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## Sermon Series: The Ten Commandments Frank Gantt

**The Ninth and Tenth Commandments: *You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.***

Readings: 1 Kings 21:1-29, Luke 12:13-34

Sermon Text: James 3:13-4:7

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from God, our Father, and from Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

This past week I read a short story about a man who had to go away on a business trip. Before returning home, he decided to buy gifts for his two little girls. He thought about what to get them and decided that the gifts should be pretty much the same, so as to avert any jealousy; but still a bit different, so as to avert any fighting. He decided to buy two baby dolls: one dressed in yellow, the other in pink. Still, he didn't know which one to give to which daughter. So he came up with a plan. He would let Cindy pick first, since she was older by a year and a half. Becky would receive the other. "Perfect!" he thought to himself. "There's no room for quarreling in this approach." So upon his return home, after being greeted with hugs and kisses, he pulled the two wrapped packages from a bag and explained that Cindy would get to choose first. After a couple seconds of thought Cindy, much to the chagrin of her father, exclaimed, "I want Becky's!"

Whether the story is true or not I do not know. It sounds rather comical, but as they say, "Reality is stranger than fiction." Thinking that he had all the bases covered, the father forgot about one major, universal truth: the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. That's just a dressed-up version of saying that we all want what we do not have. It is this attitude of the heart that the final two commandments address, and we will consider them together as we ponder God's message to us from James 3:13-4:7:

***Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***

When we first began our meditations on the Ten Commandments, you may recall that I quoted a survey in which college freshmen were asked to rank the Ten Commandments. In that ranking the only two commandments that kept the same place as they are given in Scripture were the last two commandments. Understand, though, that these college freshmen were not intent on keeping the order that God had attributed to them. They were placed last because in their minds they were the least of the commandments.

Do we have that same tendency to lessen the importance of the last two commandments? Sad to say, it does seem to be the case. We are so accustomed to seeing the Ten Commandments in the form of a list, from one to ten, that apparently we tend to think of them in that way as well. Today, however, I encourage you to see the Commandments not in a list, but in a circle—like a clock, if that helps. When you look at a clock, you know that 12:00 is a long way away from 11:00, but 11:00 isn't too far from 12:00. Well, the Ninth and Tenth Commandments bring us full circle back to the First Commandment, and in so doing, they give a deeper sense and application to all the commandments. They let us know that God is not just concerned with exposing the pharisaical problem of outward obedience. He is also concerned with our hearts and our thinking as well, because coveting is an attitude, not an action.

What specifically does God command and forbid by these commandments? In his *Small Catechism* Luther captures God's intent when he explains that we shall "not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house," nor shall we tempt, force, or coax away from our neighbor his wife or his workers. Rather, we are to help and serve him in keeping what is his and are to urge his wife and workers to "stay and do their duty." Yet beyond the horizontal application of how it should go neighbor to neighbor, these last two commandments have a vertical connection too and a deeper application to be made on every person's heart. Essentially, these commandments warn against an attitude that places one's desires above God. It cautions against the idolatry of one's self, for in Ephesians 5:5 Paul says that a "***covetous man . . . is an idolater.***"

Coveting leads to all manner of problems for an individual. It leads to physical and spiritual fatigue as it consumes a person. In Proverbs 23:4 Solomon cautions: "***Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint***" (NIV). Yet here in the USA the number of hours worked each week continues to rise, while the number of people in attendance at church and the amount of time spent in personal Bible study continue to decline. Another problem to which coveting typically leads is debt, which in turn leads to worry. I've actually heard people twist Jesus' words in our New Testament lesson to support their increase of debt. "Jesus said, 'Do not worry about tomorrow'; therefore we

shouldn't think about the consequences of purchasing this or that thing, even though we don't have the money." But consider Jesus' words again, and you will see that Jesus certainly did not intend for us to create *more* troubles for tomorrow. Yes, being in such great debt and worrying about that debt will lead to a host of other problems, all of which are spiritual in nature. Borrowing and not repaying are as easy today as picking up the phone and dialing some numbers, as is apparent from the record numbers of people who file for bankruptcy these days. Gambling and the lottery are looked upon as a way out of the situation, and not only is good money thrown after bad, but God ceases to be the object of one's trust. And on top of all that there is the conflict which James speaks about in our text.

He writes: ***"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask."*** When we hear James speak about wars, we may tend to think of major conflicts between nations, and certainly there is application of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments to such wars, even today. However, what James wants us to think about are the conflicts that we have on a personal level. They exist primarily because of our covetousness. That is, we envy someone's friendship with another, or his occupation, or his possessions, or even his spouse. That's the bitter envy and self-seeking that James condemns in our text.

Even worse is that this bitter envy and self-seeking lead to what James calls ***"boasting and lying against the truth."*** The truth that he is talking about is the fact that God lovingly supplies for all of our needs. A person who is caught up in wanting what others have has become dissatisfied with his lot, like King Ahab in our Old Testament lesson. Dissatisfaction—any dissatisfaction—is essentially accusing God of being unloving and uncaring.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. If God were not loving and caring to the point of showing absolute grace and mercy, He could have simply wiped all mankind from the face of the earth when He sent the Flood. Or He could have let the world continue in its sin until the Last Day and then deservedly condemn every human being to eternal hell. That is what a holy and just God *should do*. But our God is more than holy. Our God, from the day that sin entered into this world, has shown Himself to be so good and kind, so merciful, gracious, and caring. He promised, almost immediately, that He would undo the curse of sin by sending the Seed of the woman, His own Son, to this earth to destroy the works of the devil and to free mankind from the devil's tyranny. Jesus tells us specifically that greater love has no one than this: that he lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13). Jesus, the eternal God, went one step further and laid down His life for those who were by nature His enemies. That is the height of love and the height of caring—that our God would go to such measures to rescue us from our own blasphemous accusations and bitterness and self-seeking! By the blood of Christ all those sins are washed away from your record before God. Yes, our God is, without a doubt, the culmination of undeserved love and steadfast care.

We have listed the problems that come from a covetous heart. Let us briefly consider how to avoid the trap of covetousness. To help you remember, we shall call it the four *R*'s of replacing coveting with contentment. First, rejoice in what God has given you. It begins with rejoicing that your names are written in the "Book of Life" (Phil. 4:3), thanks to Christ Jesus. Yet every possession you have comes from God and should be an occasion for rejoicing too. Instead of complaining about what you don't have, rejoice in what you do have. "Count your blessings," as the saying goes. Secondly, refocus. Learn to fix your heart on the things that are eternal rather than the things that will eventually perish. Follow Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 4: ***"We fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are for a time only, but the things that cannot be seen are eternal"*** (4:18). Third, resist the temptation to compare yourself to others. The mentality of keeping-up-with-the-Jones' can only be a distraction from our first two *R*'s. Our motto for life is not to be: "He who dies with the most toys wins." Rather, it is to be: ***"To live is Christ, and to die is gain"*** (Phil. 1:21). Finally, release what you have. This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. A heart that

is truly content and grateful to God, refocused on His kindness and grace, is one that trusts Jesus' words, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35).

That is what we are ultimately talking about, isn't it? Contentment. Well, listen to a final passage from Hebrews that speaks about contentment. Pay special attention to God's attached promise. **"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Amen!**

**The Conclusion to the Ten Commandments:  
What does God say of all these commandments?**

Readings: Exodus 20:18-24, Mark 12:28-34

Sermon Text: Exodus 20:1-6

*(Note: The following sermon was preached during the Trinity cycle of 2008, which makes the current events reference in the introduction somewhat dated.)*

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

If you've been paying attention to the world news lately, then you know about a crisis flaring up once again in the nation of Georgia. Georgia was once a part of the former Soviet Union, but broke away in the 1990s. Since that time Georgia and Russia have had their squabbles, but they never seem to resolve anything. The ongoing tension between the two countries is now apparent in this recent flare-up involving aircraft, bombs, and heavy gunfire.

What this has to do with us is that our federal government considers Georgia an important ally in that region of the world. One article I read on the Internet has suggested that this flare-up has similarities to the start of World War I. That is, a larger nation wants to dominate a smaller nation; so they go to war. Then an ally of the smaller nation comes to offer its assistance. Then an enemy of that nation gets involved, and before you know it, world war is underway. When you stop and think about the ramifications, it can be frightening. In a world war scenario today we could have enemies that include nations like Russia, China, North Korea, not to mention the many Arab and Islamic nations in the Middle East.

Now of all the many possible enemies that we could have, which one would you fear the most? Would it be Russia because of its formidable military strength? Would it be China with its vast population? Would it be North Korea with its nuclear arsenal? I have a possible enemy in mind that is infinitely more terrifying than all of these put together. It is the LORD, our God. Let's listen to what He says in Exodus 20:1-6:

***And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."***

I've often wondered if Adam was telling the truth when God confronted him in the garden. Was it really because he was naked that he was hiding? Or was it rather that the knowledge of his nakedness revealed something far worse: that he had disobeyed God and sinned? In other words, did he sense that because of his sin God had now become his enemy?

The children of Israel knew from firsthand experience how terrible a thing it is to be an enemy of God. They saw what God had done to the Egyptians: how with a mighty hand He plagued them and

brought that mighty ancient empire to nothing. They saw the Red Sea come crashing down upon Pharaoh's army. Even the mightiest nation of the world was no match for the judgment of God brought upon it.

As we heard in our Old Testament lesson, Israel was rightly afraid to hear God's thundering from Mount Sinai. Those commandments that God had given them were the terms, if you will, of how one could keep on God's good side. Anything less than absolutely perfect obedience would mean enmity—man against God and, even worse, God against man.

Unfortunately, that fear in the hearts of Israel would subside. Throughout the course of their wanderings in the wilderness, we read time and again how the children of Israel rebelled against their God. On one occasion twenty-three thousand fell into a hole in the ground. On another occasion a large number of serpents—a rare thing in the wilderness—entered into the camp and killed many. Everyone over twenty died in the wilderness for refusing to enter into the land which God had promised them. They feared those who might kill the body more than they feared the One who can punish both body and soul in hell.

Martin Luther wrote much about the concept of fear in his explanations of and his conclusion to the Ten Commandments. He too was a person acquainted with fear. He feared God, and he feared standing before God on Judgment Day. He honestly recognized and admitted that he was far short of God's glory and that he deserved only wrath and punishment. He tried everything—fasting, self-mutilation, sleep and food deprivation—but none of it eased the fear that he felt. In his mind he was a desperate sinner in the hands of an angry God.

Does this same level of fear strike us as we consider these commandments today, which are as valid now as they were all those centuries ago? It should. There is not one of us here who has loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, or has loved his neighbor as himself. Far too often, our love is directed first inwardly, then outwardly, then upwardly. We put our reason over the Word of our God. We put our wants over our neighbor's needs. It's all backwards, and it's all wrong. It's all sin, and sin makes us enemies of God.

This reality is something that we all need to come to terms with. When Jesus told the scribe in our New Testament lesson that he was "not far from the kingdom of God," it was because the scribe had recognized what the Law of God demands. However, he was not yet in the kingdom of God because he had not yet understood how he had failed to meet those demands—a condition of unbelief which so far had kept him out of God's kingdom. He thought that by knowing the Law he was thereby guiltless in regards to the Law. Not so! And the same goes for each one of us. We know the Law of God; we learned it in Sunday School, confirmation class, Bible Class, and worship services. But God demands not only a knowledge of His Law, but also that we keep it, that we treasure and obey what His Law says. For He is, as He states in His own words, "***a jealous God.***"

It's an interesting statement that God has made about Himself, but what does it mean? Typically, we think of jealousy as something negative. Yet God uses this adjective to describe Himself. The Hebrew word here translated "jealous" is often also translated as "zealous." It is a word that carries with it great emotion and determination. And so when we hear God use that term about Himself and then say, "***visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,***" we should realize that no punishment can compare to God's punishment for sin. This zeal to punish is meant to terrify us. We, along with the children of Israel and with Adam, have good reason to be afraid because we, like the children of Israel and Adam, have sinned.

Yet as terrifying as these words are, there is something in these verses that is even more amazing. Yes, God is zealous to punish the sinner, but He is also zealous to have mercy on the sinner. He reveals as much by saying that He shows "***mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.***"

Many take these words to mean that God will show mercy to those who obey His

commandments. That understanding has two problems. First of all, because of inherited sin no one can obey God's commandments by himself, to say nothing of thousands being able to do so. Secondly, if one actually were to obey God's commandments, he would not be in need of God's mercy, for mercy is taking pity on those who cannot help themselves. To say that God will show mercy to those who obey His commandments makes human obedience the cause of God's mercy.

By its very definition, however, mercy is its own cause. In other words, God shows mercy not because of what we do, but because it is in His nature to do so. We see evidence of His mercy throughout the history of the children of Israel. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. He gave them His written Word, which contained the Law and all the Gospel promises. He provided for them in the wilderness and gave them the promised land of Canaan. Had they earned those things? No way! God had mercy.

His greatest act of mercy, however, was not given for the children of Israel alone. It was given for all the world, which includes you and me. That act of mercy was the fact that God Himself came down and permitted Himself to be nailed on the cross. All the enmity that we caused by our sins the Son of God took upon Himself, and so He felt the full fury of His Father's wrath in His own body on the tree. Yes, in Christ Jesus our greatest possible enemy, the holy God, has become our greatest Friend and Savior. That is mercy unparalleled by anyone anywhere.

Now what of the second half of that verse? God does say: ". . . **to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**" Yes, that is still an important part of what God is telling us. But instead of our obedience to the commandments being the cause of His mercy, we see throughout Scripture that His mercy is the cause of our keeping, or treasuring, His commandments. In his first epistle the Apostle John said it this way: "**We love Him, because He first loved us.**" Far from being the cause of God's mercy toward us, our love for God is actually a result of His mercy toward us. It is the evidence of the faith that He has created within us and the evidence of His rule taking place in our hearts and lives. It's the evidence of our status as friends of God whom He has led to do His will.

So, do we still have reason to fear God? Absolutely! Even the smallest sin against these commandments has the potential to destroy our faith and make us enemies of God once again. For that reason let us daily repent of our sins and plead for the mercy that God has demonstrated toward so many others. Yes, it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). Yet by the cross of Christ it is all the more sweet to rest safely in His gracious, merciful arms. May God then work in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Amen!

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## **From Fear to Faith: Homiletical Studies in Habakkuk** **Bertram J. Naumann**

Editor's note: The following reprint, offered to our readers in memoriam of its author, was third in a series of six sermon studies on the book of Habakkuk. Written by Pastor Naumann in 1966 and 1967, they were published by the *Journal* in issues 6:4, 6:5, and 7:1. Like each in the series, sermon study #3 was based on the booklet *From Fear to Faith* by Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones and was originally printed in *Journal* issue 6:5 (Dec. 1966), pages 22-27. All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

The text: **Habakkuk 2:2-3**

*And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

It is not fashionable today to state that our church proclaims the truth—all of it. But that is our claim, and we need not be so timid about saying so. Of course, there is a way of saying it that is not

Christ-like and serves no purpose other than that akin to the spite of two children each claiming that his father is stronger.

But there is a way of saying and meaning that we have found the very truth of God, a way which leads others, not so privileged, to examine our claim and, in doing so, to find Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Why was it that, as Matthew reports, “When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29)?

One searches the Scriptures in vain to find Jesus or the writers He inspired saying that everyone who is sincere in his faith has some of the truth to offer and that therefore all religious groups should get together and share the best of each. But it is easy to find many a reference in both Testaments in which God warns His people against mixing God’s revealed truth with human religion based on man’s reason or opinion. Elijah cleared the air by telling God’s fickle people: “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). We need not long wonder what Elijah would have said about the so-called “dialog” now going on between the Roman Church of the Antichrist and some of what is left of Luther’s Reformation churches, in which dialog the areas of agreement are stressed and the vital doctrines which make the difference between the soul in heaven or the soul in hell are smoothed over or avoided. Nor does one hear even a hint of doubt or uncertainty in the voice of Paul as God caused him to record: “For I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (II Timothy 1:12).

If our purpose as congregations or as a synod is to add our bit of knowledge to see if it will help humanity, heaven help us! We are not forever searching, searching, and never fully finding the truth! By God’s great love and grace we found it in Christ’s full and fully free pardon from sin, and certain promise of life eternal. We must all readily admit that we have much to learn about God’s will and way. But such learning comes through the searching of Scriptures, not through dialog with other denominations, causers of divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine. We have God’s Word, the only and final authority for faith and life. Let us not only use that Word ourselves and stand firm on it, but also present it to the world without timidity or doubt as *the* Truth, *all* the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Thus we here emphasize, in this third sermon study on the Book of Habakkuk, that we should act as though—because we are in fact—we find ourselves “UNDER THE LIGHT OF GOD’S PROPHECY.”

If all of history up until this time is to be understood at all, then all historical events must come under the light of God’s prophecy. When one takes a panoramic view of Old Testament history, it is especially striking to note how God directs both men and events toward His one great purpose, the birth of our Savior-God. It is astounding to trace God’s master plan for His Chosen People through the history of heathen nations, especially when such history was clearly foretold, sometimes hundreds of years before it happened. Surely the Lord wishes to lay this truth on our hearts for our great comfort, that, when governments seem furthest away from God’s purposes, He tells us to calm down because the biggest and the smallest are all under control, careful and complete. To illustrate God’s foreknowledge and control of all history, the text answers again the question, “What is prophecy?” God answers by telling Habakkuk: “Write the vision and make it plain.”

Prophecy is then, first of all, something that is revealed by God to man. But now the scoffers, the rationalists, say: “Certainly the prophets were men of political genius and men who, like poets, had particularly clear insights into certain situations; but there was nothing supernatural involved at all.” However, Holy Scripture clearly teaches here and elsewhere that God took hold of a certain man and gave him a definite message. Witness one of the first confirmation-class proof passages: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter

1:20-21). Prophecy cannot have involved merely some vague flash of insight that suddenly illuminated a particularly receptive mind. The Holy Ghost breathed into the holy men of God not only the thoughts but the very words which they wrote down. The Apostle Peter also urges all of us to pay particular attention to prophecy when he writes: "We also have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (II Peter 1:19).

Secondly, prophecy is not just telling something, it is frequently the telling of something that is going to happen in the future. God told Habakkuk that the Chaldeans would come to overrun His people for their unbelief and wickedness. However, at the height of their power, the Chaldeans were to be overrun in turn by the Medes and Persians. As even secular history now records for us, that is exactly what happened. How could it be otherwise?

Thirdly, the words before us reveal that the fulfillment of such prophecy is certain. "Write the vision," we read here, ". . . for the vision is yet for an appointed time." God tells Habakkuk that He has a definite time schedule in which events must take place. Here is stated, not the chance and stoic human philosophy of "whatever will be, will be," but that certain events were sure to take place in God's good time and at His specific direction. "Though it tarry," says God of His prophecy, ". . . wait for it . . . it will surely come." In all of the prophecy in the Bible there is the tone of complete and absolute finality.

Fourthly, and finally, the fulfillment of God's prophecies is exact. Concerning this particular vision God said: "At the end it shall speak, and not lie." "At the end"—when the time for fulfillment of the prophecy has arrived—it will take place at the exact moment appointed by God, and the event will not be a fraction of a second early or late. God's timing is never off, even by the smallest fraction.

Now, what does all this emphasis on God's prophecy have to do with each of us in our individual lives at this point in history? Surely we can see it! Our entire lives as Christians are tied to God's prophecies concerning the future. When we in weakness are struck by doubts without and fears within, we are to recall and remember how God has in the past done exactly what He said He would do at the exact, precise moment when His time came. We are not to be *of* the world; but God has put us *in* it to be the salt and light that exposes sin and shows the way to heaven. Being in the world, we, too, experience the uproar around us; and frightening indeed can be, even to the strongest faith, the escalation of war in Vietnam, the disintegration of morals at home, the imminence of nuclear destruction, the constant turmoil of our personal lives. But Habakkuk speaks to us today across the ages and declares by God's own authority: "Now calm down! And when you have calmed down, begin once more your rejoicing in the Lord. God is in complete control. Go back to the Old Testament history if you still need proof: these things really happened!"

The Great Flood was prophesied 120 years in advance. Like poor, "addled" Noah, when we follow God's prophecies regardless and heedless of the world's judgments on our actions, we often fare no better in the eyes of many than he who was idiotic enough to build a big boat, on top of a hill, far from water. Let us not, for all the world, back up when our church's Scriptural teachings are criticized as being "behind the times" or "intolerably narrow." By that Word let us keep our faith clearly under the light of God's prophecy and stick with it joyfully. Noah was calm and even joyful under the light of prophecy. The flood came, and then the big boat on the hill looked just fine.

Even godly Lot had his doubts about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and his sons-in-law just laughed at him and told him to stop making jokes and go home. But the next morning, as Abraham looked across the plains in the direction of the once great and thriving cities, he reports seeing the smoke rising as though from a giant furnace.

In Genesis 15 and Exodus 12 are recorded the prophecy and fulfillment of Israel's 400-year bondage in Egypt. It happened just as God said it would.

To Jeremiah God foretold that Judah would be carried off to Babylon for 70 years and then brought back again. It happened just as God said it would.



Today God says to us, as we observe the thriving success of the ungodly: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:7-9). Surely we are under the light of these prophecies. Recall another: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3). Therefore we are to calm down—even rejoice in the Lord; we are under the light of God’s prophecy. Let us get on with the main work we are called to do—preach the Gospel to every creature. (Here may be listed the immediate problems and opportunities in carrying out our Great Commission both on the local and synod level.) We have plenty to do while we calmly and joyfully await the Great Day of the Lord.

Let us, in the words of this prophet, “wait for the vision . . . it is certain . . . it is sure . . . it cannot fail.” What is there to fear? Uncertainty concerning the future is not founded in God’s prophecy but in the sinful flesh of man. For all who are living by faith in the Son of man and the Son of God are living under the sure, certain, unfailing light of God’s prophecy.

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## **Sermon Study—The Eternal Word**

Michael Sydow

Editor’s note: The reprint below, also offered in memoriam to its author, originally appeared as a sermon study of John 1 in the December 1975 issue of the *Journal* (15:5, pages 35-39). We offer our readers the original article with a change of format and the addition of New King James text for each selection of John 1 verses.

The times scream for God-words. They aren’t heard much these days. Much of what is said lacks the concise authority of the God who told Moses, “I AM the one who is!” Eyes aren’t accustomed to view the influence of affluence in their daily routine. Materialistic and deterministic principles change the glory of our Savior God and His eternal Word to “reasonable” applications of influential affluence in myriad social programs. The impetus fails on two sides. Money has never been able to save anyone or induce God to do so. Furthermore, a campaign glued to socio-political issues misses the essence and impact of God’s communication with mankind in the Gospel.

THE ETERNAL WORD is not just an abstract for theoretical philosophers or theologians. God does not leave mankind an uncertain revelation which lacks in clarity or application. He revealed Himself personally. The Eternal Word is the incarnate Son. God gave us something we could at least begin to comprehend and understand: a talking, walking, hearing, seeing, fingered-and-toed man. He was made in every respect like us, but without sin.

When we talk of the incarnate Word, the first eighteen verses of John’s Gospel flash into conscious memory. It is God’s summary-commentary on the mystery and meaning of the enfleshing of our Savior. We offer a mini-pericope for the Advent and Christmas seasons which utilizes texts from this section. A quick check in Nesper’s *Biblical Texts* indicates that not a few series have texts for all eighteen or the first fourteen verses. The Saxon Pericope makes three texts from these verses; Wuerttemberg, Fendt-Liefeld-Owens, Eisenach, and Synodical Conference have texts of smaller sections of this prologue. No one appears to have made a series dividing the eighteen verses to cover an extended schedule. Though influenced partially by paragraph selections in new English translations of the Bible,

the texts indicated are my personal choices, reflecting what I thought a convenient division for series-presentation.

1. John 1:1-5 for the 1st Advent Sunday  
THE WORD: OUR SAVIOR IS GOD.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

John uses the same “in the beginning” of Moses. Since when the *Logos*? Luther, “He is that person of the Trinity who declares or expresses the personality of God, and He declares it in such a manner that the whole Godhead is expressed, and he who has the Word has also the deity undisturbed.” He is Creator, Life, and Light. Creator: “And God said . . .”; “Let us make. . . .” Life—the type of spiritual existence which corresponds to His essence, concreated in Adam and Eve, available since sin by imputation through faith. Light—of course, not natural light, but the whole panorama of grace. God gives us what we need for a particular problem (sin-darkness) and bestows an advantage to those who accept the fact that He has accepted them because of the sacrifice of Christ.

2. John 1:6-8 for the 2nd Advent Sunday  
THE VOICE: JOHN PREPARES THE WORLD  
FOR ITS LIFE AND LIGHT.

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.*

Nothing happened accidentally. God sent the one whom Jesus later called the greatest man to rise among those born of woman. John calls him the Witness. He reflects the impact of Isaiah’s prophetic vision. From his wilderness pulpit the Baptizer calls men to repentance, shattering the security of man’s self-deception or [security of] soothing the hopelessness of their despair. Men unthreatened don’t need saviors. John “threatened” so that the Light he witnessed might shine brighter in contrast to the blackness of their (and our) sin and death.

3. John 1:9-11 for the 3rd Advent Sunday  
THE LIGHT: REAL LIGHT;  
THERE IS NO LIGHT OTHER THAN JESUS.

*That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*

To suggest a need for light when the sun seems to be working pretty well and local utilities keep the artificial sources going most of the time always raises a few eyebrows. But men with problems, rebels sitting in darkness, need solutions that fit those particular problems. Enter the Light. He was coming. He has come! He came for a purpose: to enlighten everyone. Tragedy! He was there . . . in the world. Rejection. People primed for messianic blessing say, “No.” He is here now in the witness-word of those who saw, believed, and reported. Rejection. Solomon is right: no new thing under the sun. People are determined to work out their own salvation without fear or trembling; it is ultimately less God. The

voice of Jesus still echoes across the cities of unholiness, which spurn His saving will and invitation, “You are unwilling.”

4. John 1:12-13 for the 4th Advent Sunday  
THE PRIVILEGES OF CHILDREN, THE ONLY ONES  
WHO CAN PROPERLY CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

The time clock for celebrating Christmas winds down to busy-ness and frantic preparation, all of which bear the intended purpose of minimizing or ignoring proper meditation and worship. Many celebrate the “holiday,” not the holy day. They have Christmas, but not a Savior’s birthday. To honor the incarnate Word is a privilege. God alone gives the power. He gives the faith that accepts His eternal decree of salvation through forgiveness of sins in Christ. He gives the insight to understand the implications of this Gospel for daily living. He gives the strength and spirit to be genuinely happy and to react with joyous worship. No natural, physical cause, no sexual will, no volitional human act has created this privilege. We have the privilege of children (adopted, you know!), because it is our living God’s will to save. The dry bones live!

5. John 1:14 for Christmas Day  
THE WORD MADE FLESH.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

God’s stated choice for His self-revelation is the Word who receives body and soul. He is not apparition, superhuman, or suprahuman. He receives mind, will, emotions—made in our likeness, yet without sin; no fleshly, sinful nature to compromise His holiness. The incarnate Word did not choose to live with the angels. He dwelt among us. He fought our battles. He was sympathetic with our temptations, since He endured them all for us. Those believing then saw glory. We see what they saw. It is our God speaking to us personally in a Person. He sends the eternal Son to do and die for our spiritual blessing and advantage. Those who saw told; they couldn’t help it. They wrote so that our joy may be complete.

6. John 1:15-18 for 1st Christmas [Sunday after Christmas]  
GRACE AND TRUTH: WITHOUT THE INCARNATE WORD  
THERE IS NO GRACE OR TRUTH.

*John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*

Pity those for whom the meaning of Christmas involves a choice between two fairy tales. They don’t accept the incarnation of the Son of God, so there’s no significance in His birth. And even children know there’s no Santa Claus. Men think they can experience the love of God in the spirit of giving. They assume no spiritual accountability. Happiness based on personal emotions or subjective reflection becomes an end in itself. The whole activity of God’s plan to send Jesus, make Him man, cause His suffering, death, and life is indicative of the divine will. He would have us remember the summary-word of His kindness—GRACE. The TRUTH is the personalization (Christ) and the verbalization (Christ’s words)

of grace. Oh, to see how mankind manhandles truth and TRUTH. Everything is so relative; today's truth is tomorrow's myth. God gives His assurances outside of man, his subjective capabilities, and his inclination to righteousness. The salvation message recounts and is made dependent on real, historical, space-time phenomena. From the fulness of Christ we have received more grace than we need or deserved.

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## The Church of the Lutheran Confession—Fifty Years

David Lau

### Chapter 7: *Concerning Church Fellowship*

The pastors and congregations who withdrew from the synods of the Synodical Conference realized that they needed to attain unity on the doctrine of church fellowship before they could hope to organize a new church body. They put unity of confession above organizational union. One of the most important goals of their Interim Conference meetings was to study carefully what God's Word teaches concerning church fellowship so that they might attain a God-pleasing unity. They prayed that the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures would give them such unity.

At the inception of the Synodical Conference back in 1872 it seemed that there was agreement on church fellowship. In Chapter 2 we quoted these words of Prof. Schmidt, stated at the organization of the Synodical Conference:

As faithfully confessing Lutherans we want to stand, teach, confess, work, and battle in one spirit with our orthodox fathers who taught us, and hence we also seek conscientiously to follow in their footsteps. Without violating our consciences we can have nothing to do with this unionistic spirit nor with the errors, false principles, and sins against the Word of God which are connected with it. . . . By virtue of our conscience bound by the Word of God we cannot agree to carry on church fellowship with obviously false teachers and un-Lutheran spirits for the sake of outward church union or to pull on one synodical yoke with such with whom we have no true unity of spirit. (qtd. in Schuetze 57-58)

The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, contain many severe warnings against mixing God's Word with human error and working together with those who teach contrary to His Word. Syncretism, or unionism, has always been against the will of our God. Think, for example, of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, who was a faithful follower of the true God, but had made a tragic error in becoming an ally of the ungodly King Ahab of Israel and his family. He even agreed to have his son marry Ahab's daughter. After one joint campaign with Ahab the prophet of the Lord said to Jehoshaphat: **"Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you. Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God"** (2 Chron. 19:2-3). But in spite of that warning Jehoshaphat joined forces with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, and again had to hear the rebuke of God's prophet: **"Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works"** (2 Chron. 20:37).

In the New Testament we have many warnings against false teachings and false teachers, both from Jesus Himself (Matt. 7:15) and from His apostles Paul (2 Cor. 6:14-18, Rom. 16:17-18, et al), Peter (2 Pet. 2:1-3), and John (1 John 4:1-6, 2 John 10-11). Certainly it is clear that our Lord wants us to steer clear of any support of that which is contrary to His Word. The Word of God that stands as the *sedes doctrinae* on this subject is Romans 16:17-18:

**Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. (NKJ, but with the omission of one comma)**

### **Church fellowship as practiced in the past**

The early Christians understood that unity of doctrine was essential for the practice of church fellowship. Werner Elert's thorough study of the fellowship practices of Christians during the first four centuries has provided solid proof of this. Here are some of his conclusions:

There is one ground for the denial of church fellowship about which there was never anywhere a difference of opinion in the early church, not even between East and West. Heterodoxy breaks the fellowship ipso facto. . . . Where church fellowship is broken by heterodoxy, it can only be restored by the achievement of doctrinal unity. (143)

Since a man cannot at the same time hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate [i.e., commune] in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all. (182)

When we come to the time of the Reformation, we find Martin Luther in his mature years refusing to practice fellowship with those who rejected any part of the Word of God. At the Marburg Colloquy in 1529 Luther and Zwingli were able to make a united confession with respect to many doctrines of Scripture. But they did not agree on the Lord's Supper. As far as Zwingli was concerned, this difference in doctrine should not have prevented him and Luther from practicing church fellowship with one another. John Brenz, who was present at this colloquy, reported:

We who affirm the presence of the body of Christ [in the Lord's Supper] would have gladly received our opponents into fellowship with us if they had turned away from their error. . . . Surprisingly enough they wanted to have us as brothers. . . . We were indeed willing to acknowledge our opponents, Zwingli and Oecolampadius, as friends, but not as brothers and members of the church of Christ. (qtd. in Luther 78-79)

Luther's own assessment of the Marburg Colloquy was similar: "Fellowship they requested of us; but this for the present we have refused, and could not promise them. For if we should regard them as brothers and sisters, we should have to consent to their doctrine" (qtd. in Kretzmann 105).

The next generations of Lutherans followed in Luther's footsteps and refused to practice fellowship with the Anabaptists and the Calvinists, although this refusal at times brought on them the hostility of mighty princes who were more concerned with outward union than with confessional unity based on the Word of God.

The early fathers of the Synodical Conference certainly wanted to walk in these same paths. Francis Pieper (1852-1931), president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, uttered many warnings against false teaching and unionism, and he certainly understood fellowship as a unit concept. That is, he understood that with the orthodox there can be fellowship at all levels, but with the heterodox there can be no fellowship of any kind. One of the earliest issues of *The Lutheran Spokesman* printed a translation of a church news article Pieper had written in the August 1890 issue of *Lehre und Wehre*. Included in the article were these words:

If it were shown us that even only *one* pastor were preaching false doctrine, or that even only *one* periodical were in the service of false doctrine, and we would not put a stop to this false doctrine, then we would thereby have ceased being an orthodox synod, and we would have become a unionistic fellowship. In short, it is the earmark of an orthodox fellowship that throughout it only the pure doctrine is not only officially recognized, but actually also prevails. It is on this that our whole church practice rests. (Pieper 7)

Pieper was also the chief author of the *Brief Statement* of 1932, which clearly lays out in the following paragraphs the doctrine and practice of Synodical Conference churches in their earlier years:

28. *On Church-Fellowship.*—Since God ordained that His Word *only*, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:31, 32; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate *unionism*, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.

29. The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is *actually* taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 1:3. (13)

These same two paragraphs are also quoted verbatim in *Concerning Church Fellowship*, the confession accepted by the Church of the Lutheran Confession at its organizing convention.

George Stoeckhardt (1842-1913), the leading exegete of the Missouri Synod at the turn of the century, wrote in his commentary on Romans the following on Romans 16:17:

It is God's command that Christians avoid not only false doctrine, but also false teachers, and remain separate from such denominations that tolerate false doctrines and teachers. All unionism, which unites truth and error into the same ecclesiastical organization, is condemned by this word of the apostle, which is God's Word. Similar warnings are found in 2 Thess. 3:6; Tit. 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 10. (207)

### **Contrary teaching and practice**

As the years went by, however, instances of fellowship practices that were contrary to the official confession were multiplying. One man in particular who challenged the prevailing practice was Adolph Brux, a Missouri Synod missionary in India, who wrote at the conclusion of his lengthy study of Romans 16:17-18:

Clearly, there is no escape from the conclusion that in Romans 16:17.18 Paul is referring to particular persons guilty of particular false doctrine and deceitful activity, and that he does not regard them as Christians, but as antichrists who are endeavoring to undermine and to overthrow the fundamental Christian message. In view of this, can we with any show of right and justice, apply Romans 16:17.18 to Lutheran bodies which are not affiliated with us, or to other Christian denominations which stand on the same foundation, Christ, with us, but differ in some doctrines that do not overthrow the foundation? (qtd. in "The Battle" 21)

In 1944 the Missouri Synod officially declared that joint prayer with other church bodies with which fellowship relations had not been established was not wrongful prayer fellowship. Subsequently, they distinguished prayer fellowship from pulpit and altar fellowship, thus opposing the unit concept of fellowship confessed by the Wisconsin Synod. To this day the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod disagree on this point.

In 1945 the Chicago Statement was introduced by 44 leaders of the Missouri Synod, some of which were very prominent in their fields, such as William Arndt, Theodore Graebner, Richard Caemmerer, Oswald Hoffmann, and O. P. Kretzmann. Their point number 5 was in agreement with the views of Adolph Brux, which an earlier generation had rejected, for it reads: "We affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology. We therefore deplore the fact

that Romans 16:17, 18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. . . . It is our conviction, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.” Their point number 11 was also a serious departure from the *Brief Statement* of 1932: “We affirm our conviction that in keeping with the historic Lutheran tradition and in harmony with the synodical resolution adopted in 1938 regarding church fellowship, such fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church” (“A Statement”).

From that time forward almost every issue of *The Confessional Lutheran*, a periodical published by conservative members of the Missouri Synod, had articles opposing the Chicago Statement and pointing out the correct understanding of Romans 16:17-18. For example, in an article by A. C. Dahms it is stated:

*We certainly cannot tolerate the denial and the confusion of the 44* with regard to a passage as simple and as clear as Romans 16, 17. We have always held, and must maintain to-day, that the Apostle warns against any and every errorist, no matter how slight his aberration from the truth of the Christian doctrine, no matter whether he is anti-Christ or still to be considered a Christian. The Brief Statement requires agreement in all doctrines for church fellowship. Our Synod’s Constitution calls for it. Our Lutheran Confessions demand it. And, above all, the Word of God in Romans 16 and other passages clearly binds our conscience to full unity in the truth for church fellowship. *The 44 have departed from our Synod’s Scriptural position* and espoused unionism, whether they are ready to admit it or not. (Dahms 67)

The Chicago Statement was eventually withdrawn but never retracted, and it is probably safe to say that most Missouri Synod pastors today follow the principles of the Chicago Statement rather than the *Brief Statement* of 1932 in their own practice of church fellowship. Sad to say, even most of the conservatives who had boldly defended the right understanding of Romans 16:17-18 failed to follow its instructions to avoid false teachers, although it should have become clear to them on the basis of the evidence published by *The Confessional Lutheran* that their own synod, the beloved Missouri Synod, had become a heterodox church body.

One of the questions that arose in connection with Romans 16:17-18 is whether the phrase “contrary to the doctrine which you have learned” should be understood adjectivally or adverbially. Let’s be clear on the difference between these two understandings. If the phrase is to be understood adverbially, then Paul is saying something like this: I am asking you to note carefully those who, in a way contrary to the doctrine you have learned, are causing divisions and offenses. He would then be saying that it is contrary to the doctrine you have learned to cause divisions and offenses of all kinds. But according to an adjectival understanding Paul is saying that we are to note carefully those who are causing divisions and offenses that are contrary to the doctrine we have learned. In other words, he is spelling out which kind of divisions and offenses he is talking about: those that are confessional and doctrinal in nature, those that are “contrary to the doctrine” which believers then and now “have learned.”

Already in 1947 Dr. Robert Hoerber, a teacher at Bethany Lutheran College at the time, wrote a pamphlet in which he proved grammatically that the phrase must be understood adjectivally. The conclusion of his study was this: “St. Paul is admonishing the Christians at Rome to avoid, not all who cause divisions and offenses, but those who cause the divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching—not contrary to any teaching, but to the teaching which they learned from him and the other apostles” (31).

Unfortunately, the New King James translation of Romans 16:17 inserts a comma after the word “offenses,” which signals grammatically that the phrase is to be understood adverbially. The original King James Version had no such comma. So also the New International Version correctly omits any

comma, stating: "Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them." According to this translation the phrase is to be understood adjectivally.

The Protes'tant Conference, on the other hand, has championed the adverbial view in its publication *Faith-Life*. In the May 1956 issue we find this translation of Karl Koehler echoed by Paul Hensel from previous *Faith-Life* issues: "I do, though, urge you, brethren, to look out for them who, contrary to the theology of which you are disciples, are causing the divisions and the scandals; and avoid them" (Hensel 13).

In 1956 Prof. E. E. Kowalke presented a study of Romans 16:17-18 at a Wisconsin Synod pastoral conference. He rightly disagreed with the understanding of both Adolph Brux and Hermann Sasse in these words:

Dr. Brux insists that Paul refers only to fundamental doctrines that touch the very person of Christ and that the contrary doctrines are those that remove the very foundation from under the Christian Church. Dr. Sasse too believes that the contrary doctrine here refers to the heresies that destroyed the Gospel of Christ, the great heresies of ancient times and the heresies of the grosser Sects of modern times. Luther's interpretation has much broader coverage. He includes all human doctrine as apart from and in addition to the teaching of Christ. . . . Dr. Brux says that the passage does not prevent the unionism of prayer fellowship with any who still look upon Christ as the Savior Son of God. Dr. Sasse says that the passage does not apply to Lutherans who still accept the Lutheran Confessions but does apply to Calvinists who by implication deny the perfect union of true man and true God in Christ by their false teaching regarding the Lord's Supper in particular. (5-6)

*Kowalke believed Luther's view was correct.*

Kowalke, however, had also presented a novel understanding of the word "avoid" in this passage. Even though the Wisconsin Synod had not broken fellowship in 1956 with the Missouri Synod, he claimed in his paper:

We are admonished to shun those who cause divisions. We accuse Missouri of causing divisions. Are we shunning them? We have reproved them for practices that we consider contrary to the word and spirit of the Gospel; we have tried to convince them of the wrongfulness of their actions, we have refused to become participants in those actions; we have warned them that we must declare ourselves out of fellowship with them if they persist. That, I maintain, is shunning; that is avoiding them. (11)

Kowalke was following in the path of several others who wanted to make "avoid" mean "lean away from" rather than a complete break in fellowship.

In 1958 Carl Lawrenz of the Wisconsin Synod went beyond the simple wording of Romans 16:17-18 in stating that termination of fellowship depends on reaching the conviction that admonition is of no further avail. The criterion for separation from errorists was thus changed from taking note of whether divisions and offenses contrary to Scriptural doctrine were actually taking place to trying to determine whether there was any possibility of accomplishing anything by continued admonition. This new criterion was seemingly introducing into the procedure of separation from false teachers the procedure that our Lord prescribes before excommunicating an impenitent sinner (Matt. 18:15-18).

From that time to this day the Wisconsin Synod has preferred to use the term "persistent errorist." In their view the ones who need to be avoided are those who can be called persistent in their error. It seems that instead of using God's wording found in Romans 16:17-18 to guide their actions, they spend their time trying to determine whether the persons or groups they are dealing with are "persistent errorists." A 2006 *Journal* article by Bertram Naumann has pointed this out clearly. "By the historical introduction of the words 'persistent errorist' as necessary to identify a false teacher properly, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has allowed a 'red herring' to lead them, wittingly or unwittingly, away from the action Scripture calls for in our dealing with false teachers" (27).



The Evangelical Lutheran Synod, in apparent agreement with the Wisconsin Synod, has also inserted admonition into the Lord's instructions on separation from error, declaring that their practice is to mark, admonish, and avoid. In a review of the CLC confession *Concerning Church Fellowship*, we read Theodore Aaberg's pronouncement:

The ELS position of long standing has been this, very briefly, that when a person or church body with whom we are in fellowship causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, we mark them immediately, then admonish, and if this proves fruitless, avoid them. (21) Aaberg bases this on quotations from an ELS pamphlet called "Unity, Union and Unionism," where it is stated: "As soon as they teach contrary to the doctrine laid down in the Bible, they are to be marked, admonished, and, if they continue, avoided" (qtd. in 21).

### **What does the Bible say?**

Because of all of these variations in the interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 and all of the various suggestions as to how and when Christians are to separate from false teachers and false teaching, we can understand why the fathers of our church body considered it one of their top priorities to study God's Word carefully on the subject of church fellowship and to make a united confession of what they found the Bible to say. Exegetical papers dealing with the passages on church fellowship were prepared and presented. Paul F. Nolting drew up theses and antitheses on Romans 16:17-18. The proper distinction between dealing with false teachers and weak brothers was carefully examined.

In October of 1957 Winfred Schaller, Jr., of Cheyenne, WY, was chosen in Lyons, NE, as the researcher and the scribe to put this all together as a written confessional statement. The work took several years and was debated in several conferences. Little by little the confession was forged in sections: first the epitome or summary (Mankato, Dec. 1957), next the affirmative section (Cheyenne, May 1958), and finally the antithetical section (Spokane, Aug. 1958). The content of the entire document was accepted as the confession of the group at Mankato in January of 1959 and given to an editing committee that went over the work very carefully and made some changes in wording. In August of 1959 at Red Wing, as well as in January of 1960 at Mankato, the document with the editing changes was approved. Edmund Reim was then asked to write a preamble. At the Watertown, SD, convention in August of 1960, the final amendments and improvements were made, and the confession known as *Concerning Church Fellowship* was adopted as the confession of the new church body and included as an article of faith in its constitution.

We print now the thetical and antithetical sections of the Epitome of *Concerning Church Fellowship*, which was adopted by the CLC organizing convention in August of 1960. The original and revised editions of the document have all the passages printed out which are referred to in the parentheses below.

### **STATEMENT OF TRUE DOCTRINE**

1. We believe, teach and confess that complete doctrinal agreement is the Scriptural basis for church fellowship. (I Cor. 1:10)
2. We further believe that the doctrine which the Church should teach and hold is restricted to the doctrine of the Bible. (I Peter 4:11)
3. We further believe that the Word of God (The Old and New Testaments) is inerrant, inviolable and clear. (II Tim. 3:16; John 10:35; Psalm 119:105)
4. We believe that all aberrations from the doctrines of Scripture are condemned by God. (Jer. 23:31; Gal. 1:9)

5. We believe and teach that church fellowship is forbidden with all who deviate from the Word of God in their teachings. (Rom. 16:17)
6. We further believe that **all manifestations** of fellowship are forbidden with those who deviate from the Word of God in their teachings. (Rom. 16:17b)
7. We further believe and teach that suspension of an established fellowship is to take place when it has been ascertained that a person or group **is** causing divisions and offenses through a false position in doctrine or practice. (Rom. 16:17-18)

### REJECTION OF THE FALSE DOCTRINE

1. We reject and condemn any limitations on the **extent** of the application of the Scriptural injunctions to separate from false churches and teachers.
  - a. We reject the teaching that the application is limited to non-Christian bodies.
  - b. We reject the teaching that the application is limited to those who deny the redemptive work of Christ.
  - c. We reject the teaching that the application is limited to those who err in fundamental doctrines.
  - d. We further reject the teaching that errorists and their followers are to be avoided only when they no longer listen to admonition, or that we are to remain in fellowship with errorists as long as we think there is hope that they might give up their errors.
  - e. Though the teaching Church is ever an admonishing Church, we reject the opinion that separation from errorists is dependent upon the course of admonition.
2. We also reject and condemn all limitations on the **intensiveness** of such divinely commanded separation from false churches and teachers.
  - a. We reject as false the teaching which would forbid only joint worship services with errorists.
  - b. We reject as spurious the distinction which is made between prayer fellowship and joint prayer, namely that while the former is indeed forbidden with errorists, an occasional joint prayer would not be displeasing to God.
  - c. We also reject the teaching that fellowship with errorists is permitted if there be no complicity with the error itself, or that the errorist may be fellowshipped but not his error.
  - d. We also reject the teaching that one may practice outward or external fellowship with errorists, if one does not embrace the error in his heart.
  - e. We also reject the idea of protesting fellowships when they are used as license to practice fellowship with errorists.
  - f. Finally, we reject the plea of "cooperation in externals" when it is used as license for actual joint church work with errorists. (41-43)

Richard C. Wolf included portions of the Epitome in his book, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*, and said that it "is considered the most important pronouncement of the Church of the Lutheran Confession" (448). Certainly, it does serve to distinguish us from other present-day Lutheran church bodies. But we do not believe it says anything different from what we find in the Holy Scriptures, nor does it disagree at any point with the *Book of Concord* or with the *Brief Statement* of 1932.

Which Lutheran church body today is the rightful heir of the Synodical Conference? Is it the Missouri Synod? Is it the Wisconsin Synod or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod? Is it the Concordia Lutheran Conference or the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation or some other smaller Lutheran church body? We believe the objective reader may well conclude that the Church of the Lutheran Confession is continuing in the doctrine and practice of the Synodical Conference, at least in its confession and practice concerning church fellowship. Evidence of such was stated in an earlier issue of the *Journal*:

One non-CLC source has made a connection between the CLC confessional document, *Concerning Church Fellowship*, and the position of the Synodical Conference in days gone by. See *Logia*, Vol. V, #1, Epiphany 1996, pp. 41-52, where the CLC document *Concerning Church Fellowship* is printed in abbreviated form with the following explanation: "We print this confessional statement here because we believe that it is the last and most thorough articulation available of the doctrine of church fellowship as it was confessed in the Synodical Conference." (qtd. in Lau, Rev. 48-49)

Some might say that the doctrine of church fellowship does not involve very much individual Christians in their local congregations. It only has to do with fellowship between church bodies, and therefore we hardly need to be concerned about it. But this is certainly not the case. Consider these words that Pastor Paul F. Nolting directed to his Wisconsin Synod congregation with reference to this doctrine and its impact on them.

There is no other doctrine that has such bearing on the outward life of our Church as has the Doctrine of Fellowship. It governs our actions and decisions in the following matters:

1. *Membership Changes: Transfers are granted to and transfers are accepted from only those who are one with us in the confession of the faith. A release from or termination of membership is given to anyone who wants to join a church not in fellowship with us, be that a "Lutheran" church or any other. The acceptance of people who come from an unaffiliated church is only by a confession of the unity of faith.*

2. Sponsors: Only those one with us in the confession of the faith may serve as sponsors. Anyone else, also "Lutheran" not affiliated with us may serve only as witnesses. (Anyone may serve as a witness to a marriage because witnesses observe and do not participate in the worship service.)

3. Organists, Choir Members, and Soloists: Again only those one with us in the confession of the faith qualify. Others, also "Lutherans" not in fellowship with us, do not qualify, for where there is no oneness in the confession of the faith, there can be no joining in worship.

4. Baccalaureate Service: For years we urged our students not to attend. Now we conduct our own service to protect our members from joining in a service with those who do not confess all the Truth.

5. Prayer at Public Meetings: We object to prayers at REA, Chamber of Commerce, AA, Society for Retarded Children, public school meetings, etc., for praying together can be done rightfully only among those who confess the Truth together.

6. Our Conduct in Other Churches: When we are forced to attend other churches as visitors, at funerals or weddings we do not participate in the service but only observe because God's Word forbids us to join in worship with those who teach and profess false doctrine.

7. Separation from Religious and Semi-religious Organizations: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" II Cor. 6:14. (Nolting 1)

It is true that our confession of God's doctrine of church fellowship is not in tune with the times in which we live. There have been some, perhaps even many, who have seemed to agree with our confession in other respects, but have not been able to find themselves in agreement with us on this doctrine. Perhaps one could even say that our confession of this doctrine has served to limit the outward growth of our church body. Nevertheless, we need not be ashamed of confessing God's truth, and He will certainly bless our confession of His Word in His own time and in His own way.

### **A difficult separation**

Certainly one of the most difficult actions carried out by the founding members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession was their separation from their former church bodies, which in almost every

case meant a desisting from fellowship with many of their relatives and friends who had remained as members of those church bodies. What one CLC member wrote to explain his position to such relatives and friends will, it is hoped, serve as a fitting conclusion to this chapter. His words with original emphasis are cited from Appendix A of "Evaluation of Recent (1990 and Following) Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) on Fellowship."

In conclusion, I shall try to outline what it means that we are not in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. What is our relationship to members of the Wisconsin Synod?

First of all, let me stress the wonderful truth of the Holy Christian invisible Church consisting of all those sinners who put their trust in Jesus Christ, God's Son, who hung on the cross in payment of all our sins and rescued us forever from the power of Satan, death, and hell.

This Church is INVISIBLE, because we cannot read men's hearts to tell who believes and who does not. The Lord knows them that are His.

Men all over the world in every church body who believe they are sinners saved by the blood of Christ belong to the UNIVERSAL Christian Church and will be carried to heaven to enjoy the presence of God forever.

Wherever the doctrines of sin and grace are still taught to some extent, although they may be beclouded and confused with much error, there Christians are to be found who in their hearts cling to Jesus Christ as their Savior. IT IS NOT THE ERROR THAT MAKES THEM CHRISTIANS BUT THE TRUTH WHICH IS STILL MINGLED WITH THE ERROR.

Also on the other hand there may be external members of a strictly orthodox and correctly teaching church body who are not members of the invisible Church but UNBELIEVERS AT HEART AND HYPOCRITES.

But we cannot read hearts and so we regard as Christians ALL THOSE WHO PROFESS FAITH IN THE GOSPEL AND DO NOT DENY THAT PROFESSION BY A GODLESS LIFE. Therefore it is obvious that by breaking fellowship with another synod, we do not declare its members to be unbelievers. We do not say that of members of any Christian church body, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Lutheran. On the contrary, we are UNITED IN THE INVISIBLE CHURCH WITH ALL BELIEVERS IN ALL SECTS AND CHURCHES AND COUNTRIES AND HOMES, AND IN THE DAY OF THE LORD THIS INVISIBLE CHURCH WILL BECOME VISIBLE IN HEAVEN, WHEN MANY SHALL COME FROM THE EAST AND THE WEST AND SIT DOWN IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Now it is natural for Christians saved from sin to unite with each other in prayer, worship, mission work, and other charitable works. Everything that Christians do together in their religious life is CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

Our Lord, however, HAS PLACED RESTRICTIONS ON OUR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP FOR OUR OWN GOOD. We cannot worship together and pray together with all men whom we believe might be Christians. We cannot recognize Christians on the basis of their personal faith, because we cannot read their hearts. Therefore we worship together and pray together with those Christians only WHO HOLD THE SAME CONFESSION THAT WE DO, in other words, those that profess Christ as their Savior AND continue in His Word. Jesus said to His disciples, John 8:31: "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

Ceremonies in the churches may be different, order of service may be different, but the TEACHING MUST BE THE SAME BEFORE CHURCH FELLOWSHIP IS GOD-PLEASING. So the *Formula of Concord* states: "The churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies, provided they are otherwise agreed with one another in the DOCTRINE and ALL its articles."

God's Word tells us we cannot practice church fellowship with those whose public profession and confession reveals that they believe, teach, or support doctrines or practices contrary to God's Word. Paul says, 1 Timothy 6:3ff.: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, [ . . . ] from such withdraw thyself." Also Paul says, Romans 16:17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Therefore, WHEN A MAN'S CONFESSION IS IN ACCORD WITH THE "TEACHINGS WE HAVE LEARNED," WE RECOGNIZE HIM AS A CHRISTIAN BROTHER IN ALL WAYS AND WORSHIP TOGETHER WITH HIM, PRAY WITH HIM, WORK JOINTLY WITH HIM IN MISSIONARY WORK, ETC. BUT WHEN A MAN'S CONFESSION IS NOT IN ACCORD WITH THE "TEACHING WE HAVE LEARNED," WE DO NOT WORSHIP WITH HIM, PRAY WITH HIM, SUPPORT HIM, ETC. This is God's method for counteracting false teaching, and it is because men have neglected these instructions that there is so much confusion and heresy in the Christian churches. As soon as men stray from God's clear Word (as we have experienced in the Wisconsin Synod), then there are differences of opinion, human ideas, and no theologian is smart or clever enough to solve these problems. God's Word alone must guide; where God's Word is guide, there is clarity; where God's Word is disregarded, there is confusion and uncertainty. God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and does not cause confusion if we only listen to it and follow it.

What should our relationship be to members of the Wisconsin Synod? We have left the Wisconsin Synod because it has taken a false position in regard to church fellowship and has retained this false position in spite of correction. They still support the Wisconsin Synod. That is their confession. Therefore, although we may feel that there is no difference between them and us, although we may believe that they believe in the same Savior from sin and accept the same Word of God, yet, as long as conditions are as they are, we cannot worship with them and pray with them as long as their confession supports the Wisconsin Synod, which has taken an unscriptural position. This brings great sadness to our hearts, but it cannot be otherwise. Any other action would be hypocritical and meaningless.

Dear brethren, search the Scriptures, whether these things are so. Try the spirits, whether they be of God (Lau, "Evaluation" 32-34).

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## **Chapter 9: Organizing the Church of the Lutheran Confession**

Editor's note: Due to the size of the chapter's content and space limitations in this issue, Chapter 8 on *Concerning Church and Ministry* will appear in the next issue of the *Journal* (50:1, Mar. 2010).

*The week of August 9-12, 1960, was a very exciting time for the pastors, teachers, and delegates who gathered at Trinity Lutheran Church in Watertown, SD. It is certainly something special when a person has the opportunity to be involved in the organizing of a new church body. The place of meeting was also new, for Trinity's church building had been dedicated to the service of the Lord on July 31, only a few days before the convention.*

The previous meetings of the Interim Conference had set the stage for the convention which brought the CLC into existence. The chief doctrines in controversy, church fellowship and church and ministry, had been studied at length, and it seemed that agreement on these teachings had been reached by almost all participants. A higher education program was already in place at Mankato: Immanuel Lutheran College, which included high school, college, and seminary departments. There were mission congregations that needed assistance and a foreign mission in Japan that needed support. There was work to be done. It was time to get organized.

### **Tuesday, August 9, 1960**

After the opening service on Tuesday morning, August 9, led by the host pastor, Christian Albrecht, and the service preacher, Waldemar Schuetze of Fond du Lac, WI, the Interim Conference Chairman, M. J. Witt, gave his report. Forty-five pastors and teachers registered for the convention, together with twenty-three lay delegates and fourteen visitors. What gratitude to the Lord must have filled the chairman's heart as he addressed this assembly, for just a few years earlier he had stood almost alone in his confession!

After reporting on appointments, dedications, installations, and pastoral conferences that had taken place since the January meeting of the Interim Conference, Chairman Witt laid out the suggested program for this convention:

The principle [sic] business of this convention will be to establish the doctrinal platform on the basis of which the Interim Conference will organize. Together with the essays and statements which will be a part of the doctrinal platform we will also give due attention to the constitution. If agreement is reached regarding wording and form of the doctrines that have been in controversy in the Synodical Conference, which we pray may be accomplished, the Constitution Committee should be prepared to suggest the procedure by which we can become an organized body with a constitution on the basis of which we can incorporate. . . . Unless the convention decides otherwise, all those who have withdrawn from the Synods of the Synodical Conference and have indicated their agreement with the position of this Conference as it has been set forth in the Doctrinal Platform and as it has been published in the Spokesman will be granted the right to vote. (Witt 2)

Floor committees were appointed to study the issues and prepare recommendations for the convention. The main committees were #1 on fellowship, with Waldemar Schuetze as chairman; #2 on

church and ministry, with Paul G. Albrecht as chairman; #3 on missions, with Helmuth Rutz as chairman; #4 on the constitution, with Ralph Schaller as chairman; #5 on Immanuel Lutheran College, with Gerhard Pieper as chairman.

On Tuesday afternoon two essays were read. First, Egbert Schaller read his essay on supervision. This included a sample version of Article VIII of the proposed constitution on supervision and discipline. The essay was received with thanks. Thereafter, Leonard Bernthal began his essay on the doctrine of the ministry.

Mission reports and a financial report were given at the Tuesday evening session. The floor committee on fellowship then held an open meeting during which everyone had the opportunity to present his views.

### **Wednesday, August 10, 1960**

Winfred Schaller, Jr., the editor of *The Lutheran Spokesman*, gave his report on Wednesday morning. This was followed by the report of Robert Dommer, principal of Immanuel Lutheran High School in Mankato. There were now three full-time high school teachers: Robert Dommer, Ronald Roehl, and Adelgunde Schaller. A steel structure was being erected to serve as classroom space in addition to the original building. Leonard Bernthal then completed the reading of his essay on ministry.

On Wednesday afternoon Robert Dommer reported on the college and seminary departments of Immanuel Lutheran College. Paul R. Koch had been called as a college professor, and C. M. Gullerud had been called to join Edmund Reim on the seminary faculty. Leonard Bernthal's essay on the ministry was accepted with thanks.

The Constitution Committee recommended two names for the new church body; these were Church of the Lutheran Confession and Lutheran Christian Church. Other names were added from the floor: Church of the Lutheran Confessions, Immanuel Lutheran Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Conference, Memorial Lutheran Conference, and Spokesman Lutheran Conference. Balloting on the name was to take place at a later time.

Daniel DeRose served as the speaker for the Wednesday evening communion service.

### **Thursday, August 11, 1960**

Floor Committee #5 on Immanuel Lutheran College was ready with its report by Thursday morning. Adopted was the committee recommendation that the Mankato property "be taken over by the proposed Board of Trustees of the Interim Conference as soon as possible after the group has been formally organized and that it thereafter assume complete support of the schools" (Minutes Interim Conf. 11). Thus the new church body had already in its possession a high school, college, and seminary, together with facilities and staff. This truly was an amazing gift from our Lord.

The report of Floor Committee #3 on missions was presented, discussed, and adopted by the convention. Among the items mentioned were the dedication of Berea Lutheran's property in St. Paul, MN, and the installation of its first pastor, Marvin Eibs. Other mission congregations were also being assisted in a limited way: St. Peter's of Denver, CO; Gethsemane of Opportunity, WA, now pastored by Robert Reim; Holy Cross of Phoenix, AZ; Immanuel of Winter Haven, FL. Egbert Schaller had been asked to serve as correspondent with Missionary Fred Tiefel of Japan. His report was carefully examined.

The next item of business was the selection of a name for the new church body, to be inserted into Article I of the constitution. Besides the names listed above, the ballot also included the following: Lutheran Christian Missionary Church and Lutheran Confessional Fellowship. Since the Church of the Lutheran Confession and the Church of the Lutheran Confessions were such similar names, it was decided to remove the latter from the ballot and have only the one name. On the first ballot the three

most favored names were Immanuel Lutheran Conference—24 votes; Church of the Lutheran Confession—22 votes; and Lutheran Confessional Fellowship—9 votes. On the second ballot Church of the Lutheran Confession had 31 votes, Immanuel Lutheran Conference had 27, and Lutheran Confessional Fellowship had 10. On the third and final ballot Church of the Lutheran Confession was chosen as the name of the new organization with 39 votes in favor, and 29 in favor of Immanuel Lutheran Conference. Very soon the initials CLC were being used extensively, even though there was already a Lutheran church body with those initials, namely, the Concordia Lutheran Conference. The Concordia Lutheran Conference refers to the Church of the Lutheran Confession as CoLC.

The September 1960 issue of *The Lutheran Spokesman* had this to say about the new name:

Our name is *Church of the Lutheran Confession*. We call ourselves *Church* because we are gathered together in Christ's name. We call ourselves *Lutheran* because we are continuing as children of the Reformation. We take seriously our heritage: Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone. We say *Confession* because our faith must be a living faith, unashamed of its God. We want to confess its Author and Preserver before both friend and foe, that His name be hallowed in the hearts and lives of all. ("Convention Highlights" 2)

In the same issue the question is asked: "How can we . . . dare to hope that we can live up to the name we chose, Church of the Lutheran Confession? Lord, have mercy upon us! Lord Jesus, come quickly!" (Schaller, "Another Lutheran Church" 8).

On Thursday afternoon *The Lutheran Spokesman* committee gave its report. Besides encouraging the continuation of *The Lutheran Spokesman*, it was decided "that a Theological Journal be started as soon as possible" and "that the editorial staff of said Theological Journal consist of the Immanuel Seminary Faculty and such other members as they may appoint" (Minutes Interim Conf. 13). This motion led to the beginning of the *Journal of Theology*, which made its debut with Volume 1, Number 1 in February of 1961. Edmund Reim was the first editor. He was assisted by C. M. Gullerud, Egbert Schaller, and Martin Galstad.

Article II (Purpose) of the constitution was then approved after several minor amendments. Article IV (Membership) was also approved. Membership was granted to congregations as well as to pastors, professors, and male teachers.

Since the work of the convention was far from being completed, the convention met on Thursday evening until 10:30 p.m. Chairman Witt wanted the assembly to begin the process of electing officers, but the convention decided that the Interim Conference officers should continue to serve until January of 1961, when a recessed convention would complete the work of organization.

Committee #1 on fellowship then presented its recommendations for several changes in wording. A vigorous debate took place on the meaning of the sentence: "Christians are perfectly joined together in the same mind with regard to the essentials of faith." The minutes of the convention explain that "the confusion on this point . . . occurred because some were thinking of the Christian as both new man and old man, whereas the essayist was speaking only of the Christian according to the new man" (Minutes Interim Conf. 8). The matter was referred to the committee for clarification and rewording. Since there was also some confusion regarding the difference between excommunication and termination of fellowship, the convention assigned an essay on this topic to be presented at a future convention. L. W. Schierenbeck was later given this assignment.

Committee #4 on the constitution presented the proposed Article V (Officers and Their Duties). In its acceptance of Article V the Church of the Lutheran Confession approved the office of Moderator, an office not found in the synods of the Synodical Conference. It had been learned through experience that the practice of having the synod president serve as the presiding officer at synod conventions gave too much authority to one man. Therefore Article V declared that a Moderator be elected who would make the preparations for the convention, appoint the convention committees, and also preside as the convention chairman. In its fifty-year existence this system has worked well for the Church of the



Lutheran Confession.

On Thursday evening the delegates surely were praying to the Lord of the Church that on the next day, the last day of the convention, unity on church fellowship, unity on church and ministry, and unity on the proposed constitution would prevail so that the Church of the Lutheran Confession could begin its work as a unified church body.

### **Friday, August 12, 1960**

On Friday morning the Constitution Committee resumed its report. Parts of Article VI (Boards and Committees) were adopted, as well as Article VII (Conventions) and most of Article VIII (Supervision). Then the Fellowship Committee presented its clarification of the disputed point. The wording recommended and adopted was this: "Christians according to the new man are perfectly joined together in the same mind" (Minutes Interim Conf. 14). After a few other minor changes were made, it was resolved "that the essay, 'Concerning Church Fellowship,' be recognized as a confessional statement of this conference." The vote was unanimous. The Lord had blessed the study and discussion of this doctrine and had brought about unity in confession. To Him be all glory!

Committee #2 on church and ministry then presented the proposed theses on church and ministry for adoption by the convention. Both sets of theses were discussed: the "Theses on the Relation of Synod and Local Congregation to the Holy Christian Church," as well as the "Theses on the Ministry of the Keys and the Public Ministry." On Friday afternoon the assembly unanimously adopted all the theses as the confession of the new church body. One blessing after another! God was answering many prayers.

Some constitutional matters were then adopted. Since there was not enough time to discuss all the proposed articles of the constitution and the by-laws, some of these were referred to the recessed convention, which was to be held in January of 1961. The report of the Constitution Committee was adopted unanimously. The convention was united in the doctrines of church fellowship and church and ministry, as well as in the orderly procedure by which its business would be conducted. "Hymn #23, stanza 4 was sung as a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessing of our organization. The motion prevailed that this Constitution be duplicated and distributed to the congregations for their adoption" (Minutes Interim Conf. 11).

Prof. Martin Galstad was asked to take the necessary steps to facilitate the incorporation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The convention was recessed to January, 1961.

Forty-five pastors and teachers were registered for this historic, inaugural convention, together with the twenty-three lay delegates. In the order in which they signed their names, they were: Paul F. Nolting (secretary), M. J. Witt (chairman), Christian Albrecht, Bertram Naumann, George Barthels, Ronald Roehl, Gerhart Becker, Richard Kuehne, Gordon Radtke, Ralph Schaller, Elmer Boniek, Waldemar Schuetze, L. W. Schierenbeck, H. P. Bauer, Rollin Reim, Harold Duehlmeier, Helmuth Rutz, Egbert Albrecht, Gerhard Pieper, Gilbert Sydow, Leland Grams, Albert Sippert, Arvid Gullerud, Vernon Greve, Jonathan Schaller, Martin Garbrecht, Paul G. Koch, Otto J. Eckert, Alvin Sieg, Gerhard Mueller, Daniel DeRose, Paul Prueter, Marvin Eibs, Waldemar Karnitz, Leonard Bernthal, Elton Hallauer, Robert Dommer, Winfred Schaller, Jr., C. M. Gullerud, Paul G. Albrecht, Edmund Reim, J. B. Erhart, Robert Rehm, Martin Galstad, and Otto Abrams. For some reason the list of those registered for the convention does not include the name of Egbert Schaller, who was also present.

Lay delegates were: Elwin Groose, Marquette, WI; Lloyd Egtvet, Austin, MN; E. C. Johannes, North Platte, NE; Edwin Engel, New Ulm, MN; Duane Riggert, Cheyenne, WY; Walter Romberg, Sleepy Eye, MN; Howard Strege, Nicollet, MN; Erwin Neubert, Mankato, MN; Omar Doblje, Ellensburg, WA; Hugo Apitz, Spokane, WA; Charles Sandeen, Red Wing, MN; Russell Zerbel, Marquette, MI; Orville

Fruechte, Eagle Lake, MN; William Waterman, Sanborn, MN; Truman Hagen, Monroe, MI; Herman Fennern, Jamestown, ND; Herman Gerth, Hidewood, SD; H. W. Fuerstenau, Hazel, SD; Herman Preus, St. Paul, MN; David Lau, Milwaukee, WI; Norman Gurath, Fond du Lac, WI; Vernon Fuerstenau, Watertown, SD; Robert Preszler, Lemmon, SD.

The list of visitors included Orville Noeldner of Watertown, SD; Edwin Hasse of Nicollet, MN; Norbert Reim of Mankato, MN; and Kenneth Hallauer of Mission, SD.

During the convention greetings were received from Robert Mackensen, John Lau, Roland A. Gurgel, George Schweikert, Keith Olmanson, Ruben Ude, Robert Reim, Ivan Zarling, George Tiefel, James Pelzl, and William Wiedenmeyer.

On the last day of the convention it was announced that “Mr. David Lau was colloquialized [sic] by Prof. C. M. Gullerud and Pastor George Barthels” and “herewith declared to be a Candidate for the Ministry in our midst” (Minutes Interim Conf. 10). The colloquy took place in the church basement during one of the convention breaks.

One of the hymns sung during the convention was “Lord Jesus, Thou the Church’s Head” (*TLH* 477). The words seemed more meaningful for this gathering than ever before. Think of stanza 2: “O Lord, let this Thy little flock, Thy name alone confessing, continue in Thy loving care, true unity possessing. Thy Sacraments, O Lord, and Thy saving Word to us e’er pure retain. Grant that they may remain our only strength and comfort.” We were confessing the Lord’s name, and we had been given true unity in His Word.

Stanza 4: “And for Thy Gospel let us dare to sacrifice all treasure; teach us to bear Thy blessed cross, to find in Thee all pleasure. Oh, grant us steadfastness in joy and distress, that we Thee ne’er forsake. Let us by grace partake of endless joy and glory.” Many of the pastors and laymen present at this convention had learned a bit about cross bearing and making sacrifices for the Gospel. Some had been slandered; some had to vacate their homes and were ousted from their positions. Nevertheless, the dominant note at this convention was joy and hope—joy at the unity the Holy Spirit had worked and hope that the future would provide still more opportunities for the preaching and spreading of the pure Gospel.

### **Continuation of the Convention in Sleepy Eye**

C. M. Gullerud’s report of the recessed convention in Sleepy Eye, MN, on January 24-26, 1961, begins with this sentence: “Although the weather was bitterly cold with winds blowing strongly from the northwest, there was a warm and cheerful spirit of Christian fellowship in evidence as pastors, teachers, delegates, and visitors assembled in Grace Lutheran Church at Sleepy Eye, Minnesota on January 24th” (9).

In his address to the recessed convention Chairman M. J. Witt reported that Egbert Schaller had been appointed to draw up the formal theological propositions on the doctrines of church and ministry, using the Theses adopted at Watertown as his outline. The chairman indicated that the chief business before this convention would be to continue work on the CLC Constitution and elect the officers and boards prescribed by the Constitution. Pastors, male teachers, and professors who had signed the Constitution would be permitted to vote, as well as one lay delegate from each member congregation. It was also reported that the Church of the Lutheran Confession was officially incorporated according to the laws of the state of Minnesota on December 23, 1960.

Martin Galstad, chairman of the Membership Committee, read the names of the thirty-three congregations to be received as charter members, and they were unanimously received into membership. It was decided that applications for charter membership could be made until the conclusion of the next convention in 1961.

Two essays were scheduled to be read and discussed at this convention. The first was “A Study of the Scriptural Teaching Concerning Excommunication and Termination of Fellowship: Their

Relationship to Each Other and Their Application,” presented by L. W. Schierenbeck. The essay was read and discussed in part, but final action was not taken. The title of the second essay was “Selected Passages of the New Testament that Refer to the Church,” to be read by Paul G. Koch of La Crosse, IN. There is no record that the second essay was presented. Both essays became part of the program for the next convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, held at Spokane, WA, August 23-25, 1961.

Constitutional articles on membership, officers, boards and committees, conventions, and supervision and discipline were studied, amended, and approved. In agreement with the document *Concerning Church Fellowship*, Article VIII of the Constitution declared:

When it has been ascertained that members of this body are causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, the president, in conjunction with the vice-president, shall be held to declare a suspension of fellowship with the offenders. If this should involve the pastor or teacher of a congregation, such a declaration should not be made without full consideration having first been given to the rights of the local congregation and specifically the sanctity of the call. (CLC Conv. Sleepy Eye, “St. Constitution Comm.” report 2)

The wording reflects the sad experiences of many pastors whose calls in their former fellowship had been subjected to interference on the part of synodical officials. Various by-laws having to do with board membership, duties, and terms of office were also adopted by the Sleepy Eye convention.

The first officer to be elected at the convention was the president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Eight men were nominated: Paul G. Albrecht, Christian Albrecht, George Barthels, C. M. Gullerud, Paul F. Nolting, Egbert Schaller, L. W. Schierenbeck, and M. J. Witt. The three with the most votes were Paul G. Albrecht, George Barthels, and M. J. Witt. On the second ballot Paul G. Albrecht was given the difficult task of serving as the first president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Other officers elected were M. J. Witt, vice president; C. M. Gullerud, moderator; Paul F. Nolting, secretary. The members of four boards were elected: the Board of Trustees (three pastors and three laymen), the Board of Missions (three pastors and three laymen), the Board of Doctrine (one professor, two pastors, one teacher, and two laymen), and the Board of Education (two pastors, four professors, and one teacher).

Carl Kuehne, the chairman of the Board of Directors of Immanuel Lutheran College, reported on enrollment for the 1960-1961 school year, the second year in the school’s history. It consisted of 57 students in high school, 21 students in college, and 6 students in the seminary. His report included this remarkable statement: “This Board stands ready to transfer at cost to the Church of the Lutheran Confession title to this physical plant and to the four lots on which it stands. . . . By resolution of the Voters’ Meeting of January 9, 1961, the congregation [Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato, MN] stands ready to transfer this function of supervision to the Church of the Lutheran Confession at this time.” In response to this offer the convention resolved that “the Board of Trustees be authorized to accept transfer of Immanuel Lutheran College from present owners” (CLC Conv. Sleepy Eye, Appendixes IV, VIII).

“The Sleepy Eye Convention of January, 1961, designated *The Lutheran Spokesman* as the official organ of the CLC retroactive to the date of the first issue numbered as Vol. 1, No. 1. It was agreed that all official announcements and notices were to be printed in *The Lutheran Spokesman*. . . . At this convention the following resolution was adopted: ‘That the Theological Journal [subsequently named *Journal of Theology*] to be published pursuant to the directive of this church body be herewith an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession’” (Gullerud 17).

Since that time these two publications have appeared regularly. At first the *Journal of Theology* was published five times a year, but after some time it became a quarterly, like so many other theological journals. There is no doubt that our Lord has blessed these two publications by preserving them as faithful witnesses to the full truth of God’s Word.

Some pastors and teachers were present at Sleepy Eye who had not attended the August, 1960, convention at Watertown. These were George Tiefel, Clifford Kuehne, Paul R. Koch, Herbert Witt, David Gullerud, Robert Reim, John Lau, Adalbert Geiger, and LeRoy Greening. The six seminary students also made the short trip to Sleepy Eye from Mankato; these were Norman Harms, Gene Schreyer, L. Dale Redlin, Daniel Fleischer, Paul Larsen, and Herman Preus.

Pastors in the group who were not present at Sleepy Eye were Waldemar Karnitz, William Wiedenmeyer, Harland Reed, Robert Mackensen, Norbert Reim, Jonathan Schaller, David Lau, Edwin Schmelzer, Roland A. Gurgel, and Arthur Clement.

There were many visitors at the Sleepy Eye convention, including a number of pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Those listed in the minutes include Neil Hilton, Paul Eckert, Joel Gerlach, Kenneth Hallauer, A. T. Kretzmann, Arnold Kuster, Robert Moldstad, John Moldstad, Tobias Pederson, Ruben Ude, Reimar Frick, Harold Bittorf, Fred Bartling, Norman Harstad, Wayne Popp, John Chworowsky, Clarence Hanson, Elmer Kasten, and Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Jones from Mission, South Dakota.

Lastly, we list the lay delegates present at Sleepy Eye who were not present at Watertown in August of 1960: John Johannes, North Platte, NE; Robert Lewis and George Baker, Jamestown, ND; Franklin Hansen, Hecla, SD; Art Hoffmann, Ferdinand Walz, and John Bieber, Bowdle, SD; Albert Schwandt, Manchester, WI; Jerome Friedel, Eau Claire, WI; Paul Schwieger, Cheyenne, WY; W. Reinhardt, Jr., Coloma, MI; Elmer Fitschen, Red Wing, MN; Arlen Gilbertson, Austin, MN; Stephen Wolf, Eagle Lake, MN; Fred Bruns, Nicollet, MN; William Reiners, Morris, MN; Kenneth Schatz, St. Louis, MO; Don Ohlmann, Valentine, NE; Warren Contois, Marquette, MI; Art Kolb, H. Schnabel, and C. Pogany of Lemmon, SD; Louie Wiesner, Hidewood, SD; John Wolff, Peter Ochsner, and Darwin Diede, Faulkton and Ipswich, SD; William Arndt, Seattle, WA; and Herman Kirchenstein, Fond du Lac, WI. All of these men contributed to the organization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

The minutes indicate that there were about 400 in attendance at the convention service on January 25. The sermon, based on 1 Kings 19:1-8, was delivered by Paul G. Albrecht.

The convention was asked to settle a dispute that originated in Monroe, MI. Paul Prueter, pastor of the congregation in Monroe, and the delegate from Monroe, Henry Prueter, Paul's father, did not agree with the convention's decision and walked out.

*The Lutheran Spokesman* had this to say in its report of the Sleepy Eye convention:

We were dissenters and now we are organized. . . . Dissenters like to huddle together. Dissenters must feed their ego and right to existence by constantly panning every one outside their organization. Yes, we have the unhappy role of pointing out the sad state of modern-day Christianity, but that dare not be the reason or purpose of our existence. We are to preach the Gospel, the universal Gospel, which embraces all men in the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. Each time we attack error, each time we point out false teachers and trends, this is a negative function and has no value in itself. It is providing necessary information, but it saves no one. . . .

In an age of organization may we be preserved from stressing our organization. We are not left on this old earth to make a name for the CLC. We are here to make known the love and mercy and forgiveness of God, which we miserable sinners have experienced in undeserved measure. Our energy is to be used for boasting of the sacrifice of Christ, not of the piddling sacrifices we made for Christ. Our mission boards are to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ and not to impress people with the extent and greatness of the CLC. Our educational agencies and institutions have the task to instill Jesus Christ and His Spirit into our youth and future workers, not an esprit de corps for the "only orthodox people" in the world, a spirit which engenders antagonism for all outside the pearly gates of MY church. . . .

By His grace may we all, officers, boards, pastors, teachers, laymen, dedicate ourselves to our one task: to set before all men their Consolation, their Shield when they must die. (Schaller, "Organized For What?" 2-3)

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## Book Review

**Daniel M. Deutschlander: *The Theology of the Cross—Reflections on His Cross and Ours*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2008, paperback, 283 pages.**

In the estimation of the reviewer this is a remarkable book, worthy of serious reflection and rereading. Daniel Deutschlander has had long experience in the ministry as a pastor and professor. Appendix 2 at the close of this book presents a series of sermons for the Lenten season under the general theme: "Behold the Hidden Glory of the Cross." In these sermons we are summoned to follow Christ and see the shame and disgrace and agony of His suffering. Can there be glory in such suffering? Jesus saw the glory in His suffering, and by faith in His Word we can see it too. As Christians we are also called by Christ to suffer, with Him, for Him, because of Him. Is there glory in our suffering? The world sees no such glory, and it is often hidden from our understanding as well. But the Christian who suffers with Christ will surely be glorified with Him. The Gospel of Christ shines forth very brightly in this book.

But as we are led to reflect on Christ's suffering and ours, we are reminded of Jesus' challenging words: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34 NIV). The problem is "self," and it is a big problem. The denial of self is for every Christian as necessary as the bearing of a cross. Thus we hear in Chapter 4:

To carry the cross in the grand procession of the saints on the way to heaven is to deny *self*. The parade is a messy one. The path is strewn with the dead souls of those who gave up along the way because they were spiritually lazy. Some were lazy because they never really listened to Christ's call in the first place. Jesus speaks of them in his great and paradigmatic story of the seed falling on the pathway, on stony ground, and amid the thorns and thistles (Lk 8:4-15). Some were aided in their laziness by preachers and teachers who themselves were lazy or timid or more busy winning followers for themselves than disciples for the crucified One. But the procession goes on, peopled by those who have taken Christ at his Word, those who have taken that Word seriously. For that is the essence of faith, that we take Christ and his Word seriously. We really have been redeemed from sin, death, and hell. We really are called to deny *self* in response to that good news. We really are called to follow Christ, carrying willingly, even joyfully, the cross he sends out of love for us. (p. 89)

In later chapters Deutschlander spells out some of the crosses that beset Christians in the present age: crosses of the young, the middle-aged, and the elderly; crosses of the young pastor and the mature pastor; crosses that the devil tries to use to make faithful Christians waver and doubt and

despair. One of the temptations the devil sets before us pastors is the notion that we are failures if the congregation is not growing and thriving in our watch. What is happening when the pastor succumbs to such temptations?

He is forgetting that there is only one means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacraments—and there is only one Savior of the world. The pastor is not the means of grace; he is the trumpet, not the tune. It is the sound of the gospel that converts and preserves faith. As important as the trumpet is, it is the tune of the gospel that accomplishes everything. He is not a second messiah either, as though it were his responsibility to save the world by his efforts, his eloquence, his personality, his charisma. There is but one Redeemer of the world, one Savior of each individual whom God has elected. Each of the elect will hear the tune played by the Holy Spirit in the gospel; in the Spirit's own good time (not the pastor's!) they will believe it and be saved by it. That we are the trumpet and not the tune, the messengers of salvation and not the Messiah, is both our great comfort and our highest honor. (p. 203)

As we are busy, busy, busy with so many things, some of them worthwhile but many of them rather trivial, we need to take the time to reflect on the really important things. Our work is important, of course. Our families are important even more so. But what is most important of all is our relationship with our God, our faith in Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives through the gospel. This book can help us reflect seriously on that which is most important and so provide us with a lasting spiritual benefit. For that reason this book is highly recommended for pastor and parishioner alike.

– David Lau