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CONTENTS

Corrections to the June issue	Editor
Exodus in the New Testament	David Lau
Maintaining Orthodoxy Within Our Fellowship	Terrel Kesterson
The Relationship of the Active Obedience of Christ To His Passive Obedience	Herman Meyer, trans. Norman Greve

BOOK REVIEWS

Jesus in Beijing - How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power
by David Aikman

Not Unto Us - A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert
by William H. Braun & Victor H. Prange, compiling editors

Compend of Lutheran Theology - A Summary of Christian Doctrine
by Leonard Hutter

The Lord's Supper (Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, Vol. XII)
by John Stephenson

(Reviewer: David Lau)

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Corrections to the June Issue (Vol. 45, No. 2)

In two articles of the last issue we have noted inadvertent omissions which require correction for the sake of clarity. Please make the following changes.

– On page 35 (within the ILC Commencement Address) an upper-case letter is missing two lines up from the bottom of the page. Note the sentence which reads “ND you will all have” Supply a capital A, so that it reads “AND you will all have”

The article “The Pastor's Menu for the Pulpit” is missing the endnote superscript numerals which belong in the text. It is recommended that the subscriber, using pen or pencil, add superscripts 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the locations

described below.

- On page 37 write superscript 1 in the first paragraph, line ten, at the end of the sentence which reads “... meat and the milk of God's Word.”
- On page 41, line nine from the top, write superscript 2 after the word “milk.”
- Also on page 41, in the next paragraph (dealing with 1 Peter 2:1-3), count nine lines up from the bottom of the page and write superscript 3 after the word gospel (The entire line reads: “gospel, as spiritual nourishment to be desired by Christians and ob-”).
- Finally, on page 42, first line at the top, write superscript 4 after the italicized title *Preach the Gospel*.

We apologize for the inconvenience and hope that the recommended insertions make the endnotes on pages 46-47 much more useful.

Exodus in the New Testament

David Lau

The writer has offered a sermon series quite similar in format and approach to his previous work “Genesis in the New Testament” (see issue 4 of volume 43 and all issues of volume 44). The Scripture readings are taken from Exodus in sequential order. The sermon texts are generally portions of the New Testament which use and apply the content of the Exodus passages. The series contains 17 sermons, which we hope to present in installments of 3-4 sermons per issue. – Editor.

Exodus Sermon #1

Readings: **Exodus 1:7-17** (*The beginning of Israel's oppression in Egypt*)
 Exodus 1:22-2:10 (*The birth and safekeeping of Moses*)

Sermon Texts: Acts 7:17-21; Hebrews 11:23; James 5:1-6

Acts 7:17-21 – “But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another king arose who did not know Joseph. This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.”

Hebrews 11:23 – By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

James 5:1-6 – Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

In last year's summer services our Scripture readings were taken from the first book of the Old Testament, the book of Genesis, and our sermons were based on New Testament passages that explained or applied the truths of Genesis to our time. This year I think it will be profitable for us to continue with the second book of the Old Testament, the book of Exodus, and see how the New Testament explains and applies the teachings of this book.

It is clear right from the beginning that Exodus is a continuation of Genesis. We can understand Exodus only if we know something about what is written in the book of Genesis. The main thing to remember about the

book of Genesis is that God chose the one man Abraham and separated him and his family from all other nations and gave him a very special promise. The central core of this promise was that the promised Savior of the world, the woman's Seed, would be born from Abraham's family. Over and over again God repeated this promise to Abraham, to his son Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob: **"In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

In connection with this most important promise of the Savior, the Lord also promised to Abraham and his family that He would make of them a great nation and that He would give them the land of Canaan as their possession. But God also revealed to Abraham that his descendants would, first of all, dwell as strangers in a foreign land and be afflicted for a long period of time before God would send deliverance. Yes, the Lord spelled this all out for Abraham in advance. **"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions"** (Gen. 15:13-14).

This morning, then, we want to consider HOW GOD BEGAN TO KEEP THIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM. In the time of Abraham's great grandson Joseph the entire family moved to Egypt at God's direction, and there in Egypt they grew and prospered as a separate nation for many years. Then came the time of affliction which God had foretold. The Egyptians became alarmed because of the reproductive fertility of the Israelites. As God had foretold, **"the people grew and multiplied in Egypt."** Then **"another king arose who did not know Joseph."** This Pharaoh made the Israelites the slaves of the Egyptians, who **"made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage."** The new Pharaoh did even more to afflict the Israelites beyond the harsh conditions of slavery. As recorded in the book of Acts, Stephen said centuries later, **"This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live."**

What a terrible time this was for God's people! Hard slavery, rigorous taskmasters, a king who ordered the midwives of Egypt to kill all the boy babies of Israel. And finally, when that order did not work because the midwives disobeyed him, Pharaoh gave the command to all his people that every Israelite baby boy should be thrown into the Nile River and drowned. This was murder, of course; this was genocide, a deliberate attempt to wipe out a whole nation from the face of the earth.

But the Lord had not forgotten His promise to Abraham. No, not at all. In his review of the history of Israel, written for us in the book of Acts, Stephen recognizes the promise of God sworn as an oath: **"When the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham..."** Yes, this promise had to be fulfilled. Already the Israelites had multiplied in Egypt as God had foretold. Already affliction and oppression had come to them as God had foretold. Therefore the deliverance would also now come, as God had promised with an oath to Abraham. God had told Abraham that He would judge the nation which oppressed them and that His people would come out of their bondage with great possessions.

God's way of beginning to keep this promise was very unusual. A certain couple from the tribe of Levi had a baby boy, who was supposed to be drowned in the Nile River according to the Pharaoh's orders. When the mother saw that her baby **"was a beautiful child, she hid him three months."** How could they drown their own child whom God had given to them? The letter to the Hebrews explains their actions in this way: **"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command."**

The response of Moses' parents to the welfare of their child was a response of faith. They believed God's promise of deliverance for His people. They believed that God had a wonderful destiny in store for the Israelites. They were not going to participate in any program of genocide that would finally result in the total destruction of the Israelites. They were not going to kill their beautiful baby that God had given to them, even if the mighty Pharaoh commanded it. By faith in God's promises for His people they hid their baby for three months, determined to obey God rather than men.

After three months had passed, they realized they could hide the child no longer. So with continued faith in God's promises they devised a bold plan, which they prayed God might use. Moses' mother **"took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it on the reeds by the river's bank."** Miriam, the sister of Moses, stood by to watch what would happen. Sure enough, **"the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river."** What would the princess do when she saw this Israelite baby boy? Would she tell her father, the Pharaoh? Would he then give orders that the disobedient parents be put

to death together with their son? It seemed to be a risky plan, but they believed in God's promise and trusted that God would make the plan work if it was His will.

The plan did work. Pharaoh's daughter saw the little boy in the basket. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. She determined to adopt this little boy as her own. But of course, the baby needed a nursing mother. So the princess arranged through sister Miriam to hire Moses' own mother to nurse her baby openly, without fear of being harmed. This gave Moses' mother the wonderful opportunity to train her son in the ways of the Lord during those early years, before he was taken by the princess and raised as an Egyptian. Moses did not forget that early training, for later on he remembered that he too was an Israelite, not an Egyptian, and that God's promise of deliverance applied also to him.

Stephen sums up these events by saying, **"At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God, and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son."** In this providential way God began to keep His promise of deliverance. For Moses was the man whom God was preparing to be the deliverer or liberator of His people. In Moses there would be combined both the religious fervor and devotion he learned from his believing Israelite parents and the education and training he received as an Egyptian prince. This was the combination that God wanted for the man He chose as the deliverer of His afflicted people. God had not forgotten them. He heard their cries for help in their bondage, and He was already making plans to carry out their escape and also to carry out the judgment of those who oppressed them.

It is for our learning and admonition that God has revealed the inevitable outcome of those who participate as unbelievers in the fulfillment of His will. We only face unyielding judgment if we join the likes of Pharaoh and become the oppressors of God's people. By their affliction of the Israelites Pharaoh and the Egyptians were certainly fulfilling what God promised. But that did not excuse their activities. Rather, their cruel tyranny bears the condemnation of James in the fierce words of our third text: **"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you."**

God had told Abraham that his descendants would be afflicted in a foreign land, and it happened just as He said. Nevertheless, the Egyptians were still responsible for their cruelty, even though they were fulfilling prophecy. At a later time the Jews themselves fulfilled prophecy by putting Jesus to death. But they too were still guilty. The fact that God knew they were going to kill Jesus did not take away their responsibility to the Fifth Commandment or their guilt of committing murder. Thus Stephen ended his speech to the Jewish crowd with this condemnation: **"You have become betrayers and murderers of the Just One."**

What shall we say about our own time? Consider God's prediction through the apostle Paul: **"In the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good"** (2 Tim. 3:1-3). Even as the Egyptians killed the baby boys of the Israelites, their enemies, and became murderers of the just, what similar thing is our own nation doing? Our society permits and enables the killing of unborn babies in great numbers, without the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter, with brutality, and many among us say we are doing no wrong! Are they not fulfilling the prophecies of the last times by such actions? And yet that would never excuse them for or absolve them of such actions. James says God will judge the oppressor, even as He judged the Egyptians of old and as He judged the Jews who rejected their Messiah, for God always judges those who murder the innocent.

The whole Bible gives evidence that God is constantly at work, carrying out in His own way and according to His own timetable His righteous plan of judgment and His gracious plan of salvation. At the right time God brought Moses into the world and prepared him for leadership. So also, **"when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son"** Jesus to be the complete fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. Jesus was the Seed through whom all nations have been blessed, for Jesus bore God's judgment for all our sins, received through His suffering and death the punishment we deserved and rose again to proclaim our forgiveness. We have no reason ever to doubt God's promises, no matter how adverse our circumstances may be.

He always comes through in keeping with His Word. We can trust everything He says, which means that we can act boldly, even dangerously in this faith, following in the footsteps of Moses' parents. May God give us such faith in His promises, so that we refuse to participate in doing harm and we do what is right, regardless of the consequences. Amen.

Exodus Sermon #2

Readings: Exodus 2:11-22 (*Moses forced to flee from Egypt to Midian*)
Exodus 2:23-3:8 (*Moses and God at the burning bush*)

Sermon Texts: Hebrews 11:24-26; Acts 7:22-35

Hebrews 11:24-26 – By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Acts 7:22-35 – “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.

“And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, “Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?” But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. Then the LORD said to him, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.’

“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.”

The Lord God had said to Abraham: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3). This was God's promise that the Savior of the world would come from Abraham's family. This promise was fulfilled 2,000 years later when our Lord Jesus was born, grew up, suffered, died and rose again to take away our sins.

When Abraham first received this promise, he had to wait for many years before God even granted him and his wife Sarah a son. So also, Abraham's descendants, when they were slaves in Egypt, had to wait for many years before God actually delivered them from their slavery. God's promises call for faith, even patient faith. God wants His people to believe what He says and put their trust in what He says, even though the outward evidence seems opposed to God's promise and nothing seems to happen for a long period of time.

God had told Abraham that his family would be afflicted in a foreign land, but that God Himself would judge the oppressing nation and deliver His people. This is what God said, but the evidence seemed to indicate otherwise. As time went on, the oppression of the Egyptians became more severe. In fact, the Egyptian Pharaoh instigated a plan by which the entire Israelite nation would be exterminated rather than blessed. He gave the order that all Israelite baby boys should be thrown into the Nile River and drowned.

One Levite couple, however, believing in God's promise of deliverance, protected their infant boy for three months and then put him in a floating basket on the Nile instead of drowning him. An Egyptian princess,

while bathing in the river, saw the baby, adopted him as her own and gave him the name Moses. Could it be that the birth and unique education of this boy were the indication that God was beginning to keep His promise to Abraham? Could this Moses somehow be the deliverer of God's people? This morning our texts from the New Testament show us indeed HOW GOD CHOSE MOSES TO BE THE DELIVERER OF HIS PEOPLE.

The first thing that God did to prepare Moses for his future task was to work in the heart of Moses an energetic faith in the promises God made to Israel. If Moses was going to deliver God's people, he himself would have to have faith in God's promise of deliverance. Well, where does such faith come from? It comes from hearing God's promises. In the first few years of Moses' life he was brought up by his believing parents, who acquainted him at that very tender age with God's special promises to Abraham and his family.

Then, of course, when he was four years old or so, Moses was given into the hands of his adoptive mother, the Egyptian princess, who brought him up as an Egyptian. As Stephen said many years later in his address to those who accused him of blasphemy, **"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."** The best education possible at that time was given to him, and it looked as though he would become a great Egyptian prince, perhaps even the Pharaoh himself or one of his powerful advisors.

However, at the age of forty Moses made a decision that reflected the early training received from his Israelite mother. As it is written in the letter to the Hebrews: **"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."**

How important those very first years of a person's life truly are! Moses remembered his early training. Moses remembered that he was an Israelite, not an Egyptian, and that the promise of God to Israel applied also to him. In believing God's promises to Israel, he believed especially in the reward of grace that God would give to His people through the promised Messiah. This long-range destiny foretold by God meant more to Moses than the short-term advantages he could enjoy as a wealthy and well-educated Egyptian prince.

Thus by faith Moses chose to live as an Israelite. His choice became known when at the age of forty he killed an Egyptian who was hurting one of his Israelite brethren. As Stephen says, **"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand."** Not only did Moses believe that God would save His people Israel; Moses also believed that he himself was the one through whom God would work out this deliverance. After all, there was no Israelite with as much authority and influence as Moses.

But it did not work out as Moses had hoped. His brethren did not accept him as their leader. For **"the next day Moses appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?' But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?'"** This response made Moses realize that he was not accepted by the Israelites as their leader. It also made him realize that his action of killing the Egyptian was no secret. **"At this saying Moses fled and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he had two sons."**

Now the important thing to remember in all of this is the faith Moses had in God's promises to Israel and his willingness to confess that faith and take his stand with God's people rather than with the oppressors of God's people. God wants to work in us this same kind of faith. He wants us also to confess our faith together with His people, our fellow believers. In Moses' case this meant giving up the advantages and privileges he enjoyed as an Egyptian prince. He apparently had it all: money, power, luxury, education, opportunity for enjoying all the sinful pleasures of this world. But he gave it all up for Christ's sake, that is, because of God's promise to Israel which centered in the coming of the Messiah. In that promise he wanted to participate more than anything else.

The same path is set before us every day of our lives, whether we are 40 or 80 or 20 years old. The Lord through His Word and promise continues to work faith in our hearts. He leads us to regard His Word and promise as the most precious thing in the world. He moves us to consider our membership in His Holy Christian Church as believers in Jesus, our Savior, to be our number one priority, so that we would never want to jeopardize or

endanger our participation in the promises and afflictions and joys of God's people.

Of course, there are other possibilities set before us as alternatives, and they seem to be very attractive at times. We face our own **"treasures in Egypt,"** which are nothing less than **"the passing pleasures of sin."** I know people who have chosen the alternate path. They were educated in their youth as Christians; they were taught the promises of Jesus and how we are saved by faith in the blood of Him who died for our sins on the cross; they were taught that His Word is the one thing needful. But what seems to count in their lives now is making money, enjoying the things of this world that will all pass away, becoming totally absorbed by their jobs or their recreations or their sinful obsessions, with the result that their Christianity becomes a sideline they can do without. Their membership in Christ's church has become relatively unimportant to them, and finally even their outward connection to Christ's church is dissolved. Unlike Moses, they would rather **"enjoy the passing pleasures of sin"** than **"suffer affliction with the people of God."** There is nothing more tragic than to see a once-loyal Christian gradually turn away from the Lord, turn off his faith and give up his allegiance to Christ and the people of Christ for the sake of worldly pleasure and temporary earthly gains.

When Moses was forty, he made the right choice, but it certainly did not seem to turn out well for him at the time. For forty years he lived in the wilderness of Midian with a man named Reuel or Jethro; he married this man's daughter and had two sons. He was not with the people of God at all, but with a stranger in a far-off land. Yet it was at this time that God called him to be the deliverer of His people. When Moses was forty, you see, he had attempted to deliver Israel in *his own* way, without any call or command from God.

When he was eighty years old, however, that was *God's* time to put Moses to work. Everything that had happened to him in his eighty years was part of God's preparation of him for his great calling. Now the time had come for God to take action. **"When forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him** (yes, our Lord Jesus Himself in His usual Old Testament form) **in a flame of fire, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight."** The bush was burning, but it was not consumed. **"As Moses drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, 'I am the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look. Then the Lord said to him, 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.... I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.' This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'"** is the one God sent to be a ruler and deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush."

From this sequence of events we learn that God has His own way of doing things. We learn that even though we believe His promises, our faith does not give us the right to do things in our own way, without His command or contrary to His command. We are not the ones who decide when God should act to keep His promise. We need to follow His timing and His direction rather than our own. Trusting in God's promises often requires waiting, long waiting, for God to do what He said He would do. When Moses was forty, he wanted to deliver God's people. When Moses was eighty, God wanted him to deliver His people. Christian, whoever you are and with all the talents, gifts and training you possess, God knows your address too, and He will call you when He wants you to do His special work. Amen.

Exodus Sermon #3

Readings: Exodus 3:9-20 (*The divine call of Moses to return to Egypt*)
Exodus 4:1-17 (*Miraculous signs to verify the ministry and message of Moses*)

Sermon Text: Mark 12:18-27

Mark 12:18-27 – Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

Moses was born of Israelite parents in the days when the Israelites were slaves of the Egyptians. The Pharaoh’s law decreed that all boy babies among the Israelites were to die, but the Pharaoh’s own daughter saw the baby Moses in a basket on the river and adopted him as her own son.

When Moses was forty years old, he openly declared himself to be an Israelite rather than an Egyptian. He believed in God’s promises to Israel. He also supposed that his fellow Israelites would accept him as their leader and deliverer. But they did not accept him. After killing an Egyptian man who was hurting an Israelite, Moses fled to the land of Midian where he took care of sheep for another forty years.

Then, when Moses was eighty years old, the Lord God Himself appeared to him at the burning bush and summoned him to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt to the land of Canaan, which God had promised to their fathers. At the age of forty Moses had been eager to be the leader of his people, but God did not call him then. Now when Moses was eighty years old, he tried to give God all kinds of reasons for refusing God’s call. He said, **“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?”** He said, **“The Israelites will not believe me.”** He said, **“I am not eloquent, but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”** The Lord God patiently answered all of Moses’ objections and presented strong reasons for Moses to do as he was called to do.

One reason he gave for declining God’s call was that he did not know God’s name, and he expected that the Israelites would ask, **“What is His name?”** How should Moses answer that question? The Lord God responded to this objection by declaring His name to be the Lord Jehovah. He explained this name by saying, **“I AM WHO I AM.”** This name brings out the eternal nature of God, His unchangeableness and His unswerving faithfulness to His own words and promises. In this same connection God also called Himself by another name: **“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”** The Lord said, **“This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations”** (Exod. 3:15). In fact, four times in His conversation with Moses at the burning bush the Lord God called Himself by this name: **“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”**

This morning we want to see how 1500 years later our Lord Jesus in the New Testament made use of this name of God to teach the Sadducees – and us – a very important lesson. By the use of this name Jesus demonstrated HOW GOD REVEALED to Moses and THROUGH MOSES THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The setting of our text is the Tuesday of Holy Week, that is, just three days before Jesus’ death. At this time various factions of Jesus’ enemies were trying to trap Him into saying something that could be used against Him, to put Him to death. The Pharisees had made an attempt to outwit Jesus, but they had failed miserably. Now it was the turn of the Sadducees, described in our text as persons **“who say there is no resurrection.”** The high priest and most of the chief priests at work in the Temple were Sadducees, who did not believe in any kind of resurrection of the dead. In this respect they were much like the religious establishment of our own time, for we note how many of today’s mainline Protestant denominations have as their leaders and teachers people who deny the reality of a physical resurrection of the dead on the last day.

The Sadducees who confronted Jesus thought they had proof positive that the resurrection was a silly teaching. Yes, they even enlisted Moses in support of their cause, saying that Moses’ instruction concerning in-law marriages made it clear that he did not believe in a resurrection. The Sadducees said, **“Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.”** This command of Moses was intended to prevent the dying out of anyone’s family.

The Sadducees then told Jesus the story of seven brothers. The first one married a certain woman and died before any children were born. Therefore the second brother married the woman to have children for his dead brother, but he also died childless. In fact, the same things happened to all seven brothers. They all married the same woman, and they all died childless, and finally the woman died also. Now here was the substance of the trap. The Sadducees asked Jesus, **“Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be?”**

For all seven had her as wife.” We might imagine these Sadducees telling this story before to defenders of the resurrection and getting the reaction they wanted. Nobody had a good answer to refute what they were implying. Obviously, to their way of thinking, Moses himself did not believe in a resurrection. If he had, he would not have made a law that would present such a problem at the resurrection. Imagine, one woman with seven brothers all claiming to be her husband. No doubt, the Sadducees felt very satisfied with themselves, for they were now going to stop the mouth of this rabble-rouser Jesus with all His talk of the resurrection. It was obviously a ridiculous teaching, and the law of Moses showed how silly it was.

Of course, our Lord Jesus was not at all stymied by their question. He answered them decisively: **“Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”** God has the power to raise His people from the dead with glorified bodies that will have no need for marriage or reproduction. The angels do not marry nor reproduce. Neither will the dead when they rise from the dead.

Jesus went on to prove that Moses himself taught the resurrection of the dead in the book of Exodus. They had foolishly quoted Moses as being in their favor, but if they really knew the Scriptures, they would know that Moses taught the doctrine of the resurrection, yes, that God Himself taught the resurrection in one of the most familiar episodes in Old Testament history. Jesus said, **“Concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”**

The Sadducees would have known the story of the burning bush incident. Every seven-year-old child in Israel, I suppose, would have known how God had called Moses to be His leader at the burning bush and how God had called Himself **“the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”** But they had not seriously considered the implications of this name. They did not really know the Scriptures as well as they thought. I don’t suppose that we would have caught the implications of this name either, if Jesus had not made it clear to us.

You see, when God called Moses to deliver His people, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were no longer living. They had been dead for hundreds of years, and their graves were in the land of Canaan, which God had promised to His people. But the Israelites did know that their God was the living God, the real God, not a dead memory. How then can the living God call Himself the God of dead people? How can He who is Life name Himself the God of the dead? No, if the living God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then they by their association with Him must share His life. Even though they died and their bodies were buried, if their God is the living God, then that must mean that they will live also. The living God **“is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”** This means that there must be a resurrection of the dead, that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will live also – for their God is the God of life. And indeed that is what Abraham, Isaac and Jacob believed, for it is written: **“These all died in faith ... and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them”** (Heb. 11:13, 16).

So is there a resurrection of the dead? Yes. Was it taught by Moses? Yes, for Moses is the one who wrote the book of Exodus. Where did Moses get his teaching? From God Himself, who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were dead when God spoke to Moses. They were still dead when Jesus spoke to the Sadducees. But most emphatically and assuredly, they will live because the living God is their God.

Oh, what blessings we have, dear friends, in the Holy Scriptures! The Sadducees were greatly mistaken because they did not really know the Scriptures, even though they thought they did. We also make plenty of blunders in our talking to others and in our personal lives, because we do not know the Scriptures. Of course, we have a great advantage over the Sadducees. We have the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. We have the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. In Jesus we have the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob talking to us, and doing more than talking. We have the certain record of Jesus’ love for us in His death on the cross and His own resurrection from the dead. In the account of Jesus’ death and resurrection we have the fulfillment of God’s promise to the fathers; we have the guarantee that the Bible is God’s Word and that Jesus is God’s Son; we have the forgiveness of our sins assured to us in Him; and we have the assurance that we too shall rise from the dead. Jesus Himself says to us: **“Because I live, you shall live also.”** He says to us: **“This is the will of Him who sent**

Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” There is no reason for us to be greatly mistaken concerning the resurrection. Jesus is God. His victory is ours. His Word is true. And the Scriptures cannot be broken. Amen.

(To be continued)

Maintaining Orthodoxy Within Our Fellowship

Terrel Kesterson

In connection with our seminary dogmatics courses we had opportunity to read these instructive words of Francis Pieper:

The distinction between orthodox and heterodox church bodies and congregations is based on this divine order. A congregation or church body which abides by God’s order, in which therefore God’s Word is taught in its purity and the Sacraments administered according to the divine institution, is properly called an orthodox church (*ecclesia orthodoxa, pura*). But a congregation or church body which, in spite of the divine order, tolerates false doctrine in its midst is properly called a heterodox church (*ecclesia heterodoxa, impura*). All children of God should be earnestly concerned to see how real and serious this difference between the church bodies is, because indifference as to the Christian doctrine is rampant today among professed Christians, and the “abrogation of creeds” and substitution for them of a so-called “applied Christianity” is represented as the goal the church should strive for.

With regard to the orthodox character of a church body note well: (1) A church body is orthodox only if the true doctrine, as we have it in the Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbols, is actually taught in its pulpits and its publications and not merely “officially” professed as its faith. Not the “official” doctrine, but the actual teaching determines the character of a church body, because Christ enjoins that all things whatsoever He has commanded His disciples should actually be taught and not merely acknowledged in an “official document” as the correct doctrine. It is patent that faith in Christ will be created and preserved through the pure Gospel only when that Gospel is really proclaimed. (2) A church body does not forfeit its orthodox character by reason of the casual intrusion of false doctrine. The thing which the Apostle Paul told the elders of Ephesus: “Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30), came true not only in the Apostolic Church, but also in the Church of the Reformation and will occur in the Church to the Last Day. A church body loses its orthodoxy only when it no longer applies Rom. 16:17, hence does not combat and eventually remove the false doctrine, but tolerates it without reproof and thus actually grants it equal right with the truth.¹

The Necessity of Faithfulness to Scripture

The greatest temptation facing the orthodox is that they lose their orthodoxy. When we lose our respect for the Bible as the Word of God, we lose everything. We must never forget that our allegiance is to the Word of God and to the Word of God alone. When congregation or synod or president of synod or pastor or church buildings or family or personal friendships or reason or ego or avoidance of controversy has taken the place of faithfulness to Scripture, orthodoxy has been lost.

Our Lord’s will for His Church is that we be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” We are not to be “children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” The Lord would have us preserve unity in His Church and avoid error by “speaking the truth” (Eph. 4:3, 14-15 NASB). The Lord would not command us to speak the truth if we could not know the truth. Jesus promises us, “If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth” (John 8:31-32). By our studying and meditating on the Scriptures, the Lord leads us to know the truth about what they are saying.

There were many problems and divisions within the congregation in Corinth, yet the members were willing to be instructed and corrected by the Word of God. Thus the Apostle Paul could say to them:

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:4-10).

To claim, as many do, that “all speaking the same thing” is an unattainable ideal has become their excuse for not trying. They are content with conflicting doctrines within their fellowship. Many even look on doctrinal divergence as being healthy for a church and a sign of loving tolerance. It is true that there is no church body in which every single member understands and is convinced of everything which that church body teaches. However, as long as the members of a church body are willing to submit to the authority and teachings of Scripture and not tolerate or promote error within their midst, that is an orthodox, God-pleasing fellowship.

Luther writes:

“The Word and the doctrine must effect the Christian fellowship and unity; when these are alike and one, the rest will follow of itself.” Again: “Let one church follow the other [in external matters] of its own will, or let each one keep its own customs; if only the unity of the Spirit in the bond of faith and the Word is preserved, the difference and diversity in mundane and visible matters will do no harm.” Finally: “None of that peace and unity for me by which one loses God’s Word; for then eternal life and everything else would already be lost. Here I dare not yield or concede anything to please you or any man, but all things must yield to the Word, be they friend or foe. For it is not given for the sake of external or political unity and peace, but for the sake of eternal life.”²

“And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship...” (Acts 2:42 NASB). We are faithful to that fellowship which is faithful to Scripture. Thus we are members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession because, by the grace of God, the Church of the Lutheran Confession has been granted faithfulness to God’s Word. When questions or disagreements arise in our midst, they are decided by Scripture, the very Word of God, which we know to be “a lamp to our feet and a light to our path” (Ps. 119:105). As long as our CLC retains this spirit – this dependence on, submission to and faithfulness to Scripture – so long will we remain orthodox by God working this blessing within us and among us.

Dealing with Dead Orthodoxy

Many theologians criticize the approach of maintaining orthodoxy, even to the point of calling it “a baneful influence on the Christian Church” which fosters “‘intellectualism,’ a lifeless formal Christianity.”³ We are accused of slavishly holding to the old Lutheran Confessions and simply repeating what other Lutheran theologians have said in the past. Nevertheless, we are bound by our Lord’s command, “Let him who has My Word speak My Word faithfully” (Jer. 23:28). We unequivocally hold to our historic Lutheran Confessions because they are faithful expressions of the doctrines of Scripture. We adhere to the teachings of our old Lutheran theologians who were faithful to Scripture. “Scripture cannot be broken,” Jesus said (John 10:35). Since God’s Word never changes, it rightly follows that our doctrines should never change. Our Lord has promised us, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35). The fact that we agree with the historic Lutheran Confessions and with faithful Lutheran theologians of the past is a testimony to the truth, clarity and reliability of the Word of God. “Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls’” (Jer. 6:16 NASB).

Those theologians are mistaken who think that the only way for a church to avoid dead orthodoxy is by constantly updating and changing its doctrine. Rather than making for a vital church, such an approach results in confusion and division among its membership. Satan’s ultimate goal with such an approach is always to cause people to lose their child-like trust in Christ altogether (cf. Gal. 5:9; Luke 18:17). Pieper says:

Since Scripture is the very Word of God, it is proper for the theologian that as often as he opens Scripture, he put no faith whatever in his wit or intellect and ask from God His Holy Spirit, who alone teaches one to

understand God's Word and creates that spirit which subjects itself to the Scriptures. Without this operation of the Holy Spirit man will arrogantly deem himself superior to Scripture, will make Scripture not the object of his faith, but of his criticism, an arrogance that will finally lead himself and others into perdition and will cause factions and divisions in the Church. And this is true of modern theology, because it will not accept Scripture as the Word of God, but places itself above Scripture. The Ego of the theologian becomes the dominating factor, and since there is many an Ego, the result is not unity in the Christian doctrine, but hopeless dissension and factionalism.⁴

It is only by remaining faithful to the Word of God that we can avoid dead orthodoxy and have a fellowship which is truly alive in the Spirit. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). "The Word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12 NASB). God's Word itself creates spiritual life. God's Word is the only source of spiritual life. The more a church substitutes human ideas and gimmicks for the pure Word of God, the more spiritually dead it becomes. "Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life. My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them..." (Prov. 4:13, 20-22).

The Jews had the Word of God, but they failed to put their faith in it. "The word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (Heb. 4:2 NASB). An orthodox church can allow itself to fall victim to dead orthodoxy. Being a member of a church that teaches the truth of Scripture never saved anyone. It is only when our faith is grounded on the truth being taught that we are saved. Christ prays to His Father on behalf of His believing people of all time: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus has told us, "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

Not Taking the Word for Granted

A potential threat to our state of orthodoxy is that we come to take our Savior and His Word for granted. The Lord warns us against allowing ourselves to become indifferent toward Him: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:15-19 NASB). A church body – pastors, teachers, synodical officials and all members – is simply a group of wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked sinners in the sight of God and in desperate need of the Savior's forgiveness and righteousness. May God in His mercy keep us from never losing sight of this reality and necessity!

"They received the Word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11 NASB). For a church to remain orthodox it must have a laity well trained in Scripture. Of course, the lay members need faithful clergy to shepherd them in God's ways through His Word. Just as importantly, the clergy need lay members who are knowledgeable in the Scriptures to keep the clergy faithful to the truth taught therein. The Lord wants His people to treat their pastors with love and respect (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17). At the same time, Christians are not to be faithful to a pastor or to a church; they are to be faithful to the Word of God. We pastors are to train our members to compare what we say with what Scripture says, so that they may know if we are telling the truth or not. We are to train them to carry out the Lord's injunction to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1 NASB). History shows how often a church body rots from the head down. This does not happen so easily with an involved, doctrinally grounded, Bible searching laity. Luther says:

To recognize and judge doctrine behooves each and every Christian, so much so that he is accursed who infringes upon this right by as little as a hairsbreadth. For Christ Himself has established this right by various and unassailable statements, such as Matt. 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing." He is certainly speaking this word to the people in opposition to those who teach, and He commands them to avoid false teachings. But how can they avoid them if they do not recognize them? And how can they recognize them if they do not have the right to judge them? ... In this all the syllables of the prophets agree. For what else do the prophets do except admonish the people not to believe false prophets? But what is this admonishing except declaring and confirming that the people have the right to

judge and recognize doctrine?⁵

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9 NASB). In our concern for the truth we may think that the clergy are the only ones who truly know and are able to speak the truth. Pastors have to be careful not to give their members the impression that they should not express what they believe because they will say the wrong thing. The Lord has made every Christian a member of His “royal priesthood.” In true harmony with their status as kingly priests of Christ, we want to actively train and encourage our members to be able to speak to others about Christ and His Word. We want to look for the different gifts the Lord has given our people and help them to use and develop those gifts for service to Him in His Church. Discouraging members of a fellowship in the use of their gifts results in spiritual apathy and deadness within that group, but encouraging them serves the goal of promoting a fellowship which is active and alive in Christ.

Speaking the Truth in Love

A potential problem for the orthodox is that they stay too much to themselves. Just as strong as our zeal TO RETAIN the truth should be our zeal TO SPREAD the truth. The easy and comfortable thing for us is to stay within our own fellowship and not get out into our neighborhoods and communities with the Gospel. It is not easy dealing with people caught up in all manner of sins and religious confusion, but in Christ and His Word we have what they truly need. We must constantly remind ourselves that Christ’s Great Commission to His Church is to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Our Lord wants us not only to have the truth, but also to share the truth wherever and whenever we can!

For a church to remain orthodox we must not only be “speaking the truth”; we must be “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). We do not compromise or apologize for any of the truths of God’s Word. However, having the truth and speaking the truth are not enough. It is also vitally important to our Lord HOW we speak the truth. He wants us to speak His Word to one another and to others in a loving way.

The Lord warns us through the apostle: “There must also be factions among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). A congregation or synod cannot ignore error and avoid controversy in order to try to keep from losing members. We hold fast to God’s Word and leave the outcome in the Lord’s hands. However, in our zeal for the truth we dare never forget that we are dealing with precious souls for whom the Savior died. When the Shepherd went out to find the one sheep that was lost, He did not beat it down or tell it how stupid it was. He lovingly laid it on His shoulders and restored it to His sheepfold (Luke 15:1-7). “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil ...” (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

During times of doctrinal controversy within our fellowship we must be careful not to treat those who do not agree with us as the enemy. At such times we especially need to keep in mind our Lord’s admonition: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:14-15 NASB). If someone is going to be upset, let him be upset because he will not listen to God’s Word and not because we treated him badly.

These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
Among the heart-strings of a friend.
The ill-timed truth we might have kept—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say—
Who knows how grandly it had rung?⁶

Johann Quenstedt warns against allowing controversies to become feeding frenzies: “In the field of polemical theology we must take special care not to engage in controversies over useless questions and not to let controversies breed controversies; polemics must not become quarrelsome and contentious theology, by which the truth is lost through too much disputing.”⁷

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s

matters” (1 Pet. 4:15). Our Lord condemns the act of being a busybody. Yet sadly, sins of tattling and gossiping run rampant during times of controversy. At such times it is a great temptation to look over each other’s shoulders and stick our noses where they do not belong. Those who are not directly involved in the discussions are curious and concerned. We want to make sure the right thing is being done. We may have family and friends who are directly involved and even ask for our input. In times of controversy we need to be very careful not to interfere in another pastor’s call. The Lord commands, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone” (Matt. 18:15). Controversy must be settled directly between the principal parties. “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter” (Prov. 11:13 NASB). “Let every fact be established by two or three witnesses” (2 Cor. 13:1 – my emphasis). Listening to and repeating second-hand and third-hand accounts is wrong and only adds to the controversy. Bypassing Scriptural and constitutional channels and circularizing the membership are wrong. In effect, it is saying that the pastor or president of the synod or the other principals involved are wrong and are trying to hide the truth from the rest of the fellowship. If we read such circularized materials, are we not also in the wrong? Where there is a willingness to confront controversy and see it through to a Scriptural conclusion, we must show patience and trust toward our brethren directly involved and give them time to resolve the matter. If there has been wrongdoing, the Lord will bring it to light in due course. “But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:15).

We conclude with a quote from Pieper:

The history of the Church shows that by God’s grace and power a Church which continues in the immutable Word of the Prophets and Apostles has vitality. The church at Jerusalem continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and the Lord added daily such as were saved (Acts 2:42-47; 4:4; 5:14; 11:21; 14:1). Also the Church of the Reformation held its ground against the whole world by taking the position characterized in the axiom: “The Word they still shall let remain.” And as to the Lutheran Church in America, a speedy extinction had been prophesied for its “strictly confessional trend” by both the Reformed sects and the liberal “American Lutheranism.” The fathers ... were given the advice from all sides to cast aside the “Symbol theology”..., in case they wished to keep their Church alive. Our fathers refused to be confused by such talk. They ..., in a quiet and clear manner, publicly and privately, in the home, the school, the church, and the higher institutions of learning, kept on teaching the pure divine truth, as it is revealed in God’s infallible Word and confessed in the Symbols of the Lutheran Church. And God has blessed the “restitution theology” of our fathers with success also in this country, in spite of vehement opposition. But whether there be success or not, God has commanded His Church to preach His Word without subtraction or addition. Farther than that the responsibility of the Church does not go. The success rests in God’s hands.... To this end God, of course, must give and preserve teachers who are not only scholarly but have also been trained in the school of the Holy Ghost, so that they know by their own experience how absolutely necessary it is for the Church steadfastly to cling to the *sola gratia* and the *sola Scriptura*. Modern theology has unfortunately given up both these truths.⁸

Endnotes

¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 422-423.

² St. Louis edition: IX:831, XVIII:1985 and IX:831, as quoted in Pieper, I, 178.

³ Pieper, I, 157.

⁴ Pieper, I, 187.

⁵ Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says*, §1233, I, 418.

⁶ From “The Fool’s Prayer,” Edward R. Sill, *101 Famous Poems*, 160.

⁷ *Systema* I, 14, as quoted in Pieper in footnote 77, I, 49.

⁸ Pieper, I, 184-185.

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The Relationship of the Active Obedience of Christ To His Passive Obedience

Herman Meyer

* Herman Meyer (1881-1920) was a pastor and professor in the Wisconsin Synod. He served as professor at the Wauwatosa seminary from 1915-1920. He was the younger brother of Prof. J. P. Meyer. His original article, "Das Verhältnis des activen Gehorsams Christi zu seinem passiven Gehorsam," appeared in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Volume 14:2 (April 1917), pages 108-118. It is here offered in a translation done by Norman Greve. – Editor.

Since the time of Chemnitz the distinctive expression used in Lutheran dogmatics to teach about the redemptive work of Christ has been to describe it as happening in connection with His active and passive obedience. This entire obedience of Christ, the *obedientia universalis*, the dogmatics works call vicarious, an *obedientia vicaria*. If we then wish to treat the question of how the active obedience of Christ relates to His passive obedience, this really amounts to asking whether or not the active obedience is vicarious or not.

The interest of the dogmaticians in stressing that the *obedientia activa* was *vicaria* is clear. It is to properly show the completeness of Christ's satisfaction, so that the Christian might place his whole confidence on it and not think that he still must make satisfaction to the law with his own works and then, at least partly, place his confidence upon how he in that way contributes to his justification. It was indeed Roman dogma that Christ redeemed mankind only from the slight blemish of original sin, while the individual himself had to make satisfaction for all actual sins through his works and thus, strictly speaking, be justified through his works. The dogma of *gratia infusa* mingled justification and proper conduct of life in such a manner that all certainty of faith is impossible, just as also the Tridentine decrees damn all who say that a person can and should be certain of his salvation.

The doctrine of Andreas Osiander of Koenigsberg was closely related to this Roman dogma, though indeed he did not mean it so perniciously. It is perfectly proper to think that the faith through which we are justified shows itself immediately and for all time as a new life principle in us and that sanctification is begun in us when we are justified, to be continued throughout the entire life. But he expressed these proper thoughts in such a way that he permitted the foundation of our justification to be the essential dwelling-in-us righteousness of Christ's divine nature, not the imputed righteousness of Christ, the God-man. Of course, as much as Osiander himself also strove against it, the significance of Christ's atoning work was severely injured by this. The *Formula of Concord* formulated his teaching as follows:

One side has contended that the righteousness of faith, which the apostle calls the righteousness of God, is God's essential righteousness, which is Christ Himself as the true, natural, and essential Son of God, who dwells in the elect by faith and impels them to do right, and thus is their righteousness, compared with which righteousness the sins of all men are as a drop of water compared with the great ocean.¹

In opposition to this Flacius, Menius and others stressed the significance of Christ's obedience for our redemption. The distinction between active and passive obedience dates from them. This method of teaching has dominated since the time of Chemnitz.

The antithesis has remained the same. Thus is found among the opponents of the *obedientia vicaria activa* this argument: *Christ's satisfactory fulfillment of the law would release men from fulfilling the law*. That indeed makes no sense, unless one mingles, perhaps unconsciously sometimes, this human law-fulfilling into justification and wants to let men place their confidence in it. Christ has redeemed us from the punishment of the law, from the curse and wrath of God, but now the law demands obedience which the individual must render.² A list of opponents shows that this is so: a number of Calvinists, Socinians, Arminians, Weigelianer³ and many more recent theologians. To restrain these thoughts the dogmaticians speak of the *obedientia vicaria activa*.

Also Pastor Ullrich,⁴ who gave occasion for the current discussion of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, labors under the same error. His denial of the doctrine of the vicarious active obedience of Christ ultimately amounts to saying that sanctification takes the place of justification and that with the Christian justification is not completed until that time when on the Last Day sanctification too is set in order in him. Let

one protest as much as he will; in doing this he finally comes to placing his confidence upon his good works, and he has again arrived at the error from which God has freed us through Luther's Reformation. The doctrine of the vicarious obedience of Christ, the active as well as the passive, stands opposed to this.

Naturally, as Lutherans we do not have an interest on account of our dogmatic system in establishing the *obedientia vicaria activa*. We rather ask what the Scripture says about this. But of course, we will not now discard the expression when we note that Scripture knows nothing at all of these terms. It is the very same with other doctrines too, that Scripture does not contain the terms we employ, as for example: Trinity, two natures in Christ, *communicatio idiomatum*, etc., etc. False teaching has made it necessary to use such expressions, and as long as their content agrees with Scripture, they are certainly not to be rejected. The question, then, is whether the thing which we designate by the expressions *obedientia vicaria activa et passiva* is found in Scripture.

The New Testament speaks of the obedience of Christ only in a relatively few – that is, in three passages,⁵ and then always in the plain and simple manner of Scripture in general. Twice the ὑπακοή of Christ is treated, and once the Lord is called a ὑπήκοος. But wherever the New Testament speaks of it, the words flow straight from the fullness of the apostle's heart; there he energetically (*im Geist*) portrays the magnitude of Christ's work. He fully sums this up in the word "obedience."

We turn first to the passage from Philippians, where Paul says, "Jesus Christ became obedient unto (*bis zum*) death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). We note that the subject of the sentence is the God-man Jesus Christ. The kenosis, which is the subject matter of the previous verse, is not a kenosis of the Son of God, as though perhaps with His incarnation He had partly emptied Himself of His Godhead. It is rather the humiliation of the God-man Jesus Christ. And this God-man Jesus Christ became obedient unto death, in which obedience His entire life is included. And even His death is not excluded from it. Μέχρι θανάτου does not mean that in death He ceased being obedient; on the contrary, it means that death – yes, death on the cross – is the pinnacle, the highest evidence of this obedience.

Only *one*⁶ element of Christ's obedience is mentioned in this text: the death on the cross. So it might seem to us as though Paul here deals exclusively with the passive obedience. But if we consider that the apostle speaks of an obedience unto death and that hence, as already said, he includes the entire life of the Lord in this obedience, then we are compelled in this very connection to place a truth clearly before our eyes, which is extremely important for the understanding of this whole doctrine. The concept of obedience is really a concept of activity. Obedience is really a bowing of one's own will under the will of another and a doing of that which he commands. Hence, though we can logically distinguish between the active obedience of Christ as His fulfilling of the law and His passive obedience as His enduring punishment, yet we dare not tear them apart mechanically and think perhaps that the one is an activity, but the other is pure passivity.

If we speak of active and passive obedience, then we are rather only arranging the *one* obedience under two differing points of view. According to the *one* view the self-same obedience appears to us as active; according to the other, as passive. And every doing of the Savior when He, who was indeed in the form of God and hence Lord of the law, bowed under that same law in obedience and fulfilled its demands – such doing was a suffering for Him, for it was a doing fraught with disgrace and trouble. But on the other hand, His suffering too, also precisely at its highest point in His crucifixion, was an act of obedience, for it was a voluntary, self-chosen suffering. Already Isaiah speaks in this way of the suffering Messiah: "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). That speaks of pure activity. To be sure, individual elements in the life of the Lord will seem to us to fall more under the concept of doing and others more under that of suffering, but both belong to that obedience which we dare not superficially tear apart into active and passive. In this way Philippians 2:8 too speaks of the obedience in doing and suffering, which climaxed in the death by crucifixion. Quenstedt says:

That distinction into active and passive obedience is thus not precise, as Mentzer aptly remarks, since the passive obedience does not exclude, but rather includes the active, as this has marvelously shown itself in the midst of Christ's death. Therefore Bernard rightly speaks of an *actio passiva* and *passio activa*.⁷

Now certainly, the Philippians passage does not expressly speak of what this obedience signifies for our redemption, since it rather holds as a model before the readers the attitude shown by Christ in His obedience. That significance we learn from other passages.

We now pass on to Hebrews 5:8: "Though He was a Son [*er Gottes Sohn war*]⁸, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." This text too deals with the obedience of Christ in connection with

His suffering. A comparison with the previous verse shows that here also it is not speaking of the passive obedience to the exclusion of the active: “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.” The expression in the text itself, that He has learned obedience, also shows this. And this – that Christ has learned obedience – is the great thing asserted here. He has bowed Himself under the will of God as under the will of another. Above all, that the Savior is righteous does not mean that He fulfilled the will of God naturally, according to the essential righteousness which He had as the Son of God; rather He has learned obedience as the God-man in His state of humiliation. He felt the law of God as a pressing load; He saw in the will of God a foreign (*fremden*) will. He was also tempted not to comply with this will; Hebrews 4:15 draws particular attention to this. We dare not seek to weaken these thoughts in any way. The great temptation in the wilderness, for example, was a real temptation, which confronted Him with full force, which He also did not dismiss with ease by virtue of His divine holiness, but which He in bitter struggle has overcome. He has learned obedience. He has submitted Himself. Without ever placing His will in sinful opposition to the divine will, without ever granting room in His heart to even the faintest tinge of a sinful thought, He has borne the burden of the divine will. To be sure, we do not understand this, just as little as we can grasp His humiliation with our weak reason, but Scripture says it is so. And if it then says in Hebrews 5:9, “And having been perfected, He became the author (*Ursache*) of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,” then we understand that His work of redemption consists of this obedience, this obedience which was at the same time the highest doing and the deepest suffering.

No doubt, the chief passage on the obedience of Christ and its significance in the redemptive work is Romans 5:19: “For as by *one* man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by *one* Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” The vicarious nature of Christ’s obedience is clearly under discussion here. It is placed side by side with the disobedience of Adam, of which verse 12 has said that it is called through God’s immediate imputation a disobedience of all men: ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον, namely *Adamo peccante*.⁹ Adam in his sin was the representative of all mankind, its substitute. Adam’s sin was the sin of all mankind and is imputed to each individual person as his guilt. In like manner Christ in His obedience was the representative or substitute of all mankind. In God’s eyes His obedience is the obedience of all mankind; it is substitutionary. And it is just as clear that His obedience is considered in this passage to be a fulfilling of the law. The ὑπακοή of Christ is placed in contrast to the παρακοή of Adam. Just as the latter was a disobedience against the divine command, so the former is also an obedience precisely of the divine command; it is precisely what we call the active obedience of Christ. Christ’s work of redemption through which the many were made righteous consists of this obedience. But when Paul in Romans speaks in this way of the obedience of Christ, who would be so foolish as to believe that he wishes to exclude what we call the passive obedience? The work of redemption consists of the entire obedience in doing and suffering. Scripture sums it up in this way.

However, the logical distinction between active and passive obedience is not to be discarded on this account. The earlier citation from Quenstedt shows that our dogmatists fully recognize that the two belonged closely together and are aware that they are throwing elements which lie within each other into sharp relief by placing them next to each other. That they make a division here arises from their efforts to present the redemptive work in its full immensity and to prevent justification and sanctification from being mingled in the way mentioned earlier. The Scripture itself also offers occasion to do this. Without ever using the expression “obedience,” it sets the Lord in His redemptive work before our eyes in such a way that it reports how He fulfilled the law for us. This being so, we have the right to find the active obedience in these passages. We confine ourselves here to a few verses.

Christ says in John 8:46, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” That means that His entire conduct agreed exactly with the law, for the Pharisees would surely have reproached Him, if they had known anything against Him; but they must remain silent and by their silence give a loud and eloquent witness to His innocence. And that this fulfillment of the law in His work is not something completely unimportant follows from the way Christ continues: “And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?”

The Lord says in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). The Lord does not wish to destroy the Old Testament, which is here designated according to its two parts, but rather to fulfill it. But it is clear that the Old Testament does not come into view here in so far as it prophesies, but in so far as it contains the law. Therefore

Christ designates it in verse 18 simply as the *nomos*. He wants to fulfill the law, that is, render what the law demands; He has come for that purpose. Indeed, the context here points out that Christ has that fulfillment of the law particularly in view, which He wishes to produce in the members of his kingdom: it is righteousness, that is, a righteousness of life which is better than that of the scribes and the Pharisees. But in this righteousness He goes before as King in His kingdom; as He also says, He has come to fulfill. He does not say in these words what meaning this, His personal fulfillment, has for His disciples. But that will not seem strange when we consider what is said in verses 1 and 2: "His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them." The disciples have recognized their Messiah in Him; here He is not speaking to them of His redemptive work.

Similarly, at His baptism the Lord said to John the Baptist, "Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). He wanted to do everything that God's law demanded, and now because God had sent John to baptize for the forgiveness of sins, He also wanted to be baptized. And that befitted Him; that was, as He said in the Sermon on the Mount, the purpose of His coming.

We will cite only one other text, but it is an extremely important one. Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Christ had been made *under* the law; the text speaks of obedience, of actual obedience, bowing to a foreign will. He was made under the *law*; this being so, it speaks of his fulfilling the law, of His active obedience. And that is mentioned as essential for His entire work for the redemption of mankind, since it is included in His divine mission. Yes, it is even said in express words that this fulfillment of the law, this active obedience, was vicarious, since it is said that Christ was made under the law for this very purpose, so that He thereby might redeem those who were under the law. Through this we have received sonship. Here, similarly to Romans 5:19, the *obedientia activa* is clearly and plainly called¹⁰ *vicaria*. So the use of this term is firmly justified, even though Scripture itself does not employ it.

About this active obedience being a necessary component of Christ's work of redemption, Quenstedt says:

Christ was obligated to make satisfaction according to the rigor of the law, on the one hand for our guilt through the perfect holiness of His life, and on the other hand for the punishment (which was to be borne by us) on account of this guilt. In His suffering Christ makes amends in accordance with our punishment, in the active obedience in accordance with our nonfulfillment of the law. Through His suffering we have the nonimputation of sins; through His active obedience the imputation of a positive righteousness.

In spite of this remark of Quenstedt just mentioned, it would appear to us as if, when making this distinction, one runs the risk of mechanically tearing apart the active and passive obedience, as well as causing forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ's righteousness to be construed in a way that does not spring from reality – as if they are pieces of justification. Concerning this, Dr. Hoenecke says in his *Dogmatik* (Vol. III, pp. 347-48):

The relationship between the nonimputation of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness dare not be falsely apprehended, as when one perhaps would view the nonimputation of sin and the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ as two parts, out of which justification itself for the first time issues as a unit. Rather, according to Scripture justification exists where sin is not imputed and thus is forgiven, as well as where Christ's righteousness is imputed, so that in the one case as in the other the entire justification exists. This relationship depends on this: that in both cases (the nonimputation of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ) one and the same all-encompassing reality (Christ with His entire obedience) is at the root. It is clear from this that the nonimputation of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness are not really different pieces of justification, but rather only the positive and negative expression for the very same thing. Thus one fully describes justification both when he describes it as the imputation of Christ's righteousness and just as much when he describes it as nonimputation, or forgiveness, of sin. For the one is given in the other.

Scripture does not say, "Christ was delivered for our sins, and fulfilled the law for our righteousness." Forgiveness of sin and imputation of Christ's righteousness are, for the Scriptures, the one justification, which is grounded upon the entire obedience of Christ. Paul says in Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."¹¹ The law is only added because of sin; it is the dividing wall which sin has erected between God and men. Christ has made satisfaction to the law in our stead through His perfect obedience both in doing and in suffering and thereby has broken down the dividing wall. He is the end of the law. Now we have sonship, since the law has nothing more to say. As many of you as are baptized have put on

Christ. God looks upon us as upon Christ; we are His dear children in whom He is well pleased. Christ has brought this to pass through His obedience, active and passive. This entire obedience of Christ is one *obedientia vicaria*.

When we think about it in this way, the arguments of those who oppose the substitutionary meaning of Christ's active obedience appear so meaningless. They maintain that Christ, as true man, has had to fulfill the law for His own self, and therefore His obedience could not be substitutionary. Such people forget that Christ as the God-man stands before the law just as He stands before it according to His divine nature; hence He can also say, precisely when He points to His human nature, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." And Paul says that the God-man Jesus Christ, who was in the form of God and therefore Lord of the law, became obedient, as well as that the Son of God was born of a woman and was made under the law. We do not understand, then, how they can speak of an obligation of Jesus Christ to keep the law for His own sake.

Or they say: A vicarious active obedience makes the passive obedience superfluous, since the law only requires either obedience or punishment, but not both. That is pure unspiritual hair-splitting¹² without Scripture basis. The Scripture tells us that Christ with His obedience, both in doing and suffering, has taken our place and combines everything into His obedience by which the many were justified – how does this question then still concern us?

With this we have really ended our inquiry. However, we still add a few historical notices. Although the doctrine of the active and passive obedience of Christ was given dogmatic precision for the first time as a consequence of the Osiandrian Controversy, yet we dare not think that it had been unknown before that. Already in the ancient church this subject was occasionally spoken of in similar expressions, and it was pursued repeatedly by Luther.¹³ Thus in his sermon for the Sunday after Christmas from the *Kirchenpostille* (St. L., XII, 235):

But so that we the more deeply understand how Christ was made under the law, we should know that He was made under it in a two-fold manner. First, under the works of the law: He has permitted Himself to be circumcised and to be presented and purified in the temple; He has become subject to father and mother, and such like. And He was not obligated to do this, for He was Lord over all laws. But He has done this freely, not in fear or seeking anything in it for Himself.... Secondly, He has willingly placed Himself under the suffering and pain of the law. Not only has He done the works which He was not obliged to do, but He has also willingly and innocently endured the penalty which the law threatens and inflicts upon those who do not keep it.

Following the Osiandrian Controversy, Flacius' formulation of the doctrine attained general acceptance in the Lutheran Church. Only Parsimonius, a superintendent from Ansbach, initially opposed it, but he later gave up his opposition. The *Formula of Concord* sums up the outcome as follows:

For this reason, then His obedience, not only in suffering and dying, but also in this, that He in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law, and fulfilled it by this obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that, on account of this complete obedience, which He rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves us.¹⁴

In this way Scripture and the Confessions include the entire work of redemption under this obedience and show at what great cost we are purchased.

Endnotes

¹ The English translation comes verbatim from the Thorough Declaration, III, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 917.

² The italicizing of the "argument" clause has been added by the editor, who in agreement with the translator grants that the exact substance and differentiation of the opposition argument and Meyer's apparent counter-argument are difficult to follow. However, we believe that the reader need not determine exactly what Meyer says in this paragraph in order to continue on and profit from the rest of the article.

³ Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) was a German pastor who, although he subscribed to the *Formula of Concord*, was a mystic with theosophic and pantheistic leanings. This became evident in his posthumously published writings.

⁴ No information about Pastor Ullrich or the “current discussion” to which Meyer refers is available at this time.

⁵ Meyer’s conclusion here seems to be based on identifying passages which refer to Christ according to the Greek form ὑπακοή and its cognates.

⁶ The italicizing of *one* in this paragraph and also in the next reflects Meyer’s intended emphases in the German, which also occur later in his treatment of Romans 5:19 and Galatians 4:4-5.

⁷ The translators of Heinrich Schmid’s work, *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, have rendered Quenstedt’s words in this way: “The distinction into active and passive obedience is not very accurate, as Dr. Mentzer well remarks, because the passive obedience does not exclude the active, but includes it, inasmuch as the latter was wonderfully active, even in the very midst of Christ’s death. Hence Bernard correctly calls Christ’s action passive, and His passion active” (p. 352).

⁸ Meyer cites Luther’s translation, which has *Gottes Sohn*.

⁹ Literally from the Latin: “Adam having sinned.”

¹⁰ Although Meyer employs *ist genannt* as his verbal expression, it would seem more accurate to say both in German and English: “the active obedience is clearly and plainly set forth (or taught) as vicarious.”

¹¹ Luther’s German, here cited by Meyer, reads rather differently: *Christus ist des Gesetzes Ende, wer an den glaubt, der ist gerecht* (“Christ is the law’s termination; whoever believes on Him is justified”).

¹² Meyer’s word *Tiftelei* may be the same as *Tüftelei*, lit. “subtleties,” here rendered as “hair-splitting.”

¹³ In addition to the sermon on Galatians 4:1-7 cited from the *Kirchenpostille*, see also *Sermons of Martin Luther*, John Lenker, ed., VI, p. 255f.

¹⁴ Thorough Declaration, III, *Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 919, 921.

Book Reviews

David Aikman: *Jesus in Beijing - How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, Regnery Publishing, 2003, hardcover, 344 pages.

How many Christians live in China? Only the all-knowing Lord God knows the real answer. Surely the Communists in control would like to see very few Christians, if any, in China after so many years of harassment and persecution. Nevertheless, all the many efforts of these Communist leaders have not succeeded in wiping out the name and worship of Jesus Christ in China. In fact, all indications are that the presence of Christianity in China has been expanding rapidly. David Aikman, former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine, makes this astounding claim in his well-researched book: “The number of Christian believers in China, both Catholic and Protestant, may be closer to 80 million than the official combined Catholic-Protestant figure of 21 million. But, the reality is simply that no one knows for sure. All we do know is that Christianity has grown at a staggering speed since 1979, when China began to relax the fierce restrictions on religious activity that had been imposed during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s” (pp. 7-8).

Over a number of years Dr. Aikman has accumulated as much information as he could on the entire Christian presence in China, and this book is the result. In his many visits to China in the last 20 years he has discovered Chinese Christians in all walks of life: consulate officers, businessmen, actors, singers, other musicians and students.

He has observed two kinds of Christian churches in China. One kind is the official government-sponsored church, affiliated with the Three Self Patriotic Movement which stresses self-government, self-support and self-propagation and opposes all ties with Christians from other countries. This kind of church includes both the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) and the China Christian Council (CCC).

The other kind is the Underground Church, made up of hundreds of so-called house churches. These churches are, without doubt, more faithful to their Lord in their teaching and practice than the official church. In fact, many of the house church leaders want nothing to do with the official church, since it is under the rule of the Communist establishment. Many of these leaders have endured severe persecution because of their allegiance to Jesus.

In his book Dr. Aikman refers to a meeting he attended in August of 1998 when many of the house church leaders got together and drew up an appeal to the government. In November of 1998 some of these same

leaders also drew up a confession of faith. Both the appeal and confession of faith are reproduced in English translation as appendices to this book.

From Appendix A, "United Appeal," we quote the following: "We call on the government to admit to God's great power, and to study seriously the new trends of development of Christianity.... We call on the legal authorities to release unconditionally all House Church Christians presently serving in Labor Reform Camps. These include Presbyterians (who believe that if one is saved once, he or she is always saved), the Charismatic Church, the Local Church (incorrectly called the 'Shouters' Sect'), the Way of Life Church (also called the Full Gospel Church), the Little Flock Church, the Pentecostal Church, Lutherans who do not attend the Three Self churches, and the Baptist Church" (p. 293). Note the variety of beliefs represented in China.

From Appendix B, "Confession of Faith," we quote the following: "The Bible is the complete truth and without error; it will allow no one to change it in any manner.... We are opposed to interpreting Scripture by one's own will, or by subjective spiritualization.... We believe that God created all things.... We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son.... He allowed himself to be crucified on the cross of his own will and there shed his precious blood in order to redeem those who believe in him from sin and death.... Anyone who repents, confessing his or her sins, and believes in Jesus as the Son of God, that He was crucified on the cross for our sins, and that He rose again on the third day for the remission of our sins and for receiving the Holy Spirit, shall be saved through being born again.... The missions of the church are: proclamation of the Gospel, teaching and pastoring the believers, training and sending them, and defending the truth by refuting heresies and bringing them to the correct path.... We are opposed to the unity of the church and state or the intermingling of the church and political power" (pp. 297-301).

This book provides evidence that the Holy Spirit is working through the Gospel of Christ especially in countries like China and India and in the various smaller countries in Africa and South America. This growth is happening at the same time that churches in Europe and North America appear to be drifting away more and more from God's truth. We pray that the name of Christ will continue to be proclaimed in China and that many more millions will be brought to faith in Jesus, the only Savior for all sinners everywhere.

Dr. Aikman predicts in his final chapter: "At the present rate of growth in the number of Christians in the countryside, in the cities, and especially within China's social and cultural establishment, it is possible that Christians will constitute 20 to 30 percent of China's population within three decades" (p. 285).

William H. Braun and Victor H. Prange, compiling editors: *Not Unto Us - A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*, Northwestern, 2001, paperback, 266 pages.

This book is sure to be of immense interest to the friends of Pastor Kurt Eggert (1923-1993), who served as Hymnal Project Director for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's (WELS) 1993 hymnal entitled *Christian Worship - A Lutheran Hymnal*. The first two sections of the book contain some of Pastor Eggert's essays on worship and music as well as a listing of various texts and tunes written by Pastor Eggert. In a brief biography written by his widow, Ruth Eggert, we learn that some of the founding fathers of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) were college classmates and close friends, namely Rollin Reim, Winfred Schaller, Jr., and Len Bernthal. After serving as pastor of WELS congregations in North Dakota and Wisconsin and after long-time involvement with the singing group known as the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee, Pastor Eggert was chosen in 1983 to be full-time director of the new hymnal project. He devoted the last ten years of his life to this difficult task. The first copy of the new hymnal was presented to Pastor Eggert as he was lying in a hospital bed, just five days before his death.

After the biography the reader encounters short chapters written by those who worked with Pastor Eggert in the Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee and *Viva Vox*, a publication on worship and music that continued from 1955 to 1961. Carl Schalk, a prominent Lutheran musicologist, contributes a chapter on hymnody in honor of Pastor Eggert.

The last two chapters were written by two WELS ministers, James Tiefel and Victor Prange, who served on the Joint Hymnal Committee. I found these chapters especially informative on the development of liturgical and worship practices in the WELS. For example, early WELS congregations were strongly influenced by German Lutheran Pietism, which was decidedly "low church" rather than "high church." The constitution of one of the oldest WELS congregations stated flatly: "Never may or shall a preacher of the said congregation use the rite of the old Lutheran church, whether in Baptism or the Lord's Supper" (p. 147). Many congregations in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), on the other hand, "experienced not only an elaborate liturgical rite

based on Luther's Reformation revisions, but chasubles, chanting, candles, and crucifixes as well" (p. 149).

The Lutheran Hymnal of 1941 was a project of the Synodical Conference, of which the LCMS and the WELS were the largest members. Professor J. P. Koehler of the WELS was influential in promoting the old orthodox Lutheran hymns in the WELS, but he was not much interested in the old Lutheran liturgies. "Koehler's knowledge of history led him to the conclusion that too often liturgy and ceremony were imposed on the church in a legalistic way and led not to a faith-wrought liturgical life but to one that was formalistic instead" (p. 151). The WELS publication *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (formerly known as the *Quartalschrift*) did not have an article on liturgies until 1938, 34 years after its first issue. This article was written by another CLC founder, Pastor Gervasius Fischer of Mankato. To many in the WELS *The Lutheran Hymnal* liturgy was too "high church."

Nevertheless, in the course of time it happened that most LCMS and WELS churches cheerfully accepted *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941. However, after the breakup of the Synodical Conference in 1963 and the publication of a new LCMS hymnal called *Lutheran Worship* in 1982, pressure was placed on the WELS to come up with a new hymnal of its own. The last section of *Not Unto Us* tells the reader how this new hymnal came to be put together. What hymns should be included? What kind of liturgies should be proposed? How were the psalms to be presented? What about forms for baptisms, marriages and funerals? Many committee and subcommittee meetings were held to discuss such matters. It was Pastor Eggert's task to bring it all together, which became especially difficult towards the end because of his failing health.

The process of developing the new hymnal aroused hostility on the part of some. Pastor Eggert was on the receiving end of angry correspondence, some of which was published in the WELS periodical *The Northwestern Lutheran* (now *Forward in Christ*). Changes in the wording of the Nicene Creed and in the standard liturgies probably elicited the most reaction. Many persons were upset by the attempt to modernize the English used (e.g. removing "thee" and "thou"). Change in worship practice and language tends to get many Christians upset. As the history revealed in this book indicates, it is hard to take a middle road that will satisfy all sides, even though all sides are totally agreed on the doctrine they teach and confess.

I suppose that most congregations in the CLC still use *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, perhaps together with the *Worship Supplement* developed by Prof. John Reim, son of Rollin Reim, one of Kurt Eggert's college friends. The last chapter of *Not Unto Us* refers to the uproar that accompanied the introduction of *The Lutheran Hymnal* in 1941. The son of a member of the committee that produced the 1941 hymnal reported: "Recently I went through my father's correspondence from this stormy period. The letters, mostly from pastors, reflected emotions ranging from outrage to warm acceptance. They ran something like ten to one in favor of our old *Book of Hymns* [the hymnal used by many WELS congregations before 1941 - D.L.]. Most of the critical letters deplored the new 'high church' liturgy, the new translations, and the unnecessary cost to congregations just emerging from the Great Depression" (pp. 190-191).

The title of the book, *Not Unto Us*, comes from the first line of Hymn #392 in *Christian Worship - A Lutheran Hymnal*, a hymn whose words and tune were written by Pastor Eggert.

"Not unto us, not unto us be glory, Lord;
Not unto us but to your name be praise;
Not unto us but to your name all honor be giv'n
For matchless mercy, forgiveness, and grace."

Leonard Hutter: *Compend of Lutheran Theology - A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, (Confessional Heritage Reprint Series #7), The Johann Gerhard Institute, 1609, 1868, 1997, hardcover, 249 pages.

In the last fifteen or twenty years some of the Latin writings of the Lutheran scholars from the age of orthodoxy have been translated into English. For this we in the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) should be especially grateful, since we are no longer expecting our seminary graduates to learn enough Latin to work with these materials themselves. Among those who have put out these translations are the Repristination Press (P. O. Box 173, Bynum, Texas 76631) and the Johann Gerhard Institute (34 South Country Club Road, Decatur, IL 62521). The Johann Gerhard Institute has closed its doors, according to recent Internet information. However, we still have the opportunity, if we want to pay the price, of reading some of the writings of such men as Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586), David Chytraeus (1531-1600), Nicolaus Hunnius (1558-1643), Leonard Hutter (1563-1616), Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) and Johann Quenstedt (1617-1685). Because there is only a limited demand for such books, they tend to be a bit expensive. Black has been chosen as the color of the binding for most of

these books.

The *Compend of Lutheran Theology* by Leonard Hutter was put out in English translation by H. E. Jacobs as early as 1868; this volume is a reprint. The book consists of questions and answers on all the major topics of Christian doctrine. The wording of the answers is generally based on the Lutheran confessional writings, especially the *Formula of Concord* (1577), and thus presents the confessional Lutheran position on all the doctrines that are discussed.

When Hutter ventures out beyond the Lutheran confessions, however, he sometimes becomes unclear or even misleading. For example, in connection with predestination, he says this: “Predestination or election is a purpose or decree of the divine will made from eternity, by which God out of pure mercy chooses in Christ to eternal life, and saves all those who truly believe in him, and persevere in faith unto the end; whilst all the rest, on account of persistent unbelief, are assigned to eternal damnation” (p. 112). This comes close to John Calvin’s theory of double predestination. It is better not to speak of predestination in connection with unbelievers, since the Bible does not speak of it in their case.

Hutter also speaks of foreseen faith in connection with predestination. He asks: “Do you therefore state that God has elected men with respect to foreseen faith?” Then he answers: “What else should I state, when the Holy Scriptures with such exceeding clearness, declare this truth? (p. 120). The Scripture passages cited speak of faith, but they do not clarify exactly what is meant by foreseen faith. I noted that Hutter does not quote Acts 13:48 (“And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed”), where the Holy Spirit makes it clear that God from eternity has chosen in Christ to bring some to faith and then in time carries out His plan by bringing them to faith in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. Thus faith foreseen is not a cause of God’s choosing us, but God’s eternal election is a cause of our coming to faith, as the *Formula of Concord* clearly says. It is a historical fact that most of the Lutheran dogmaticians in the age of orthodoxy went astray in the doctrine of election, and their aberrations did not really come to light until the predestination controversy (1880-1900) among Lutherans in the United States led to a thorough examination of their writings.

Since the times in which Hutter wrote were very different from our own, some doctrines are not sufficiently clarified for our use, such as his presentation of the church, invisible and visible. Also, in connection with civil government Hutter states that “the civil magistracy is a rank ordained of God, which is to uphold, as to both tables, external discipline, and also maintain peace, having the power to punish with physical force” (p. 215). Since he specifically refers to both tables of the law, Hutter is saying, I believe, that the civil government should punish external disobedience to the first three commandments. Hence gross idolatry, gross blasphemy and gross contempt for God’s Word should thus be punished by the civil government. Our Lutheran fathers had no experience of the kind of pluralism we live with today, and therefore some of them believed that the civil government should indeed punish blatant idolatry or contempt for the Triune God or even disregard for infant baptism. The religious liberty we enjoy in the United States is something that was unknown in the time of the Reformation and the following century.

Since Hutter’s book is largely material from our Lutheran confessions, I do not recommend purchase of this particular volume. Nevertheless, I do encourage our pastors and teachers to contact the Repristination Press and obtain a listing of some of the other translated materials available. From the listing you may find one or two of these old books which could be useful for your private study or pastoral ministry. At some time in the past some of these were best sellers. More information is available at: www.scholia.net/repristination_press.htm.

John Stephenson: *The Lord’s Supper* (Volume XII in the series *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*), Luther Academy, 2003, hardcover, 294 pages.

In the preface to this book John Stephenson relates that in 1995 Robert Preus, just a few days before he died, asked him to write this book on the Lord’s Supper. No doubt, Robert Preus was expecting at the time to live a few more years to see his project of compiling a series entitled *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics* through to the end. The Lord of the Church willed otherwise. Still, the project is not dead. The Luther Academy is “committed to completing the entire series” (p. vii). At the time this review was being written, five books have become part of the series, here listed by order of volume number: Volume VI (*Christology*), 1989, by David Scaer; Volume IX (*The Church*), 1990, by Kurt Marquart; Volume XI (*Baptism*), 1999, by David Scaer; Volume XII (*The Lord’s Supper*), 2003, by John Stephenson; and Volume XIII (*Eschatology*), 1993, by John Stephenson.

No doubt, if he had lived, Robert Preus himself would have authored a book or two in this series. As it is, he has contributed the three-page General Introduction, which is printed in each of these five volumes. In this

introduction he points out that “no dogmatics book of any kind has been published by orthodox confessional Lutheran theologians ... within the last generation” (p. viii). Nevertheless, the series is not intended to replace Francis Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics* as a seminary textbook. Rather, as it seeks to “follow the actual pattern of thought of the Lutheran Confessions” (p. ix) and “consciously and scrupulously draw its doctrine from Scripture” (p. ix), it proposes to show the relevance of the confessions to our present situation. The General Introduction also says that the series “engages in much more direct and extensive exegesis than other works in dogmatic theology of our day” (p. x), but I, for one, would have liked to see more direct exegesis of Scripture in these five volumes.

Stephenson’s volume on the Lord’s Supper is a thorough study in particular of what Martin Luther had to say about the Lord’s Supper. Footnotes with direct quotations from Luther make up a great share of this volume. Other references that are used extensively include Hermann Sasse’s *This Is My Body* and other writings of his on the Lord’s Supper, Tom Hardt’s *On the Sacrament on the Altar*, some of the writings of Werner Elert and, of course, the *Book of Concord*, together with the writings of one of its chief authors, Martin Chemnitz.

Any confessional Lutheran volume on the Lord’s Supper must, of course, go into detail on how the Lutheran confession differs from the Reformed confession. In a 1532 letter to Duke Albrecht of Prussia, Luther makes the strong assertion that the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper “has been unanimously believed and held in all the world from the outset of the Christian church to this hour... This testimony of the entire holy Christian church... should alone suffice to attach us to this article and to move us neither to hear nor to tolerate any factious spirit on this matter. For it is a perilous and dreadful thing to hear or believe anything against the unanimous testimony, belief, and doctrine of the entire holy Christian church” (p. 237). Luther was obviously not eager to accept some new-fangled teaching that denied the presence of Christ’s body and blood.

On this point, however, Stephenson remarks: “With this judgment Luther seems to have succumbed to a tendency to hyperbole” (p. 237). He then presents the rather meager evidence that there were a few teachers before the Reformation who taught what might be considered a symbolic view of the Lord’s Supper: Ratramnus of the ninth century, Berengarius of the eleventh century, John Wycliffe of the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, in view of the near-unanimity on this matter through the ages, it is deeply troubling that a supposedly Lutheran church body like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) can declare fellowship with church groups that openly deny the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. Stephenson’s aim is certainly to get Lutheranism back on track with Luther and the Lutheran confessors. For example, we have this quotation from Luther with regard to the deniers of the real presence: “If we are to practice Christian unity with them and extend Christian love to them, we must also love and be satisfied with, or at least tolerate, their doctrine and behavior. Let anyone do that if he wishes. Not I... In civil matters we are glad to be one with them, i.e., to maintain outward, temporal peace. But in spiritual matters, as long as we have breath, we intend to shun, condemn, and censure them, as idolaters, corrupters of God’s Word, blasphemers, and liars” (p. 10).

In the eighth chapter, entitled “Our Sad Divisions,” Stephenson strongly supports the ancient practice of closed communion, as opposed to the ecumenical, tolerant open communion of today. He even admits: “Massive holes have been blasted during the past half-century in the Missouri Synod’s practice of closed communion” (p. 150). Although here, as in many other places in the book, more emphasis could have been placed on what the Bible itself says on the topic of open and closed communion, it is clear that Stephenson agrees with Luther’s remark based on Matthew 7:6: “We do not want to make Christ’s church into a pig pen, letting each one come unexamined to the Sacrament as a pig to its trough” (p. 158).

On the matter of ordination Stephenson apparently takes the view that a lay person or an unordained servant of the church should not administer the Lord’s Supper, even though he has been called (asked) by Christians to do so. Luther, Walther, Adolf Hoenecke, Melancthon and Arthur Piepkorn are all called on to testify on behalf of this point of view. “Walther...branded lay celebration ‘a departure from the divine order,’ and Hoenecke...argued: ‘The administration of the Supper pertains only to the ordained servants of the church’” (p. 86). A footnote on this same page (p. 86) quotes Piepkorn: “The Wittenberg faculty, with Melancthon concurring, rejected the position that ordination was an adiaphoron and held that Freder’s vocation did not constitute an ordination.” Likewise, Piepkorn is quoted with reference to Luther (p. 85): “In 1533 Luther directed John Sutel in Goettingen ‘to refrain from celebrating the Sacrament of the altar until he publicly before the altar with prayer and the laying on of hands receives from the other clergymen the evidence [of the legitimacy of his status] and authority to celebrate the Sacrament of the altar.’” Stephenson therefore concludes

(p. 85): “Holy Baptism and Holy Absolution may (and should) under emergency circumstances be administered by the laity, but neither the Treatise nor the orthodox Lutheran tradition acknowledges any such situation in the case of the sacrament of the altar.” One wonders whether Stephenson is able to confess agreement with the *Brief Statement* of 1932 when it says: “Regarding *ordination* we teach that it is not a divine, but a commendable ecclesiastical ordinance” (p. 15, #33).

Since no Scripture is quoted and since the ministry of the keys has been given to all Christians, it will take more than the above authorities to convince us that it is wrong for a member of the congregation to administer the Lord’s Supper to the pastor when asked to do so by the congregation, or that it is wrong for an unordained vicar (student in training) to administer the Lord’s Supper in a congregation, or that it is wrong for isolated Christians separated from their home congregation to make arrangements in a decent and orderly manner to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in their own homes without the presence of an ordained pastor.

On the question of the precise time the bread and the wine become at the same time the body and blood of the Lord, Stephenson seems to take the view that after the presiding pastor repeats the words of Jesus in His institution of the Supper, the Lord’s body and blood are present on the altar. However, the views of so many people on this question are introduced that it is difficult to determine exactly what Stephenson’s own position is. Consider the following sentences on p. 93: “Luther thinks that to pursue the issue of when the real presence in consecrated bread and wine remaining after the distribution comes to an end is to get entangled in a morass of ‘endless questions.’ Auer likewise admits, ‘While the *beginning of Christ’s presence* may be determined exactly with the uttering of the words of consecration, the *cessation of the presence* is difficult to ascertain.’ Taking with utmost seriousness the only mandate given by the Lord with respect to the elements which He makes to be His body and blood, namely, their eating and drinking, Luther here enjoins the consumption of the remaining consecrated bread and wine before the celebrant leaves the altar.”

It seems to me that endless questions arise not only in connection with the cessation of the real presence, but also with the precise beginning of it. Is it not enough to know and believe that when the Lord’s Supper is being administered in our churches, all communicants are receiving Christ’s body and blood as they partake of the bread and the wine? Do we need to know or believe any more than this?

The last question we want to discuss in this review is the question of transubstantiation. Stephenson divides Luther scholars into three groups: those who believe Luther thought transubstantiation was an acceptable opinion; those who believe Luther mildly denounced transubstantiation as an error; and those who believe Luther rejected transubstantiation as a godless opinion. Luther is quoted as writing: “Sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the pope that there is only blood” (p. 96). Undoubtedly, Luther considered the absence of the Lord’s body and blood from the sacrament a worse error than the alleged omission of bread and wine. Nevertheless, Luther’s view on transubstantiation is clearly stated in the *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Article VI: “Concerning transubstantiation, we have absolutely no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substances and that only the form and color of the bread remain, but it is no longer real bread. For it is in closest agreement with Scripture to say that bread is and remains there, as St. Paul himself indicates (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:28): ‘The bread that we break ...’ and ‘Eat of the bread’” (*The Book of Concord*, Kolb and Wengert, editors, p. 321). For some reason Stephenson does not quote these plain words of Luther.

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