this passage and the truth it teaches you are invited to read the *Lutheran Spokesman* article by Professor Emeritus Paul Koch in the May 1999 edition. (Vol. 41, No. 11, page 7.)

Order is God's Idea

Encouragement in following good order in various aspects of ministry within the larger fellowship

[Presented to the CLC General Pastoral Conference, Eau Claire WI, June 15-17, 1999.]

Michael Sydow

Among the attributes of the Lord of heaven and earth are His consistency and order. Our own ability to contemplate order and consider its applications flows from the nature of God, the natural order of the creation, and the similarities and consistencies of our common existence under His providential guidance. The Scriptures allow us to be observers of the transformation *ex nihilo* into the cosmos. Its design is exquisite. Its mechanisms are extraordinary. They indeed are a day and night speech which tells of His glory and genius (Ps. 24). Our praise flows from the worshipful evaluation of seeing that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139).

Soteriological Order

The pristine spiritual perfection in Eden collapsed with the fall of Adam and Eve. God's communication of His unique solution to the predicament caused by man's rebellion also demonstrates consistent order. This we would expect from an orderly God, whose very character requires what His plan reveals about Him. The problem between Him and our first parents was an issue of obedience – doing what He asked them to do, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’ (Gen. 2:16,17). They ate. They died—spiritually . . . right away; physically . . . after days riddled with toil and sweat ended in their return to dust. The act of disobeying God's word . . . commands . . . will . . . His law . . . is **sin**.

One of the results of human sinfulness is a fine-tuned *opinio legis*. Part of our ego-centrism is a belief that, if there is going to be any solution to the problems of mankind, it will take a human being to figure it out. If sins need some kind of atonement, then it will be men and women who must discover what might work, what deeds must be done, to set things right with God. Part of the current psychological milieu is a belief of some that there is still a modicum of goodness in people and that salvation occurs when one taps into that goodness. Karl Menninger, a noted psychiatrist, asked a poignant question in the title of his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* His concerns flow from

an observation of too many relegating human problems and dysfunction to categories of illness and criminal behavior.

Our God tackled the sin problem with a solution He “can live with.” His personal attributes require a punishment for sin. He arranged for His Son to substitute for all mankind of all time and offer His life as the redemptive, atoning sacrifice to take away all sins for all time. The Spirit has given us many words to describe the bounty of God’s forgiving love. We hear John tell us that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). The apostle Paul uses some of those other words to describe forgiveness when he writes that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation ... For He made [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:19,21). We know “that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Gal. 2:16). And the apostle Peter describes forgiveness as a redemptive reality: “. . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19).

Sanctification Order

The dynamics of regeneration include the extraordinary gift to live in righteousness and holiness before our God and to say NO to sin in our lives. Sanctification is also by faith. The faith that justifies is never alone. Like the inevitable magnetic field around an electric wire, where there is faith, there is Christian love. The gift of love is God’s own orderly input for our loving response to Him and to our fellow men. “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12,13). It is sin which generates all variety of disorders – personal and interpersonal. It is the forgiveness of sins which has repaired our relationship with almighty God and is a resource which gives us the extraordinary capability to “order [our] footsteps by [His] Word” (*TLH* 416).

Ecclesiastical Order

The confusion that reigned among the Corinthian Christians displeased the apostle Paul. A spiritual cancer had infected the congregation as they argued about pre-eminent preachers, took one another to court, vacillated in their church discipline, undermined marriage and divorce, debated about what meat Christians should or should not buy, and turned their worship to disarray. Some would be eating a love feast at the same time others were celebrating the Lord’s Supper. The gift of tongues was competing with the more important goals of understanding and edification.

The apostle’s solution to the disorderly worship situation focused on the preeminence of love. It was the necessary complement to any silver-tongued preacher, mountain-moving faith, any eleemosynary activity or the prospect of martyrdom. Christian love withdraws self-interest from behavior as believers seek the good of others before their own (Phil. 2: 4-8) .

It is in this worship context that the Spirit guides the Corinthians believers through the apostle Paul to universal truths in connection with the character and will of our God. “For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. . . Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:33,40).

Paul mentioned the “churches of the saints”—those whom the Spirit has “separated” from sin through faith and gathered into groups and assemblies. These groups did not come into being in some haphazard way as if there were no plan, divine or human, for the spreading of the gospel. The witness went out from Jerusalem according to Jesus’ promise and plan. The gospel was effective on the lips of the forgiven failures as it radiated from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The Spirit brought people to faith through the preaching about Jesus and His death for the forgiveness of sins.

Just as Jesus promised, He would not leave us orphaned. The believers needed the continuing presence of the Spirit to sustain and nourish them for a pilgrimage which would not ordinarily include the visible presence of the Savior. It would be gifts from God Himself to assure the Spirit’s presence through the Word as He sent “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors

and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). One of the overriding concerns now is who preaches what to whom. The orderly progress of the gospel among the Corinthians is outlined by the apostle Paul, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. . . . For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:6,7,11).

Our Lutheran confessions uphold the principle of decency and order:

What, then, are we to think of the Sunday and like rites in the house of God? To this we answer that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church, not that thereby we should merit grace or make satisfaction for sins, or that consciences be bound to judge them necessary services, and to think that it is a sin to break them without offense to others. So Paul ordains, 1 Cor. 11:5, that *women should cover their heads* in the congregation, 1 Cor. 14:30, that *interpreters be heard in order in the church*, etc.

It is proper that the churches should keep such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquillity, so far that one does not offend another, that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion, 1 Cor. 14:40; comp. Phil. 2:14 (“Do all things without murmuring and disputing . . .” Parenthesis added.); but so that consciences be not burdened to think that they are necessary to salvation, or to judge that they sin when they break them without offense to others; as no one will say that a woman sins who goes out in public with her head uncovered provided only that no offense be given (*Triglot Concordia*, “Augsburg Confession,” Article XXVIII, ¶53,54, p. 91).

Specific Responsibility

In his last visit with the elders of Ephesus Paul outlined their relationship with, and responsibility for, a specific group of people. “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). This flock, a group of confessors gathered around the Word in one place, was just a part of the “one flock” whom the Good Shepherd gathers through the work of these pastors, countless others, and every Christian who shares the news about the Savior. It is over this local flock that the Spirit has placed the undershepherds of the Good Shepherd. He entrusts the spiritual care of those sheep and lambs specifically to them.

As Paul anticipates his trip to Spain he explains the implications of specific responsibility. “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another’s foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’ For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts (Corinth -- parenthesis added), and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain. For I hope to see you on my journey . . . But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints” (Rom. 15:20-25).

Paul’s call directed him to bring the gospel especially to the non-Jews. Jesus told Ananias about Paul that “he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). His regular pattern in the cities he visited on his missionary journeys was to seek out the Jews who were living there and tell them that the Savior for whom they had been waiting had indeed come and redeemed the world. Frequently the rejection of the message by the Jews became the impetus for him to go to the Gentiles. The sequence is illustrated with Paul’s work in coming to Corinth. “And [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles’” (Acts 18:4-6). In his letter to the Galatians Paul summarized the major thrust of his work, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles . . .” Paul then waited three years before going to visit the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:15-17).

The Larger Fellowship

The Spirit, who gathers fellow confessors around the Word, also leads congregations here and there in the world to recognize their common ground. It is the Lord’s will that these larger fellowships

are founded on an agreement in doctrine and practice. It is also the Lord's will that the principles of love and good order pervade inter-group relationships.

Already in New Testament times any one congregation might have been served by a sequence of pastors. Witness the Corinthian situation where the congregation was served first by Paul and then Apollos. Silas and Timothy helped Paul during the year and a half he was in the city. Through the call process the Lord expresses His will where He wants His servants to work. As we observe the effects of these divine processes in our larger fellowship, we notice that it is the exception for a pastor or teacher to serve his entire ministry in one place. The principles of love and good order also guide the Lord's servants in all their ministerial relationships including those with a former congregation and members of the congregation.

Examples

#1. I was a senior at Northwestern Lutheran Academy (1958-59) when my father told me that I was growing my confessional teeth early. The synodical debates regarding the fellowship between the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (by 1961 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod -- WELS) and the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod (LC-MS) had been going on for half a decade. I was particularly close to one situation involving one of my instructors at the Academy and a classmate's father who was pastor of a congregation in South Dakota. The behavior of this instructor in consort with officials of the Dakota-Montana District in my classmate's home congregation and in another congregation in the eastern part of the state led to an observation by CLC President Paul Albrecht that one of the differences between our church body and the WELS was violations of the sanctity of the call.

When the WELS finally suspended fellowship with the LC-MS in 1961, the question remained whether the differences had been removed between the WELS and the CLC. In an article titled "What Separates the CLC from Wisconsin?" CLC President Albrecht reported the unresolved issues which remained:

1. Deviations from the Scriptural doctrine of church fellowship.
2. Deviations from the doctrine of the clarity and authority of the Scriptures.
3. Instances of violation of the sanctity of the call.

What follows is the complete text of this third "unresolved difference":

We have always believed and taught that a valid and legitimate *CALL* is something sacred and divine, and may not be tampered with by any man. The relation of a Christian pastor to his congregation, and the relation of a Christian congregation to its pastor is a creation of the Holy Spirit. It is God who gives a Christian congregation its pastor. Ephesians 4:11 ("Christ gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers." Parenthesis added). A Christian pastors is not a servant of men but a servant of Christ. 1 Corinthians 4:1 ("Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Parenthesis added). For this reason, no congregation can, without grievously sinning against God, reject its God-given shepherd unless he has made himself unfit for the high office by persistent adherence to false doctrine, a scandalous life, and wilful neglect of duty.

In the very recent past, however, Wisconsin has, through its elected officials and appointed representatives, taken the position that a congregation has the right to reject its pastor whenever he ceases to be a member of the Wisconsin Synod.

Congregations have been advised and urged to take this sinful step. When they acted on this ill advice they were commended for their faithfulness and synodical loyalty. In no case that has come to our attention has a congregation contemplating this step been admonished not to tamper with the divine *CALL* of their pastor unless there is clear evidence of persistent adherence to false doctrine, a scandalous life, or wilful neglect of duty. In one instance, a visiting elder tried to make this Scriptural point and was promptly and rudely overruled by the district president. The monotonous reply to the question,

'For what reason do you want to reject your Pastor?'

has been,

'He does not belong to the Wisconsin Synod.'

Is a Christian pastor pledged to membership in a synod or to faithfulness to Christ and His

Word?

Again and again, Wisconsin has given its official sanction to the actions of congregations which rejected their pastors for no Scripture-approved reason, and has helped fill the pulpits thus sinfully vacated.

The manner in which Wisconsin Synod officials have dealt with congregations and their pastors whose only "sin" was that they disagreed with, and objected to, Wisconsin's unscriptural fellowship doctrine and practice can not [sic] honestly be described as anything other than violations of the sanctity of the CALL (*The Lutheran Spokesman*, Vol. IV, No. 8; January 1962.)

#2. What is a former pastor's role in the congregation he has left when he becomes aware of a problem in that congregation? The general principle is expressed in the adjective "former." It is not his congregation anymore. It is inevitable that members of a congregation seek out their former pastor. Frequently it may involve nothing more than a continuation of a social relationship which developed between the pastor and one of his members. Some believe that, when a pastor leaves a congregation, he and his family sever all ties with the members even the social ones. They would discourage any contact. Others might respond to the social contact with former members with typical hospitality, but they would do so carefully, knowing the dangers of ecclesiastical meddling.

However, what if a member of a pastor's former congregation seeks his counsel regarding a spiritual or congregational problem? The pastor now must be concerned about what comments he hears and what he says lest he interfere with another's call. As difficult as it might be, he should really not listen to the complaints. What he can do is direct the individual in an orderly course of action. "You need to speak to your pastor about his." "You should go and talk with the member about the difficulties between you." "If you have talked with the pastor without a resolution of the problem, contact your congregation's elders." You may direct them to the appeal process outlined in the *Constitution of the Church of the Lutheran Confession* for situations involving excommunication, dismissal from congregational office, suspension, or termination by the congregation.

The *Constitution* reminds us of the orderly processes among congregations in the larger fellowship. "The excommunication, dismissal, suspension or termination by a congregation or the praesidium is to be recognized and honored by the entire Church of the Lutheran Confession membership unless and until it is shown that the appellant has been dealt with in an unjust and unscriptural manner" (By-laws #6. The Right of Appeal).

A former member, who had left his CLC congregation, inquired if he could join the congregation I was currently serving. I told him he could not under the existing circumstances and that he needed to resolve the problems with the congregation he had left in a God-pleasing manner. I'm pleased to say that he did.

Some problems involving the current pastor, which a former pastor might become aware of, could be of a public nature. There might be false doctrine in a bulletin, or the pastor's name appeared in the police report of a local newspaper. Spiritual concern requires that a former pastor become involved. Good order requires that he go directly to the current pastor without talking to others including officers of the congregation, reporting it first to synodical officials, or firing off a letter to the editor.

#3. What is the role of a brother when members of another congregation or his own seek him out on a problem with their pastor? Christian love and good order insist that this brother's role is to advise those troubled members to, first and foremost, discuss their concerns with the pastor. If this step does not prove satisfactory, the "witnesses" now might be the congregation's elders.

Does the nature of the problem alter the process? Obviously in cases of false doctrine and scandalous living there is a sense of urgency since an offense is created, and immortal souls might be deceived. Circumstances may be somewhat different if the issue involves apparently unwise pastoral practice in an area of *adiaphora*. Here judgments involve personal opinion and experience. There may be differences in these areas without threatening the fellowship. Even at that a pastoral practice may become a spiritual emergency if it has the features of "being lords over those entrusted to you" (1 Peter 5:3).

#4. What is the approach when a former pastor or a different pastor is asked to perform a wedding or funeral in a congregation which has a pastor of its own? Christian love and good order find any officiant deferring to the called pastor of a congregation lest they build on another's

foundation. He's the one whom the congregation in the name of God has asked to perform those very duties. I have regularly insisted that those planning a wedding for which they want me to officiate speak with their pastor and ask him if I might be involved. I have not heard of an instance when a pastor refused to allow a colleague to officiate.

Only once did I not conduct a funeral service for a member. As a matter of fact I was en route from Wyoming to Arkansas when the member died. I heard about his passing a day later. Meanwhile the family requested that the former pastor conduct the funeral. The request was made of the vacation pastor, and permission was granted.

Might a pastor perform a baptism or celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar with members of congregations other than his own? Again, I would not do so without the knowledge of their called pastor.

#5. For the years of its existence students attending Immanuel Lutheran College worshiped with Immanuel Lutheran Church when the school was in Mankato and worship with Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire. While attending the Academy in Mobridge, the students worshiped with Zion congregation in town. The church was a mile or so away from the school – most of the way was prairie. No bus was provided. Some Sundays it was one long, freezing trek there and back. (That was in the days before “wind chill” was every -winter-day talk.) Messiah church in Eau Claire is seven miles from the ILC campus, a twenty minute bus ride.

It certainly would have been easier for the administrations of the schools in Mobridge and Eau Claire to provide for a worship service for the students on campus. Although in some of its functions a Christian school functions as Church, it is primarily an educational facility. No one at the school has a call similar to that of a congregation's pastor to conduct worship services, administer the Sacraments, etc. ILC students are members of home congregations throughout the synod and are guests of the Eau Claire congregation while they are attending school. Students do not transfer their church membership to ILC. The school does not have the usual standing and functions of a local congregation. The worship arrangement we use has worked satisfactorily and reflects Christian love, good order, and a desire to avoid the impression and pitfalls of *ecclesiola in ecclesia*.

#6. Are you prompt in responding to synodical administrators, making conference announcements, or answering your mail? I believe Christian love and good order provide the compelling reason to do the work we have agreed to do together – including the paper work and common courtesies – in a timely manner. The pre-eminence of our task should find us out-professionalizing the professionals.

Finally. God does not like confusion, but peace. Disorder becomes a distraction which can disrupt worship, confuse fragile souls, and endanger the faith of a few unnecessarily. Our God is a God of order. The Christian freedom under which we live is not a license to libertarian disorder. Because it is God's will, we seek to do everything decently and in order. To do otherwise would be uncharacteristic of one of God's children. The principles that apply to our relationships within our congregations also apply to our larger fellowship. The cause of the gospel begs nothing less.

Encouragement For Discouraged Pastors

[Presented to the West Central Pastoral Conference, Golden CO, September 15-17, 1998.]

Delwyn G. Maas

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are

lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6, KJV)

The ministry to which we pastors have been called is a service by which life everlasting is dispensed. Of all the occupations with which man may busy himself, this one alone bestows a benefit which extends beyond this temporal life on earth. What a joy and a privilege it is to be called on by the Lord to serve our brothers and sisters in this way! Eventually, the Hoover Dam will be washed down the Colorado River. The greatest achievements of engineers, scientists, physicians, and leaders will pass away. The results of preaching the gospel of Christ, however, will never pass away. Of course, this is not due to any intrinsic power in ourselves, but the power is within the gospel which God has entrusted to us.

We are called to be ministers of the gospel, and it is through this gospel that righteousness is administered and life is given (2 Cor. 3:6, 9). Those who were lost and condemned have passed from death unto life. Those who were once sinners are now reckoned as saints. This must be a potent ministry indeed! The means by which these miraculous conversions come to pass is the gospel, but is it not amazing that the agents through whom God works are servants such as we? Are we not, like everyone else, lost and condemned sinners?

We have not merited this calling. We have not even merited God's love. Nevertheless, God does love us and He has called us to this ministry which brings righteousness and life to many. We are completely dependent on the Lord for bestowing His grace upon us, and that begins with us being the objects of His mercy. Before we can begin to tell others of God's mercy, we must first experience it ourselves.

When someone comes to the aid of an animal, which has been hit by a car, it can be said that he showed mercy to that animal. Several hospitals include the word "Mercy" in their name. However, when we think of the mercy of God, then it is well to think of mercy defined in a way that applies exclusively to Him. His mercy goes far beyond the mere human expression and concept. When speaking of the **mercy of God**, then the emphasis should be on **His willingness to forgive penitent sinners**. Before we can serve others, we need to be the objects of God's mercy. We need to know what it is like to sorrow over our sins and to receive the remission of sins. Think of how the risen Lord dealt with Peter when He commissioned him to feed His lambs and His sheep. First, Peter needed to taste the goodness of the Lord; then he was able to go forth and share it with others. Of course, this is not a one-time event for any of us. Daily we need and must rely on the Lord's mercy. Without it we can do nothing. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15: 10).

What effect does this have on ministers who have been the recipients of this kind of mercy? They do not faint. They do not lose spirit. They do not become discouraged. Peter did not go through life kicking himself for denying Jesus. The Lord wiped away Peter's bitter tears and put away his sin. Peter's heart was then filled with Joy and a zeal to preach the gospel to others. Remember, though, from this point on the life of Peter still was not flawless. Once he even endured a public correction by the Apostle Paul. God's mercy was a commodity, which he needed every day of his life. The daily application of the Lord's mercy to ourselves is what we need to keep our spirits up.

What are some of the things that can typically cause a pastor to become discouraged?

Opposition to the gospel is certainly one of these. This can range from aggressive resistance to simple apathy and neglect. In the Scriptures we can look to examples of preachers who were faced with this in abundance during their ministry. Elijah naturally comes to mind. He was ready to give up and die, feeling that no one cared about the message God gave him to preach. Jeremiah would be another one whose message seemed to fall either on deaf or hostile ears. While it is a sad thing to see the gospel treated in such a shabby way by its hearers, even in extreme cases such as these just cited there truly is no reason to become discouraged or depressed. This is a service to which the Lord may call His ministers. The call to preach does not come with a guarantee of visible success. Sometimes

the purpose of the message is to leave the despiser without excuse. If that is the purpose to which the Lord has called us, who are we to complain or become bitter? Paul writes earlier in this epistle, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2:15-16) Our thoughts are not His thoughts. We would like to have an experience like Peter and see thousands turn in faith to Christ after one of our sermons. Not all of us are called to this purpose, however. Our calling is to proclaim God's word faithfully. It shall prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. It is all a part of His gracious, good will. It is fitting that we rejoice that the Lord has called us to proclaim His word, and it is proper that we leave the results of this to the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, we are liable to blame ourselves wrongly when it does not have the positive impact we long to see, and wrongly take credit for the successes when the glory belongs only to the Lord.

Another cause of discouragement on the part of pastors is the reality of their own weaknesses and sins. The frustration level with one's self can at times run mighty high, especially after committing a significant blunder. "What a bonehead I am. How could I make such a stupid mistake?!" In addition to berating ourselves we may deserve a good scolding from someone else. It is fitting when we have sinned for contrition to fill our hearts. Let us then be ready to confess our sins, to others when appropriate, but certainly to our Lord. We also need to hearken unto the message which we have been preaching to our people and carry our burdens to the foot of the cross. Only there will we find genuine pardon and peace. And it is at the foot of the cross where we need to leave those sins. We cannot function well as a *Seelsorger* if we continue to carry around our own guilt as an ever-increasing burden. Do you think that your moments of weakness are sufficient to undo God's good and gracious will? His grace is made perfect in our weakness! He knew we were weak when He called us. It does not come as a shock to Him that we have lapses in judgment and make mistakes. The gospel does not derive its effectiveness from us but from God, and it will surely nurture and refresh the souls of His flock, even though the shepherd proclaiming it is himself a sinner. God's mercy is the answer to our guilt, and His grace will direct all things together to work out according to His good will. It is even able to overcome our mistakes.

Pastors may become downhearted because there are some things in the ministry that always come hard to them. There may be some tasks that, no matter how hard they try, they just never seem to do them very well. A pastor can waste a lot of time beating himself up over this. The Lord is the one who is the dispenser of gifts, and every one of us has received different gifts in different measure.

I know of one pastor who loves to preach. The enjoyment he experiences in sermon preparation is only superseded by the thrill that comes from actually preaching the sermon. Yet, when the phone rings with the message that one of his members is in the hospital, he breaks out into a cold sweat. He even tells the story of a time when he made a hospital visit on a member who was in her 90's. He was so nervous and tongue-tied that she reached over, patted him on the arm and said, "Don't worry, it will be alright." I know of another minister who is almost the exact opposite. He loves the one-on-one contact that comes from a personal visit, such as in the hospital, but he dreads Sunday morning and getting up in front of the entire congregation.

Why spend time fretting over gifts the Lord hasn't given? We know that the Lord spreads His gifts around. Where we may be lacking, some of our members may be blessed, and that is when we should nurture and encourage that in them. You may have heard a member remark about how good Pastor So-and-So was at (fill in the blank), and you start to feel bad because that is not an area where you excel. Situations like this can and should serve as an impetus to try harder. Even in those areas that are hard for us, our best effort should be made. We certainly don't want to be looking for convenient excuses not to do our work or for doing a poor job, but we also should not waste time feeling guilty over something that is beyond our control. We pray for the Lord to guide us, to give us strength, to bless our labors, to forgive us, and to overrule our weaknesses and mistakes with His goodness.

That which gives us boldness is the Lord's promise to be with us. The confidence to step into the pulpit and preach on Sunday doesn't come from something within us but from the word, which we

have been called to preach. No one is in church to hear our ideas or be amused by how clever we are. They are there to hear the word. Preachers come and preachers go, but the message remains the same.

If we did not have the confidence in God and in the word, which He has given us, then we might think we need to use worldly techniques and cleverness to accomplish visible success. Of course, there are a number of reasons why that would be wrong. The ways and means of the world can never accomplish heavenly goals. God's word does not need the assistance of any man. True success is not much measured in ways that can be seen, as the kingdom of God comes not with observation. We have renounced worldly methods. Human cleverness has no place when it comes to administering the gospel. At the end of chapter 2 and throughout chapter 3 Paul focuses our attention on the ministry that excels in glory. In these initial verses of chapter 4 Paul continues to speak about this ministry and the way that ministers press on toward their goal. Just what is their goal? If it is not in numbers, such as dollars, then what is it? It is to **make sure that the members of their flock are in possession of the remission of sins**. Plain and simple. This is not enhanced by gimmicks. It is simply through the faithful preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. The minister's business is not entertainment. It is the healing of souls.

Our people have consciences that accuse and berate them, and we have been sent to provide them with genuine relief. This cannot be found in the psychobabble that denies culpability. The only real remedy is the truth, which is centered in Christ Jesus. He is the one who placed the burden of sin, our burden of sin, upon His own shoulders. He bore it all the way to the cross.

The full, unmitigated punishment for each and every one of our sins was directed away from us and leveled on Him. On the basis of this unparalleled sacrifice, the Lord says to us, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." And we in turn proclaim the very same pardon and peace to the sheep and lambs under our care. How could any craftiness of ours improve upon this? More than that, how can we ever grow weary of applying such wholesome salve to the souls of our members?

How thrilling it is when the gospel is embraced with joy! But does everyone receive it with joy? No. As was mentioned previously, it is all too often met with indifference or even violent opposition. Should this have a depressing effect upon us? Not at all! It should only serve to make us more determined in being faithful witnesses. It is not the fault of the gospel nor those who preach the gospel that some are lost. For those to whom the gospel is a veiled thing, they must own the responsibility for their blindness. Just as those who refused to gaze upon the brazen serpent finally succumbed to the poison of their snake bites, so those who perish spiritually do so because they refuse to look to and to trust in the only One whom God raised up as the antidote to sin and death.

Our active opponent to delivering the gospel is Satan. Many follow and revere him, even if they don't acknowledge him. He leads religious zealots to eternal destruction by encouraging them in behavior that impresses men but does nothing to change their lost status before God. Even the atheist and agnostic bow down to the "god of this world." Satan and his unholy hosts pose as a potent threat against us. Now, as throughout most of history, it seems that he has been effective in persuading the majority of the world over to his side. We reside and preach in a world hostile to the gospel. Spiritual darkness seems so prevalent. Is this cause for being dejected? Not a bit, for in our hearts and congregations the brilliant light of the gospel of Christ has dawned. By the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus Christ, we know that God is for us, and if God is for us, who can be against us? In the dazzling light of the gospel, we see Jesus as our victor over death and hell, and by this same light we see Satan as someone who can be felled by one, little word. How exhilarating it is to equip our people with this sword of the Spirit that causes the devil to fall like lightning. Does this not stimulate us to redouble our efforts?

If visible success or personal advantage were our objectives, then many of us would need to doubt our effectiveness. But, that is not the case, is it? We are instruments and organs of the Holy Ghost (*Concordia Triglotta*, 791:18). We are here for a brief pilgrimage, and while we are here we have work to do. Our treasures are not to be found here because they are reserved for us in heaven. Our business is to proclaim God's word fervently and faithfully. Some will cherish it, some will despise it. What occurs when this word strikes a person's heart is, really, none of our business. We are not promoting ourselves, neither are we trying to sell our own ideas. If we were, then we would have a reason to feel dejected when our message is rejected. However, it is not ours but God's, and He has

sent us forth to present His message of salvation. What He has given us to offer is objectively the most valuable, yes, the supremely precious treasure of all. Whether people react to it positively or negatively has nothing to do with us. If they receive it with joy, then praise be to God! The Lord will also know best how to deal with any unfavorable response to His offer. We are just His spokesmen, His oracles, His ambassadors. Whatever the reaction, we should not take it personally. It is enough to have been recipients of His mercy and assured that He will work it all together for the eternal welfare of His people.

We love and adore this Savior who has not only delivered us, but who has called us into His service to share this gospel with others. Our faith and love for Him is such that we are truly His slaves, redeemed by Him and committed to serving Him. The Spirit has created this connection between our Savior and us. It is the most natural and spontaneous thing, then, for us to be slaves to our fellow-redeemed in Christ. The shepherd serves the flock, and not vice versa. We are engaged in the work because of Jesus and because He has filled our hearts with a compassion for our brothers and sisters in Christ. This work means so much to us because Jesus means so much to us.

We know that the heavens declare the glory of God, but God would chiefly be glorified for His mercy. ‘Christ is God’s glory. When we see Christ, see His condescending love for sinners, when we see Him suffering and dying in order to redeem sinners, when we see Him rejoicing over a lost soul which He found: then we see the glory of God. When Christ comes to our conscience in saving love, then we get a taste of the glory of God. God’s glory appears in the *προσωπον*, in the person of Christ.’¹ It is our calling, our privilege, and our obligation to preach so that our people may taste and see this glory every single time we take our place in the pulpit.

‘Can Paul grow weary of administering this office? Can any apparent failure discourage him? Can he stoop to trickery of any sort in bringing this *φωτισμος* to despairing consciences? Having this ministry, he said in vs. 1, we do not grow weary.’²

¹ Joh. P Meyer, *Ministers of Christ*, 70.

² Meyer, 71.

Proverbs 19:18, “ Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.”

[Sermon preached at St. Paul’s Ev. Lutheran Church, Austin, Minnesota, on May 2, 1999.]

Stephen C. F. Kurtzahn

Based on what we read in the papers and news magazines, and from what we see on television, what happened at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20th should really be waking people up to the problems of our modern, secular society. You could also say that God’s allowing this tragedy is a warning cry. It’s a divine wake-up call for our entire nation. But are we listening? If you look back to the warnings God sounded to His Old Testament people, you will discover that very few paid attention. God had threatened destruction upon Israel and Judah if they did not repent of their sins and turn away from their idol worship back to Him who had promised the Savior. For the most part, they refused. As a result Israel was carted off by the Assyrian’s, never to be seen again, and the people of Judah were taken captive for 70 years by the Babylonians.

The nature of God’s Old Testament warnings are summarized for us in the Lord’s words to King Solomon in 1 Kings, chapter 9 (6-9): **“But if you or your son’s at all turn from following Me, and do not keep my commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight. And this house will be exalted; yet everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say,**

‘Why has the Lord done this to this land and to this house?’ Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worship and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity upon them.’”

We hear the warnings in our own time and for our own situation. After this last school massacre people seem to be finally sitting up and taking notice. But are we taking the warnings to heart? For the most part, I would say that we are not. Blame is placed everywhere except where it really belongs. We blame the violent movies. We blame the bloody video games. We blame the gun industry.

We blame the music industry. But there would be no violent movies if people didn't pay millions of dollars every year to watch them. There would be no bloody video games if young people wouldn't rent them or buy them. There would be no Marilyn Manson satanic music if people didn't flock to the music stores to buy the CDs.

Our society is like one great big *Rip Van Winkle*. After the violent deaths of these 15 students, it is as though we are waking up after a long sleep and asking, “How did we get to this point? How did things change so fast without our realizing it?” To begin with, we've arrived at this point because of two major developments in our society in the 20th century. The first is the acceptance of the theory of evolution in our scientific and educational communities as fact. If children receive no religious education at home, and they are taught in our public schools that this universe came about from a “big-bang” by sheer chance, and that this earth, and life on this earth, developed on its own over millions and billions of years—then God becomes irrelevant. And if there is no God—that must be true since we are mere accidents of nature—if there is no God, then there is no life after death. If there is no God, and we merely evolved from the apes, and there's no life after death, then there is no right or wrong. If there's no God, if there's no heaven or hell, if there's no right or wrong, then we can live anyway we want and do anything we want. **“Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!”** This is why human life has become such a cheap commodity in our day. This is why abortion has become so accepted. This is why it's so easy for hundreds and thousands of people in Kosovo to be executed. This is why a Dr. Kevorkian can do his dirty work. This is why it was so easy for the gunmen to blast away in the school.

We have also arrived at this point in our history and our society because the majority of churches in our country appear to have rejected the Bible as the word of God. That's why so much is happening today in the United States that we never heard about when we were younger. Forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years ago most of our churches still testified that the Bible was true. But not anymore. If you don't believe in the absolute truth of Holy Scripture, that it is the verbally inspired and inerrant word of God in all its parts, all you can offer your people from the pulpit and in the Sunday school classroom is a lot of fluff. And so the religious teaching in a majority of churches in our day is like cotton candy—it tastes sweet, but there's nothing to it. And so people have nothing to anchor their faith in. People build their houses on sand. They are like ships adrift on a stormy sea. The problems we have in our nation, and the two developments we just spoke of, all stem from a little three-letter word. That word is SIN. At the instigation of Satan, sin has infected and polluted our human nature ever since the Garden of Eden. Sin has been wreaking havoc with us ever since. Sin is also the reason young people and children can do such terrible things. After Noah got off the ark after the flood, God said to him (Genesis 8:21), **“The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.”** As David confessed his sins in Psalm 51 (5), he wrote: **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”** The Holy Spirit said through Paul in Ephesians 2 (1) that we **“were dead in trespasses and sins.”** Jesus Himself told us (Matthew 15:19), **“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”** Because of our sins we human beings deserve nothing but God's eternal anger and punishment (Romans 6:23): **“The wages of sin is death.”**

So if the underlying root problem is sin, all the legislation, all the gun control, all the warning labels on video games and movies and TV shows, will not really do any good. They may stem the plunge into the abyss for a while, but the underlying problem is still there. The only solution for what ails our country, our citizens and our children, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news of our

Savior is the only thing powerful enough to change human hearts, to break down the cold and stone barriers we have erected against God. And that gospel is simply this: since it is impossible for any of us to keep God's commandments, Jesus stood in our place and kept the commandments perfectly as our Substitute, so we could be right with God. If we were to pay for all the times we broke His laws, we would have to suffer and die in hell for all eternity. But Jesus again took our place and suffered instead of us so that we wouldn't have to. Christ has reconciled us to our heavenly Father. He has defeated sin, death and the devil. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. All of His perfect works and all of His sufferings have been credited to us. And so we are now viewed as the heavenly Father's dear children!

When this gospel has taken hold on our hearts, when the Holy Spirit has worked faith in us through God's word, then we will want to live our lives on this earth as His children. We will listen and pay attention to the word of our Savior as He speaks to us about living as a salt and a light in a sinful and perishing world. We will then want to love others, as He has so graciously loved us. We will then want to treat others as He has so lovingly treated us, and as we would want to be treated ourselves. And we will want to raise our children as He guides and directs us in His holy word. The Bible has a great deal to say about marriage, family life and the raising of children. In this sermon we would specifically like to focus our attention on a verse from Solomon's Proverbs. We use this proverb for our text today because it specifically relates to the killers in Colorado. Our text reads from the New King James Version: **'Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.'**

The word "chasten" means to discipline or correct. It encompasses several thoughts. Parents should know and understand their children. They should set their offspring a Christian example to follow. They should instruct their youth in the precious truths of God's word, in the great Biblical teachings of law and gospel. They show their children from the Bible what it means to live a life pleasing to the Savior who has rescued us from hell. There are also times when this discipline may even take on the form of punishment, like a grounding, or a time-out; or something precious is taken away for a while, or the child receives a stern talking to, and sometimes may even receive a spanking. Parents should 'Dare to Discipline.' And it should be done early while the child's personality is being molded and developed, for there will come a time in the young person's life when it will be too late to discipline. Just think of the Old Testament priest Eli and his two wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, in the first book of Samuel. The Living Bible brings this across beautifully in its translation of this verse when it says: **'Discipline your son in his early years while there is still hope.'**

But then we come to the second half of today's proverb. It lends itself to two different understandings, but both of these understandings are Scripturally correct. The first meaning is this: don't overdo the physical discipline and beat your child to death! A popular Bible commentary that many of our pastors use takes the verse in this way. The Keil and Delitzsch commentary translates the verse: **'Correct your son, for yet there is hope; but go not too far to kill him.'** This Biblical thought is also expressed by the apostle Paul when he writes to the Ephesians (6:4): **'And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath.'** Don't overdo the discipline. Don't let the discipline turn into abuse. But the second way the verse can be taken is like this: don't underdo the discipline and contribute to your child's self-destruction through an undisciplined life. Again, let me quote from the Living Bible: **'Discipline your son in his early years while there is still hope. If you don't, you will ruin his life.'** Now I normally wouldn't recommend the Living Bible to anyone, because it is a paraphrase and not a translation, and it contains many Reformed and Arminian influences. But it offers a rather remarkable and accurate understanding of this particular proverb.

In the Christian home all discipline should be carried out in the context of love. Proverbs 13:24 says, **'He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.'** And in speaking of our discipline by God, we read in the New Testament book of Hebrews (12:5-11), **'...You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to us as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are**

illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Sad to say, discipline has become a rather rare commodity in our day and age—especially loving Christian discipline. Parents are so busy chasing after the gods of our society, like money, prestige or self-fulfillment, that many children are ignored and left up to their own devices. Again, because of the sin that infects us all, the end result of such a lack of attention and true Christian discipline is not a pretty sight. Just look at what those two boys did in Columbine High School. The only way hearts and minds can be changed is with the proclamation of God’s word. As a Christian congregation, and as individual believers redeemed with the blood of Christ, may we be about our Father’s business of preaching the gospel to every creature. May each and every one of us be a salt and light among those with whom we live, both by our Christian example and by the word we speak.

There are many lessons that can be learned from what took place in Littleton, Colorado. But the most important lesson of all that we should take home today is this: the people around us, with whom we live and work, are in desperate need of Christ. May we work at getting His word out to those who are perishing while it is still day, before the night comes and no one can work. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

P A N O R A M A

Something Old, Nothing New

A look at the 1979 report of the President of WELS and AAL

We are all agreed that the word and will of God do not change over time. Yet is it possible for organizations to change – to become better or worse over time? Of course it is. In fact, in speaking as we are of Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), it was in part a change in the policies of AAL that led to our current problems with that organization. With the breakup of the Synodical Conference, AAL became a unionistic organization. The problem was compounded when in 1966 AAL began accepting members into its organization from all branches of the Lutheran Church.

Is it now possible that AAL has again changed, this time for the better? Have they transformed themselves into an organization that does not join its members in pan-Lutheran church work? Have they ceased to be a unionistic organization? Apparently the Wisconsin Synod (WELS) believes they have, since the WELS’ public objections to AAL policies and practices seem to have been silenced since the 1979 convention.

Some History on the relationship between WELS and AAL

In 1973, seven years after AAL voted to sell insurance to members of all Lutheran bodies, the Conference of Presidents of the Wisconsin Synod drafted a letter to AAL asking them to make certain changes in their bylaws. Phrases such as “drawn together through the bonds of the Lutheran faith” in the bylaws of AAL were troubling to some. It is interesting that before AAL had even made any changes to their bylaws, the 1973 convention of the WELS “*commended the Conference of Presidents for its efforts in safeguarding our fellowship principles.*”¹ It seems to be something of a WELS mindset to equate “admonition” with “safeguarding.”

In 1974, presumably as a response to the request from the Conference of Presidents, AAL made

certain changes in their bylaws. Those changes apparently satisfied at least a majority in the Conference of Presidents, since they then lifted the moratorium on grants that had been in effect since 1973.² Apparently, however, WELS did not enjoy agreement on this entire issue. The president of the WELS reflected the concerns of the Dakota-Montana District when he said (on the matter of receiving grants from AAL and others outside of their fellowship), “We must frankly confess that unanimity concerning this matter does not exist in the Conference of Presidents.”³ The Wisconsin Synod in convention responded by appointing a committee to study the matter and to report its findings to the 1978 district conventions. This committee’s work was then included in the President’s report to the 1979 WELS Convention.

To offer a clear and public confession of what we believe, and why, we will again publicly address some of the issues raised in this president’s report, and then reexamine the modern day Aid Association for Lutherans.

On the Report of the WELS Committee on Reception of Grants

In this day when the infallible word of God is so often cast aside in favor of the ideas and opinions of man, the WELS is to be commended for their careful use of Scripture in this report. While we may not agree with their conclusions in every case, it is gratifying to see Scripture consulted in such matters.

It should be noted from the outset that the committee report in question dealt primarily with the reception of grants from outside the fellowship of the WELS, specifically from AAL. It touched on other aspects of the AAL problem, such as unionism through membership, but only cursorily. This explains in part why this report has confused some in our circles. The report, for example, makes a strong case for placing the general reception of outside grants in the area of adiaphora (things neither commanded nor forbidden by God). Their chief argument in connection with this particular aspect of the AAL question lies in the Book of Ezra. In chapters 1 and 6 of that book we do indeed read that the Children of Israel did accept material assistance from both the government and the citizens of Persia. Yet to make this example germane to AAL, the WELS begs what we believe to be the real question concerning AAL. Before the example of the Jewish acceptance of aid from Persia could be made to apply, WELS had to make the assumption that Aid Association for Lutherans and the people and government of Persia were similar entities; in other words, that both were secular in nature. In citing the example of Persia, the report also failed to fully explain that it was *God* who caused King Cyrus to *command* that gifts be given to Israel (Ezra 1). The Jews certainly then had no option to refuse what God had ordered of King Cyrus, and what King Cyrus had ordered of his people.

There is another example in the Book of Ezra (dismissed by WELS as not applicable) that we believe to be a much more relevant incident – the rejection of aid from the Samaritans (Ezra 4). The Jews refused aid from the Samaritans because they did not want to give the impression that they shared a common faith, which they did not. The WELS Committee Report itself puts it well:

It is also possible that help from the outside may create an impression of unity in faith and worship where no such unity exists. This was clearly the reason why the proffered help of the Samaritans toward rebuilding the Temple was turned down (Ezra 4:3). Although the Jews accepted help from the Persian kings and from the people at large... apparently because there were no implications of unity of faith, they felt obligated to refuse the overtures of their neighbors, the Samaritans. Acceptance of the latter would encourage the Samaritans in their idea that they were of one faith and worship with the Jews when in fact they were not. Accepting the help of the Samaritans would thus have been offensive in the true biblical sense of the word. Under such conditions, the church will turn back help offered by outsiders.⁴

Note that a rather pivotal assumption has to be made by the WELS if this statement is *not* to be applied to AAL. They must first assume that the various activities of AAL do not fall under the heading of joint church work. They must assume that the reception of grants from AAL does *not* “create an impression of unity in faith and worship where no such unity exists.” Otherwise, by their own admission, “acceptance of (financial help) would encourage the (AAL) in their idea that they were of one faith and worship with the (WELS) when in fact they were not.” (*Parenthetical words supplied.*)

How did WELS come to the conclusion that AAL is purely a secular organization comparable to any other corporation or government entity? Apparently WELS has chosen to focus exclusively on what AAL chooses to say about itself. Such an approach is almost always both unfair and unreliable. It is unfair in that it calls for a determination of a spiritual question on the part of those who are not equipped to make such an evaluation. What AAL says about itself is therefore unreliable for the same reason. This is not to say that AAL would be dishonest in its statements or determinations. It is rather a questioning of the wisdom on the part of WELS to base their judgment on an AAL bylaw. There are always two factors Christians have used to determine the true character of an organization: what they say about themselves and what they actually do.

AAL Today

AAL has consistently made clear that they do not consider their organization to be a church.

*It is not AAL's purpose to be a church, or to be a Lutheran institution carrying out church work, or to be an arm of the church.*⁵

We do not believe that such statements from AAL are dishonest, but rather that such statements indicate a lack of understanding of the fellowship principal. The CLC position is not that AAL is a church; it is that the structure of AAL is such that it joins together in church work those who are not of one faith.

That AAL is involved in church work ought to be beyond dispute. Unfortunately it is not beyond dispute, so we offer the following quotes from AAL's own Position Statement from June, 1983.

AAL's fundamental purpose, as stated in Article IV of its Articles of Incorporation, is:

To associate Lutherans and their families and thereby enable them through membership in this fraternal benefit society to aid themselves and others with programs of:

- 3. Assistance to Lutheran congregations and their institutions, and,*
- 4. Assistance to ...educational... moral... or religious endeavors as the board of directors may determine.*

With AAL, membership and benefits, including insurance, go hand in hand. They cannot be separated.

It is AAL policy for branches to be sensitive to and supportive of Lutheran congregations.

AAL members use some of the funds which their insurance premiums generate... to aid the church bodies and their institutions.

It is AAL's purpose to assist Lutheran congregations and their institutions in carrying out the work which the congregational institutions determine they want to carry out.

(AAL) will strive to enhance the life of the church by supporting new and innovative programs developed by the church.

AAL says that it does not want to be regarded as a church. We acknowledge that they are not. That they are a semi-religious organization, or at least an organization that strives to carry out the work of the church, cannot be questioned. They seem to try to ameliorate what they are doing by drawing a distinction between "doing church work" and "assisting in church work." Such a distinction is artificial. Assisting in church work is doing church work. Buying an AAL insurance policy, by their own admission, makes one a member of AAL and unequally yokes him together with those who are not one with him in the faith in church work.

Nor has AAL changed in recent times. In the 1999-2000 AAL Handbook, in the chapter entitled: ***Making a Difference in the Lutheran Church***, they write:

*AAL's support of Lutheran values dates back to our founding in 1902. Today, that commitment shows in our support of Lutheran congregations, institutions and church bodies. As a member, you can enjoy the satisfaction of knowing AAL helps further this Lutheran heritage in many ways.*⁶

On the inside cover of the many religious books distributed by AAL today is their AAL label that reads:

This book is a special gift to you as a member of Aid Association for Lutherans. AAL understands the importance your faith has in your everyday life and wants to provide resources that help support and strengthen that faith.

It is our belief that these words from AAL are a better reflection of the reality of the situation that exists today. AAL is well aware of the objection on the part of WELS and the CLC to joint church work. They state that such work is not their purpose, and then contradict themselves in both words and actions. Further evidence can be found in the 1999-2000 Handbook mentioned above. The section on church grants and programs lists the following:

Confirmation recognition

This special day in a child's life is honored through a special program in your congregation, sponsored by your local AAL branch. Confirmands receive a memorable gift to recognize their affirmations of faith.

AAL Member Gift-Matching Program

The AAL Member Gift-Matching Program benefits Lutheran elementary and secondary schools, colleges and seminaries. Your gift of \$25 to \$100 to a participating Lutheran institution will be matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL.

Inter-Lutheran Grants

Cooperative stewardship between Lutheran church bodies is encouraged through these funding opportunities. These AAL grants provide support for practical or service-oriented projects to the Lutheran Church at large.

Opening Grants

These special grants benefit Lutheran judicatories to help congregations develop demonstration outreach projects that focus on drawing unchurched people to worship.

Network Grants

Periodic AAL funding opportunities provide help to Lutheran organizations that have similar, yet broad-based missions.

Innovative Grants

This competitive AAL grant program helps fund projects of various Lutheran organizations.

Support for Lutheran seminary students

AAL provides financial support to benefit future Lutheran pastors. Examples include sponsoring special events and giving AAL members \$250 vouchers for tuition and books.⁷

AAL funds all these programs, yet what they tell us is that it is not their intention “to do the work of the churches.”⁸ Since AAL itself has stated that the members *are* AAL, it is a very eye-opening experience to substitute one's own name for “AAL” in the quotes above to gain a better perspective on just what happens when you buy an AAL insurance policy. The company itself has stated that you participate in all these programs through your membership:

When a member joins AAL, he or she receives a certificate of membership and insurance. This membership status makes joining AAL different than just buying a commercial insurance policy. With AAL, membership and benefits...cannot be separated.⁹

AAL steadfastly maintains that it is not a semi-religious organization. The Wisconsin Synod has chosen to “take the AAL at its word.”¹⁰ Yet also by AAL's own words, and certainly by their actions, they have clearly demonstrated that they are deeply involved in the church work of many different Lutheran church bodies. For this reason the members of the CLC continue to avoid membership in this organization, as well as the reception of grants, which would at best confuse, and at worst offend fellow Christians.

NOTES

¹ 1979 Report of the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Proceedings*, 50.

² *WELS Proceedings*, 1975, 23.

³ *WELS Proceedings*, 1977, 23.

⁴ 1979 WELS President's Report, 56.

⁵ "AAL'S Relationship with Lutheran Churches," AAL Position Statement, June 1983, 3-4.

⁶ AAL Member Handbook, 1999-2000, 40.

⁷ Handbook, 40-41.

⁸ 1983 AAL Position Statement, 2.

⁹ Statement, 3.

¹⁰ 1979 President's Report, 60.

- Michael J. Roehl

A Brief Report of the 1999 WELS Convention . . .

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) held its 1999 convention during four or five sweltering days (July 26-30) at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. The general sessions were held in the gymnasium, a part of the campus commons building, most of which is not air-conditioned (a lack which is not rare in this part of the world). It is a good thing when a church body does not waste its money by using the high-priced hotel and/or other public facilities for its conventions that are used by so many church bodies today. The impression was received that most of the WELS delegates resided in the college dormitories and ate their meals in the college cafeteria, part of which operated in a colorful tent outdoors.

The high point of the convention involved the adopting of plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the WELS and also "the 2000th anniversary of the Christian church" during 2000. (Whether or not church history buffs could isolate the correct date of the founding of Christianity from that description is dubious. For one, I always thought that Christianity, properly speaking, began in the Garden of Eden at the first announcement of the Promised Messiah. Others might want to use the day of Pentecost as the starting point. Was that AD 30, or 34, or somewhere in between? It couldn't be the birth of Christ, since that is thought to have occurred 2004 to 2006 years ago.) The celebration, termed "Forward in Christ," will involve the collection of a "thank offering." If the members contribute according to anticipation, the funds to be raised will be used for the following prioritized projects: A. Mission projects/scholarships, \$19.9 million; B. Martin Luther College chapel, \$8 million; C. WELS Heritage project, \$2.1 million; and D. Additional projects, \$15.8 million. Total - \$45.8 million, somewhat less than the \$100 million that the ELS (Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the WELS' far smaller synod-in-fellowship) is hoping to raise for its Bethany College in Mankato, Minnesota.

An item of interest to CLC readers may be the adopted resolution: "That Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary proceed with seeking accreditation with ATS" [Association of Theological Schools], "with the understanding that if WLS encounters anything that would ask it to violate God's Word, WLS would either stop the process of seeking accreditation or withdraw from the status of an ATS-accredited school." Among others, the premises upon which the resolution was based included: that "accreditation could bring benefits to WLS and its students such as assistance in self-study, deferment of the repayment of student loans, and opportunities for matching funds"; and that "WLS has given assurance that the Synod's confessional integrity will not be compromised." One wonders whether the financial benefits are really so great that the WELS institution is willing (and even desires) to seek the assistance of and be accredited by theological schools which they must surely still regard as heterodox. The resolution was passed without floor discussion or dissent, a situation which prevailed throughout the well-orchestrated convention.

One resolution that brought about some floor debate before passage was: "That MLC" [Martin Luther College] "proceed with seeking Minnesota state licensure for teacher graduates." Objections to the passage of this resolution came primarily from teachers, trained at Dr. Martin Luther College (MLC's predecessor institution), who declared that such licensure would require training

controlled and regulated by the state (which was granted by the resolution's "WHEREASes") and that they had been taught that such training would be deleterious for a Christian Day School teacher. The voice vote on this resolution appeared to President Gurgel (the WELS still permits its president to chair its conventions) to be inconclusive, but when the standing votes were counted, the motion to adopt was carried with an overwhelming majority.

Floor Committee #2 presented resolutions in which the convention concurred, without discussion or dissent, with various reports of the CICR (Commission on Inter-Church Relations). Several of these reports involved church bodies with which the WELS has fraternal relations; two reported on developments in the LCMS and the ELCA; and one reported regarding the CLC as follows:

WHEREAS 1) The CICR sent an official observer to the 1998 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) and the CLC has reciprocated by sending an official observer to our 1999 convention; and

WHEREAS 2) we regret that CLC literature continues seemingly to misunderstand and misrepresent several WELS' doctrinal positions, including the role of admonition in the breaking of fellowship; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we thank the CICR for continuing to testify to evangelical Lutheran doctrine and practice; and be it further

Resolved, b) that we encourage the CICR to maintain some contact with the CLC; and be it finally

Resolved, c) that we pray that fellowship with the CLC might one day be established on the basis of holy Scripture and the Lutheran confessions.

The CICR report upon which these resolutions were based was presented in the Book of Reports and Memorials (BORAM) addressed to the convention:

Prof. Armin Panning attended the convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) in Eau Claire, Wis., on June 15-20, 1998. The CICR wants to keep informed about CLC and to maintain some personal contact. We regret that CLC literature continues seemingly to misunderstand and misrepresent our WELS position.

The accusation in the CICR report (veiled somewhat by "seemingly") that we misrepresent *the* position of the WELS has not only been adopted but also upgraded by the convention resolution that we misrepresent *several* positions, including the role of admonition in the breaking of fellowship. As we have had occasion to mention before (cf. *Journal of Theology*, Vol. 39, No. 2 [June 1999], 55), the first meaning of "misrepresent" in *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* is: "to give a false or misleading representation of usu. with an intent to deceive or be unfair" (emphasis added). Whether or not it was the intention of the WELS convention to make that accusation, that is what the wording declares. Throughout the history of our controversy with the WELS, we have attempted to be consistent in determining what the doctrine and practice of the WELS is from their officially adopted resolutions and ongoing practices. There has been no intent to deceive. The false doctrine and practice of the WELS is plainly and openly revealed in its own words and actions. This we have declared in the past and, God willing, will continue to declare.

- John Lau

On the Ecumenicity of Money . . .

We have noted at times that when such generous organizations as fraternal insurance companies and foundations are willing to hand it out, there is a certain ecumenicity that appears where it might not otherwise. A certain relationship that we might term "fellow-doneeism" (not to be confused with donatism) develops, or so it may seem.

For example, the Aid Association for Lutherans and the Lutheran Brotherhood fraternal insurance organizations are truly ecumenical in their giving of their largesse. The WELS, the ELS, the LCMS, and the ELCA (plus more?) are banded together, willy-nilly, under the banner of fellow-doneeism. Excess funds (?) from members in all of these church bodies work together to support religious work in all of the church bodies, whether or not any of them look upon another as heterodox. Articles in *Christian News* frequently point out that AAL and LB provide support for “homosexual speakers” and “books written by liberals who deny basic doctrines of the Christian faith, etc.,” among others. These, as well, are being supported by WELS, ELS, LCMS, and ELCA members of the fraternal insurance associations, whose churches do not oppose their membership but gladly receive their donations to their religious work.

The Schwan Foundation, whose originator was a member of a WELS congregation in Minnesota and had attended the ELS Bethany Lutheran College, is also included as a participant benefactor of “fellow-donees.” Pastor Herman Otten writes (*Christian News*, September 20, 1999, 5):

The Schwan Foundation, often referred to as an “anonymous donor,” has given about two million to Heit’s Point, a camp in Missouri, millions to God’s Word to the Nations Bible Society, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, the Concordia University System, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Thoughts of Faith, and many other worthy causes. It was reported that the foundation last year gave about \$25 million to the LCMS. It gave \$25 million to one college alone in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

So, along with the many gifts to the WELS and ELS, the Schwan Foundation is also supporting the LCMS, a church body which the other two call heterodox and with which they have declared themselves to be not in fellowship. Whether or not the Schwan Foundation also donates to the religious work of any branch of the ELCA is not known to this writer. As far as the other three are concerned, however, it is clear that they at least are all involved in “fellow-doneeism.” While they may not be so directly involved in the work and worship of groups of which they are not members as the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin desired to be (cf. Ezra 4:1-5), through their membership in AAL and LB members of the WELS, ELS, LCMS, and ELCA are involved in such pan-unionistic efforts ... which, it is of note, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the leaders of Israel rightly refused.

- John Lau

BOOK REVIEWS

Overcoming Pastoral Pitfalls, by Kurt Brink. Concordia Publishing House, 1997. Paperback, 138 pages.

The author of this book is a retired pastor of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). His book is directed particularly to other pastors of the LCMS as well as to those studying for the pastoral ministry in the LCMS. Nevertheless, it should prove helpful also to pastors and seminary students of confessional Lutheran synods like our own.

What is it like to be a faithful Lutheran pastor in these times? Pastor Brink describes the pitfalls in the pastoral ministry, that is, the various problems that can arise to undermine the effectiveness of a pastor’s ministry and in some cases even end his ministry. Some of these problems are brought on by the pastor himself, by his personality, his family life, or his faulty ways of doing ministry. Other problems, beyond his control, are caused by doctrinal controversy, fault-finding congregational members, and neighboring pastors who interfere in his ministry. In writing this book Pastor Brink had the benefit not only of his own 41-year experience as a parish pastor but also of the cooperation of many LCMS district presidents and other officials who listed and described pastoral pitfalls in their

experience. Many lay members of LCMS congregations also contributed to this book by means of their responses to a questionnaire sent out by a Lutheran seminary in 1990.

I appreciated this book especially for its mention of many practical things that may have been unintentionally neglected in a seminarian's training. For example: "If you have been living in a church-owned parsonage, do everything possible to leave it neat and clean for the next occupants" (5). "Block out time in the daily schedule for the one thing needful" (11). This refers to personal Bible study and prayer, as opposed to the professional study that is necessary to do our pastoral work. Brink warns against the tendency in some pastors to brag about their talents or accomplishments (20). "In congregations of up to 350 communicant members an annual visitation of all homes should be possible" (44). "We pastors ought to go through the three gates of gold every time we open our mouth to speak: 'Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?'" (78). "It is a fact of life, for better or for worse, that many pastors' wives are employed outside the home. In such a case there can be little, if any, justification for the pastor to serve as baby-sitter for his children" (82). "When correcting offspring in love is practiced diligently and in a consistent manner most Christian parents will discover that there will be very little need of a spanking after the age of three" (90). "Finger nails should be properly cared for and clean at all times" (103).

One of the few instances where I find myself disagreeing with Pastor Brink has to do with the money gift often given to a pastor for conducting a wedding. The government does not consider such payments as gifts. Pastor Brink's reminder is therefore in place: "Perquisites (money received for weddings and funerals, etc.) are taxable; it is essential that pastors keep good records and report perquisite income on their tax return" (28). He also rightly says: "Having a fee system, especially for joining members in wedlock, smacks of being money hungry and cheapens the church." But then he follows that up by saying: "It is certainly proper for a pastor, particularly when both in the wedding party are non-members, to state that some type of honorarium is due him for performing the service" (81). In my opinion a pastor should never bring up the subject of payment for any specific pastoral act, but gratefully accept a gift if one is offered.

Because a pastor does not punch a time card and has no supervisor other than our Lord Himself watching what he does during the moments of his day, it is very easy for a pastor to waste his time. Pastor Brink wisely says: "Unless we pastors are organized and commit ourselves to a schedule which outlines our goals for each day and week of the year, we will automatically become time-wasters, abusers of time" (82). I think this may be especially true of the many pastors in our church body who are serving small congregations.

Chapter 11, entitled "Pitfalls Associated with Christian Stewardship" (94 -105), brings up many points worthy of our consideration. Laziness, being unorganized, watching too much television, making an idol of sports, submission to the mastery of the computer, on the one hand! Then, on the other hand, giving three hours to each shut-in visit, board meetings and congregational meetings that last for hours and hours, never taking a day off, not making use of vacation time, not getting enough exercise, neglecting wife and family! And what about all the pitfalls in the use of money? Being stingy with our offerings for the Lord's work. Over-spending. Borrowing and being slow to pay back. Abusing our credit cards and paying excessive interest. Failing to save money for the retirement years. Constant complaining about our low wages.

We might expect Pastor Brink to disagree with our positions on doctrinal discipline and church fellowship. It is well-known that the LCMS at the present time is a church body greatly divided in matters of doctrine and practice. Although his specific position on such matters as open communion and prayer fellowship with promoters of false teaching is not presented in this book, he does go so far as to say the following (110-111): "A very real problem is compounded when an errant pastor or seminary professor who has been dealt with in Christian love at several levels absolutely refuses to give up the error of his way and is simply not dealt with, not disciplined and not put out of the fellowship of the church body. Unless the latter happens, he will beget more termites, and after a while such a church body, which may have a thoroughly Scriptural body of doctrine, loses this cherished blessing and departs more and more from the foundation of Scripture teaching. Church history teaches that this is an inescapable consequence when the errant clergy of a church body are not

disciplined and put out of the fellowship. Charles Porterfield Krauth correctly observes that the doctrine of a church body is not what it publicly confesses, but rather what is actually being taught and practiced in its seminaries and in the congregations of which it is composed. In our church body, as in most others, a pastor's persistent adherence to false doctrine is cause for defrocking him."

In our opinion the LCMS has already begun to lose the blessings of orthodoxy, and in fact has been a unionistic fellowship for over 50 years, allowing false teachers of many kinds to cause doctrinal divisions.

The chapter on inter-pastoral relationships produces evidence that many LCMS pastors have difficulty getting along with other LCMS pastors. In our opinion one of the basic reasons for this is simply that there is no unanimity in doctrine and practice among the LCMS clergy. God's word requires something better, namely, that we "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

We intend to make use of this book in our Pastoral Theology class in the seminary. It will serve as a helpful reminder of things that we tried to teach our students. It may also give practical advice on a few items that we unintentionally overlooked.

-David Lau

The Fourth Dimension, by Dr. David Yonggi Cho. Seoul Book Center, Seoul, 1994.
222 pages.

While browsing through a hotel bookshop in Nigeria I came across a book that I thought would certainly appeal to Nigerians. It was subtitled, "The Key to Putting Your Faith to Work for a Successful Life." Shades of Robert Schuller (who wrote the "forward") and Norman Vincent Peale, whose positive thinking, while not explicitly referenced in the book, was evident. The book was *The Fourth Dimension* by Dr. David Yonggi Cho. Pastor Cho preaches four services on a Sunday. With forty years in the ministry, he is now head pastor of the largest congregation not only in Korea, but the world. It has 700,000 members, with many satellite churches. Seven hundred fifty associate pastors assist Pastor Cho; three hundred fifty missionaries and families are in the field from this church. Can one argue with success? YES.

While his ministry anecdotes are interesting, his exegesis and hermeneutics of Scripture are outlandish and dreadful. Now, I am willing to give Pastor Cho a chance on his explanations, and, as he says, he does not have a great command of the English language, but the Spirit of God "incubated" and then there has to be a period of incubation of faith? And he starts this line from the Spirit of God hovering/brooding over the water in Genesis 1:2. There is a difference between the spoken word and the read word. This he builds on from Romans 10:17. His methods of building the churches he has pastored fly in the face of counting the cost before building the tower. There is to me at least an ethical question mark on that. and yet the largest congregation in the world is pastored by him! Well, the antichrist heads the largest visible Christian denomination...

What might come as a surprise is Pastor Cho's inveighing against entertainment in church. "Americans have often turned churches into a place for lengthy entertainment. In Korea, we have gotten rid of entertainment in the church" (33). What will not surprise any, when it is remembered that he is a member of the Assembly of God, is his ardent pentecostalism with miracles abounding. We have to thank God that he does stress "God's uppermost goal, the redeeming of souls" (112).

And what, you ask, is the 4th dimension? There is a spiritual realm, also of the evil that is beyond the cube. The incubated faith ... well, you don't really need to know. I read the book because I had heard about Pastor Cho and his church. I am sorry to say that he is rather shallow, despite what Schuller says. Our joy must be that God saves through His word, despite the baggage often brought with it.

- David Koenig

What Saint Paul Really Said, by N.T. Wright, subtitled "Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?" Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. 192 pages.

A title like this repels, since one assumes from that phraseology that it is a liberal trying his higher criticism. It isn't that. Although Wright must certainly subscribe to some aspects of higher criticism, he is generally a staunch defender of Jesus as the cornerstone of our faith in both the subjective and the objective senses. This is a series of lectures put into book form.

Of the different Pauline scholars that he identifies, he states, "If I had to choose the works of one Pauline exegete to take with me to a desert island, it would be Kaesemann" (18). It was also interesting to find, at least from Wright's assessment, that A. Schweitzer wasn't as liberal as I had thought.

Wright goes into who Paul is with regard to his Jewish and Greek roots. Since he is from a different church background (Anglican), we can grant him the benefit of the doubt when his terminology is not ours. He raises the question of whether the cross and justification are "the" center of Paul's thinking. Right here we have problems with him. But listen to him categorize himself, "... without wishing to deny this as a part of the Pauline message, are struggling to do justice to the wider categories and the larger questions that seem to be a non-negotiable part of Paul's whole teaching. This, indeed, is the category into which I would put myself" (22). I think a better view is to put what he categorizes as "wider categories and the larger questions" as a backdrop to the cross and justification or the fabric into which the cross and justification are indelibly printed. Read him for a different perspective.

- *David Koenig*