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The Petitions of the Lord's Prayer in Light of the Lord's Passion

Frank Gantt

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

(John 19:28)

"May He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God" (2 Cor. 9:10-11). Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed: In our Lenten meditations on the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we have considered so far the first three Petitions. Let us recall the basic idea of each. *Hallowed be Thy name*—that the name of God is everything He has revealed about Himself to us in His Word. *Thy kingdom come*—that God's kingdom is His gracious rule in the hearts of sinners by faith in Jesus Christ. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*—that God breaks and hinders everything that would not allow us to hallow His name nor let His kingdom come to us. This evening our attention now turns to the Fourth Petition, in which our Savior teaches us to pray for *daily bread*.

Many suggest that while the first three Petitions deal with things of a spiritual nature, the Fourth Petition is a prayer for material goods, as though there is nothing spiritual about our material goods. Since we live in a very materialistic society, it is necessary to remind us all that the gifts God gives for this life are only temporary, and therefore we ought not to set our hearts upon them, but rather use them to His glory. At the same time, however, we should be careful not to disdain or despise these gifts from the hand of our merciful God. It is, after all, He who has created us not only as spiritual beings, but physical beings, too—who are in need of such things. It is He who desires that we look to Him for our daily bread and has commanded us so to pray.

In our discussion of the Fourth Petition the issue before us is this: keeping a proper balance between the desire for daily bread, on the one hand, and the desire for God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will on the other. Let us keep this balance in mind as we consider our text, recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 19, verse 28: ***"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!'"***

In this text Jesus Himself has demonstrated a proper desire for daily bread. Let's remember that daily bread includes not only food, but all that we need for this body and life. One of the things mentioned in our recitation of Luther's explanation to the Fourth Petition is "drink." Likewise Jesus, having flesh and blood as we do and thus subject to dehydration, had need of a drink—a need that He addressed from the cross when He said, *"I thirst."*

Among all the agonies of crucifixion, experts say, thirst was one of the worst. The condemned would have his hands and feet fastened—sometimes by rope, sometimes by nails—to a cross of wooden beams placed upright in the ground, leaving the crucified man staked out in the open sun to die. Jesus was put on His cross at 9:00 in the morning. He died six hours later at 3:00 in the afternoon. In His case, unlike any other crucifixion ever, darkness extended across the land for three hours. But that did not stop the indescribable suffering which Jesus had to endure. Remember that Jesus not only suffered the pangs of crucifixion; He suffered the very pangs of hell, which is God's wrath over sin. King David describes the sufferings of Christ in these words from Psalm 22: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth" (22:15 NIV). Centuries later, in fulfillment of King David's words, Jesus demonstrated His bodily need and desire for daily bread by saying, *"I thirst."*

In speaking these words, we have a clear testimony from our Savior that the desire for daily bread is not a sinful thing. In fact, it is quite pleasing to God that we recognize such needs and look to Him patiently for each one to be filled. We have many such needs, don't we? Several minutes ago,

reciting Luther's words reminded us of things that are included in daily bread: "food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money and goods, a godly husband or wife, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace, health, education, honor, faithful friends, trustworthy neighbors—and things like that" (Small Catechism, 2000 Sydow Ed.). Really, that's only a sample of all that is included in the Lord's term "daily bread." Daily bread includes all that we NEED for this body and life.

The term *need* is a broad and relative term. If you examine the many peoples on the earth, you would find differing needs among the various groups. When it comes to providing for our needs, the Lord doesn't treat us as a bunch of clones. He treats us very personally in supplying our needs according to our individual circumstances. For He knows that one generation's needs differ from another's, and one people's needs are not necessarily the same as those of another. One's personal needs are unique to his own situation in life. We have a few examples that apply right here in rural South Dakota. I have no need at all for hay, but many of you do because of your cattle. In other parts of the world, where the Lord has not determined to give people some of the technology with which He has blessed us, there is no need for electricity; but we surely need it. One could argue, I suppose, that we could get along without such things. Yet the Lord has placed us in the situation where we have become dependant on them. And since He Himself has put us here into these circumstances, He sees to it that we have what we need. Of course, that is not to say that at some point in the future the Lord won't decide that we no longer need the things mentioned before. If so, then He will supply us according to the change in needs that we face at that point in time.

The point is that in so many ways our Lord keeps and preserves us in the various callings into which He Himself has placed us. It is not His will that the desire for daily bread consume us. However, neither does He desire that we despise the good gifts that He seeks to give us. Indeed, He wants us to remember from day to day that He is our constant and gracious Provider.

As we remember this, we will understand the lesson Jesus meant for His disciples when He taught this Petition of the Lord's Prayer. When we pray for daily bread, it is not so that God will remember to provide for us; it's so that we remember that He is our Provider. He's not the one who forgets; we forget. We fall easily into a frame of mind which reasons that our survival depends on us—our plans, our taking charge, our quest to be our own provider. Of course, we should recognize that God provides for us through the work that He enables us to perform. But the strength and opportunities to work, as well as the good results that come from it—all comes from Him as His blessing to us.

Now it's not just in the area of who is provider that we often forget our role and His. We also forget, and often, what the purpose of our daily bread is to be. Daily bread is a gift given by God, which we are to use to glorify Him. Yet too often we want to take credit and hoard resources. We want to use God's gifts to bring glory for ourselves or to store up for ourselves treasures on this earth. It is in this vein that we need to remember the second lesson demonstrated by our Savior in His words, "*I thirst.*"

Jesus didn't say, "I thirst," just to have His thirst relieved. Remember His plight: six hours on the cross, yet asking for nothing. He had refused the wine mixed with a narcotic drug, which was offered to Him earlier. Why the refusal? Because His heavenly Father had put Him there to go through the agony of hell for you and for me and for the whole world. Jesus had to suffer the full fury of a holy yet angry God on that cross, and part of that full fury, that punishment of God's wrath, was the raging thirst that He endured. Jesus set aside His own daily bread, and that included food, water, pain relief, protection made available by others, both friend and foe. For you and me He laid these things down, what we pray for in the Fourth Petition, because it was the will of His Father.

So why does Jesus now say, "I thirst"? Our sermon text tells us: "So that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Jesus said, "I thirst," because the Old Testament foretold that they would give the Messiah sour wine to drink. David said in Psalm 69: "*They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink*" (69:21 ESV). Because the Scriptures had said it would happen, Jesus had to fulfill

it. Thus His words, "I thirst," are also spoken to keep the Old Testament Scriptures, the inspired plan and blueprint of our salvation, right down to the last letter.

Jesus did this with hundreds of Old Testament passages, what we know as Messianic prophecies. He kept and fulfilled them all, one after another after another. This is especially true with the Psalms. Again and again the Psalm writers put words into the Messiah's mouth and actions into the Messiah's life, and we see Jesus keep those words and actions right down to the last letter and the last detail. For example, Psalm 8 says that God caused the Son of Man to be separated from Him for a time, and then He crowned Him with glory and honor. The writer to the Hebrews shows how this was fulfilled when Jesus was separated from His Father on the cross and then crowned with glory and honor in heaven. Passage after passage in the Old Testament finds fulfillment in Jesus. As He spoke a word of need, "I thirst," He did and said what God had foretold right down to the smallest of details. He also did what God's Word said in the right spirit—with perfect fear, love, and trust in God, and a willing heart and loving obedience to His Father's will.

That especially was the reason why Jesus spoke this word of need, "I thirst." He needed to take that drink to fulfill prophecy and to obey His Father perfectly at every moment, even in the face of intense physical suffering. He needed to do that because we don't. Remember that Jesus wasn't just being a good example in life and in death. He was being our substitute. He was being our righteousness from God and our redemption.

The Apostle John tells us in our text, "*Knowing that all was now completed, Jesus said, 'I thirst.'*" Taking that drink signaled that something was done. All sins of all people of all time had now been atoned for and forgiven by a holy yet loving Father in heaven. God had vented His anger on Jesus in place of Adam and Eve and all of their children, with the result that heaven's doors were now open wide for all those children of Adam and Eve to enter.

But who knew this? Who from the rabble crowd in front of Him grasped any of this? The Jewish leaders, the soldiers, the mob? None of them knew, none of them understood, none of them grasped the awesome payment Jesus had just made for them on the cross. So Jesus had to tell them. Jesus had to communicate the good news to them. Jesus had to speak. And He needed wet lips to do it. He needed moisture in His mouth to talk, to cry out loudly, "*It is finished!*" He needed to shout out for all to hear, "*Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.*" The gospel needed to be spoken at that moment, which is why Jesus had to say, "I thirst." And not just for those people standing there at Calvary on that Friday afternoon. We needed Jesus to take that drink so that we would know what He was about to say: that our sins are forgiven through His death and heaven is ours through His gift.

Yes, it's still that way today. People still don't know. People still don't understand or grasp the meaning of Jesus' death. In our sinful weakness we still don't get it either; we still don't comprehend the tremendous meaning of God's own sacrifice complete. And so we come to these Lenten worship services to hear the moistened mouth of Jesus cry out again, "It is finished!"

So many people think that Christianity is a matter of doing, a matter of law, a matter of posting the Ten Commandments somewhere and then complying with them outwardly as much as one can. So many people wander around without Jesus at the center of their lives because they've put themselves and their own feeble efforts to do good at the center of their lives. Jesus said, "I thirst," so that He could announce, "It is finished!" He said, "I thirst," so that He could say to you and me today: I forgive you, my dear son or daughter, and all is well between you and God because of Me. Surely we needed Jesus to take that drink of sour wine so that He would speak loudly and clearly, forcefully and powerfully for every single sinner in this world: Sins are forgiven! Heaven is paid for! Death is conquered! Satan and hell are defeated!

Even today we still need to hear those words from Jesus' lips and understand the meaning that they convey. We still need Jesus to announce to us the completion and the effects of His work. Surely His dying words spoken and recorded were not random utterances. When He said, "*I thirst,*" and

received the vinegar, it enabled Him to cry out in victory: *"It is finished!"* One statement has led to the other so that we would know that our sins are all forgiven and that we stand justified before God. And something as mundane as that vinegar became a means for Him to glorify God—both in fulfilling Scripture and in declaring salvation complete.

Standing now in that salvation through faith in Jesus, let us also see our daily bread as the means that our heavenly Father gives us to glorify Him. Let us wet our lips, so to speak, with what God gives for our bodies and so be empowered to share our Savior's proclamation of redemption complete. Let us make it clear to all, in words and in actions, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life of which we all have need. In Jesus' name let us pray, receive, and thank God for our daily bread. Amen!

***FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE
FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US
(Luke 23:34)***

You, who were dead in trespasses and sins, God has made alive together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, that was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:13-14). Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed, restored, forgiven:

Forgiveness is all the rage in our society. Well, in a way. Every time a criminal on death row is about to be executed, we hear of protestors standing outside the prison, shouting Bible passages and waving signs that may say, for example, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." When a politician is caught red-handed, taking bribes or using his office for other criminal behavior, it's not uncommon to hear his supporters invoke Jesus' name and say, "Well, wasn't it Jesus who taught us to forgive one another?" I'm sure you could add to the list other instances of someone speaking or seeking forgiveness on behalf of another who has committed some wrong.

Now I don't want to give the impression that forgiveness should be withheld from such individuals, or that there are occasions when the Christian should refuse his forgiveness. However, what many understand by forgiveness is not what the Bible means when it speaks of forgiveness, either from God toward us or from us toward one another. In our society so many understand forgiveness as overlooking the sins and wrongdoing of others. That's not forgiveness in the biblical sense—from God's point of view. Lest we forget, forgiveness of sins came at a price. Keep that in mind as we listen to our Savior's words spoken shortly after He was nailed to the cross and recorded in Luke 23:34: ***"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots."*** These are the words of our Savior, inspired by the Spirit of God to give us the assurance of salvation and an example of what it means to live under the shadow of the cross. And so we pray: *Sanctify us by the truth, O Lord; Your Word is truth. Amen.*

Did the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross know what they were doing? You bet they did. They were well trained in the brutal art of crucifixion. They knew exactly where to place the nails. They knew exactly how long a condemned person should languish. They even knew that if they placed a little step at the feet of the individual, he would use that step to relieve pressure from his abdomen, which would make the death take longer to happen. Crucifixion was something of a science in deadly torture.

So, yes, in that sense the soldiers at Calvary knew what they were doing. And yet they didn't know what they were guilty of doing on this particular occasion. On this particular morning they were not crucifying a murderer or pounding nails into the hands and feet of another insurrectionist. They were pounding them into the flesh of an innocent Man who also was their Creator and the very Son of God. To add insult to injury, they sat at the foot of the cross upon which the eternal God was hanging and split up among themselves the various garments of His clothing.

Were these soldiers guilty of sin? Yes, indeed!—and ignorance is no excuse. It is here that so many misunderstand the forgiveness for which our Savior cried to His Father on behalf of these soldiers. In Jesus' heart, as always, there was nothing but pure grace for sinners, regardless of who they were or what they were doing. Jesus understood with perfect clarity what sin merits. He knew full well that sin is a serious matter that can't be overlooked. Jesus wasn't asking His Father in heaven to turn a blind eye to these sins. He wasn't petitioning Him to give them a free pass this time around. He wasn't even asking God simply to forget what they had done. All such notions, which fit the world's concept of forgiveness, were not the true forgiveness that Jesus was seeking.

What, then, is real forgiveness? We are told in Hebrews 9:22 that *"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"* (ESV). Forgiveness of sins comes at a heavy price—the shedding of blood, no less. And not just any blood will do; what's required to satisfy the justice of God is the blood of God's own beloved and innocent Son! So when Jesus cried to His Father that He forgive these ignorant soldiers, He was essentially saying: Father, apply My blood even to these who are guilty of crucifying Me.

Now that's forgiveness on a completely different and much higher level. The forgiveness for which Jesus pleads from the Father involves forgetting, to be sure. But it also involves His remembering—the Father remembering what the death of His Son means. As a sacrifice that atones for all sins, Jesus did not die because these soldiers had nailed Him to the tree. No, the cross was the altar of God on which He bore their sins and took the complete punishment for them. The forgiveness of which Jesus speaks is not just erasing the sins from the record of the sinner, but inscribing all those sins to the account of Christ. True forgiveness is not found in God turning a blind eye to sin, but rather in turning His back on the One who knew no sin, yet became sin for us.

That's right! Don't forget that your sins too were placed on Jesus. We easily fall into a trap of despising these soldiers for doing what they did to Jesus. But stop for a moment and think about all the sins you know that these men committed. The most we can possibly list is four: nailing Him to the cross, taking His clothing, mocking Him, and then piercing His side. Now compare that short list to the many sins you know that you have committed. I don't mean to imply that these soldiers never committed any other sin; certainly they did. The point, rather, is that when we are honest, we have to admit that we also had a part, a guilty hand in Christ's death. It was, as Isaiah reminds us, "our iniquities" and "our transgressions" for which Christ suffered so greatly.

That fact is disturbing, inasmuch as we too are guilty of being the cause of Christ's death. And yet it ought to be a fact that is greatly comforting, especially when we hear our Savior so lovingly call on His Father to apply His blood to those soldiers. It was for real sinners—like those soldiers, like you and me—that Christ suffered and died on the cross. So, yes, while our sins were indeed the cause of Christ's crucifixion, the same holy blood that enacted forgiveness for the soldiers cries for your sins to be pardoned as well.

Forgiveness of sins always finds its source, its foundation and certainty in the cross of Jesus Christ. With the cross of Christ in view God made such statements in Scripture as Isaiah 1:18: *"Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* And Jeremiah 31:34: *"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."* And as the Psalmist declares: *"You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin"* (Ps. 85:2). Your heavenly Father wants you to apply these truths to your own hearts and to know that no matter what sin weighs on your heart and mind, no matter what guilt burdens your conscience, the blood of Christ calls out: *"Father forgive them."*

The truth of this Gospel message has three very practical applications for our lives today. First of all, it is this forgiveness of sins that gives us the right to address God as Father, as we do in the Lord's

Prayer. When approaching Him in prayer, we should be confident that He's not looking down on us as poor wretches pestering Him yet again. Rather, He sees us as the blood of Christ has made us: pure and spotless. He sees us as His own dear children. On the sure basis of a blood-bought relationship between us and Him, our prayers He gladly receives and hears and answers. It is, as the writer to the Hebrews declares, that with boldness we may approach the throne to find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

Secondly, knowing that Christ suffered for our sins, we should not treat sin lightly, as though it has no consequences. That we have full and free remission of sins should not be an occasion for living or continuing in sin. In fact, it's just the opposite. We hear the warning in Hebrews: *"If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"* (Heb. 10:26). That's not a threat to intimidate us into taking sin seriously, for the child of God does not live on the basis of fear. It is a statement of fact, however, which causes us to be on guard against the desires of the flesh, which do war against our souls and pose a constant danger to our faith. At the same time we draw comfort and encouragement from the words of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, in which he answers the question that he poses: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:1-4). That newness of life is now. It's a life in which we have been set free from sin—from its condemnation and its bondage. It is a life in which Christ Himself lives in us with all of His grace and all of His power.

Finally, the forgiveness we have through Jesus' blood has an impact on how we deal with one another, especially with those who sin against us. It's one of the most important ways that a Christian reveals the relationship he has with his heavenly Father and with his Savior. While the world speaks about forgiveness, generally what is meant is an overlooking of someone's faults. But as we noted already, that is not what forgiveness really is. Forgiveness finds its source always in the blood of Christ.

Let me explain to you the difference. After someone wrongs another person in whatever way, it's not uncommon for the person who's been wronged to say, *"I'll forgive, but I'll never forget."* In other words, I'll act like no wrong was done, but I'll keep on remembering how that person hurt me." Now what happens if that same person wrongs you again? Well, then we keep score: *"That's twice that he's hurt me."* That kind of thinking is hardly in line with the forgiveness that God has for us in Christ Jesus. His forgiveness for us is complete because it is founded upon the blood of His Son. On that cross all sins were atoned for and washed away in His blood, which means that they all are gone from His sight, never to be remembered or brought up in the future.

That's the approach we ought to take with one another when our neighbor, especially our fellow Christian, sins against us. Christian forgiveness is like an article of clothing that used to be stained, but after going through the wash the stain is gone and its former presence is forgotten. How many of us keep track of stains that are no longer there? When you go to your closet to look for a white blouse or a dress shirt, do you skip over one because it used to have a spot of coffee on the sleeve or tomato sauce on the front? No! It might have had a stain at one time, and an obvious one at that, but you scrubbed it out and the stain no longer exists. And with the disappearance of that stain the memory of it vanishes too.

That's forgiveness—both from God the Father and with His children too! Even as we rejoice to have our sins washed away in the blood of Christ, so we ought to apply that same cleansing flood to every individual who sins against us. This is what Paul spoke about when he wrote in Ephesians 4: *"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."* How did God forgive you? He applied Jesus' blood to your sins. It is on that basis that we should forgive those

who sin against us—not begrudgingly, not with strings attached, but in great gladness of heart, knowing that, yes, even the sins that others commit against us were laid upon our Savior.

Dear friends, if you have any sin that continues to bring you shame and continues to weigh upon your heart, I encourage you to listen to the loving words of your Savior: “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” While He spoke those words specifically on behalf of the soldiers who crucified Him, the message for us today is clear. The blackest sins of the most terrible pasts have all been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb of God. In Christ God remembers your sin no more. At the same time, if in your heart you are still hurt by the wrong that someone has done to you, go back to those same words of your Savior (and his Savior too!): “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” Our Father did not withhold his love and complete forgiveness even from those who crucified His Son; neither should we withhold our love and forgiveness from those who sin against us. In both cases the blood of Jesus cries for pardon.

Therefore as we pray the Fifth Petition, may the Holy Spirit cause us to claim that forgiveness so dearly purchased for us, and may He also work in us the desire and willingness to extend it freely to others. In Jesus’ name we pray that it be so. Amen!

Journal of Theology: Fifty Years Ago

As noted below, the first selected reprint (*Journal* 1:3, June 1961, pp. 1-16) was originally a 1955 Wisconsin Synod conference essay. But its message is as timely now as it was when the *Journal* put it into print fifty years ago.

Our second reprint, beginning on page 27, is the conclusion of the series, “The Kingdom of God,” written in German by John Schaller and translated by Egbert Schaller. The first half of the series appeared as a reprint in the last issue (cf. 51:2, pp. 24-43).

Temptations That Especially Confront the Orthodox

Martin Galstad

* “This essay was delivered before the Pastoral Conference of the Minnesota District, Wisconsin Synod, April 20, 1955, Sleepy Eye, and was duplicated at the request of that conference. It is printed here [June 1961] exactly as it was delivered” (Editor’s note, *Journal* 1:3, p. 1). In this reprint, however, citation of Galstad’s quoted material has been noted parenthetically per MLA guidelines. See Works Cited on page 27 for the available publishing information. Words in brackets have been added by the editor. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

On July 28, 1938, I said this in a pastoral conference devotional:

Is there not a danger that we have become quite satisfied with the definitive and the scholastic to the exclusion of the meditative and the mystical (I had been reading Luther on the unio mystica at the time)—I mean the “love, joy, peace; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, (and) temperance” of Galatians 5, and the “I in them” of the Sacerdotal Prayer, John 17:26. Is there not danger that we may become satisfied with clear mental processes and principles (doctrines), with an attendant carelessness as to the bringing of their fruits to the surface in our lives? Thomas Carlyle once said, “It is a sad but sure truth that every time you speak of a fine purpose, especially with eloquence and to the admiration of bystanders, there is less chance of your ever making a fact of it in your poor life.” Let us tremble at the danger that lies in that deep psychological truth. In an unconscious way we are tempted to let our mental processes climb over the boundary line into the field of memory of things we imagine we have performed; there they

find a comfortable seat, and remain there, much to our admiration of their excellence; but we forget that they are sneak thieves who stole in there without going the round-about way through our words and deeds.

. . . We with our orthodox Christianity are in danger of becoming like a cup of good coffee in which the sugar remains lying at the bottom. It needs to be stirred up; not in the way of the holiness preacher, but in the way of Jesus, of Paul, and of Luther and Walther, yes of every practical Christian of whom it can be said as it was said of Abraham of old, he is a "friend of God." It can be seen and tasted. His Christianity flavors his daily life.

In his recent book on heresies and the travails of religious liberty, Roland H. Bainton says, "We tremble for ourselves lest we too be engulfed, and even more lest in the effort to extricate ourselves we succumb to the very methods that we abhor" (Bainton 14). Toward the end of his book the same author writes:

The noblest achievement of the Western world has been the conduct of controversy without acrimony, of strife without bitterness, of criticism without loss of respect. But when men do not operate within the same framework, this becomes impossible. Only those who believe in universal right, in integrity, law, and humanity, if not in the Christian God, are in a position to clash on higher levels and retain personal friendship as did Roger Williams with most of his opponents. But if one side makes the will of a party into an absolute, and for it will lie and assassinate, then for the other side to fight according to the rules is very difficult. The more the contestants are locked, the greater becomes the danger that the rules will be scrapped on both sides.... The very effort to control the unscrupulous foe leads to unscrupulousness. (259)

[At his installation as seminary president in Thiensville, Wisconsin, Edmund Reim said:] "We must realize that when we defend the cause of conservatism, when we resist the trend toward liberalism, we are in constant danger of a reaction in the opposite direction, of falling into a state of rigorism and legalism that is just as wrong as the errors we oppose. Let us not close our minds against this possibility. For such a false attitude can exist only at the expense of the true spirit of the Gospel. Let us have eyes for the dangers that lie in the one extreme as well as the other" (Reim 235).

Our temptation is to lose our balance. We are tempted to forget that "every solution, however wise and necessary, carries within itself the possibility of some new abuse" (Bainton 254). "Even that which is imperative in any given situation opens the way to abuses of another sort" (Bainton 254). He that standeth must take heed lest he fall. Believing that good works are not necessary to salvation, it is easy to think they are not necessary. Believing that they are necessary, it is easy to rely on them for salvation. Having humility, it is so easy to be proud of it. It would be easy to preach a sermon on the dangers of being a Christian; we are to work it out with fear and trembling, are we not? An English divine once remarked about a preacher who lived so ill that it was a pity he ever entered the pulpit, but once in the pulpit, he preached so well that it was a pity he ever got out. Every shade of liberalism has its own extremes to which it runs; but our concern is not with that. Our concern is with avoiding the perversions that especially beset us.

The first requirement is an alertness to the fact that perversions lie in wait to corrupt every situation or position. Aristotle pointed this out when he showed that tyranny is the perversion of monarchy and that oligarchy is the perversion of aristocracy. Too much courage leads to foolhardiness, and too little leads to cowardice. Better than either is the happy *meeden agan*, the golden mean. Moses was meek above all men; therefore he was strong. Being strong, he only gained strength by being meek. When we are weak, we are strong; but there is a weakness that runs into despair even as there is a strength that leads us to tempt God and lose His protection. Take an analogy from politics, to show that every situation is open to abuse. Both in Britain and in America steps were taken by liberals to protect the people against too much power of sovereigns, presidents, governments. Now true liberals are those who must protect the people against too much paternal government of their own making. So also Luther fought the tyranny of the pope, but the fanaticism of the peasant revolts grieved him fully as

much. St. Paul fought valiantly for our liberty in Christ, but he has just as many words against the perversion of this liberty.

Historically the Church has run into perversions from time to time. The “orthodox” at times committed sin to make heretics good. The story of persecution is the story of the actions of those who belonged to the established Church. There is no more terrible thing than an entrenched ecclesiasticism. And it is a sad but sure fact that defection from a commonly accepted course or practice or profession is generally more intolerable than is a failure to live up to it. Partisan belonging is more tangible and more easily made important than is religious rectitude. “Place and nation” is an easier rallying ground than is the plain of truth.

Look at the temptations to which we are put. See how we are tempted to sacrifice the truth in order to maintain the party. How anxious we are to be leaders rather than prophets! The leader changes the nuances to win followers; he will choke down something he ought to say lest he discourage someone who is almost persuaded to follow him. The prophet will be forthright, for he knows in advance that he will be cut down for it. The leader is tempted to be sticky with the honey of sweetness and light; diplomacy and tact fairly ooze from him until you could wish that he would apply his over-socialized activity to salesmanship. The prophet is tempted to be clipped and sharp—let the chips fall where they may. One man is silent on lodgery and can’t resist the invitation to be baccalaureate speaker—but what a missionary!—he knows every person in church by name and he makes them feel welcome after the services! The other is a great theologian and pulls no punches in the pulpit—but he doesn’t get out to see the people, is not a missionary, and confesses to the congregation that he just can’t make calls. Oh, for the sweet reasonableness of God’s Christian gentleman, who can do the one and not neglect the other!

Right now our great temptation, perhaps, is that we do not follow through our confessions and professions. The temptation is to talk boldly until the crisis is at hand, then fail to follow through. Experience has shown that it is risky to predict performance on the basis of past words. “A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Matthew 21:28-30).

If someone catch us at this failure to act according to our word, we are quick to point to the “utter purity” of our mental attitude. The study of the “utter” is interesting; it turns out not always to be purity—yet very “utter.” The devil started it by changing “Thou shalt not eat” to “Thou shalt not touch.” Note the psychological gymnastics in this! The Pharisees scrupulously tithed their mint and anise and cummin. Jesus made their doing of it look foolish when it was done to cover up the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). “The Talmud tells of the ass of a certain Rabbi which had been so well trained as to refuse corn of which the tithes had not been taken” (qtd. in Robertson 183). There is strong indication that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was contrasting the Word of God with “what hath been said by them of old time”—not with what God had said, but with what had been said by the rabbis to cover up their own defection—and did they ever talk big! The Talmud is the record of the additions men have made to the Law by an age-long set of men who departed from justice, from mercy, and from walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Isn’t this like the behavior of the little boy who was scolded by his mother for pilfering a piece of cake just before dinner; “Then you’ll never let me have anything to eat!” The temptation is to sharpen the Law’s demands to make excuse for not keeping it. The “utter” can go pretty far.

The extreme should warn us lest we be tempted to move even a little in that direction. If the opponents of orthodoxy have pointed out this tendency in what they call “splinter groups,” is there perhaps not enough truth in it to alert us to the danger? Have the requirements of orthodoxy in a parish

sometimes been made so great that it has seemed almost useless to try to win others to it? Have not unnecessary inhibitions at times taken all heart and spirit out of people?

Bars should not be let down, but they should be upheld with dignity. The world will hate us, but let us make sure that it is for Christ's sake. Let it not be for our failure to walk among men as did Abraham of old, as friends of God. Let them not call us self-satisfied, cold, aloof, supercilious, and worse. Can't we compel them to say, "These men have done nothing amiss"? The sacred Proverb stands: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). Whence is the high correlation between being "orthodox" and having insensitive personalities? We prefer people who are orthodox because they have to be—are bound by the Word.

One wonders wherein lies the quirk by which one who disagrees so easily becomes disagreeable; and by which one who speaks the Law so readily conveys the impression that he, of course, would never be guilty! Is it lack of insight that makes people sometimes think that it is the loud crash of the hammer which cracks the shell of the erring sinner? It is not the tornado or lightning that breaks the rocks into sand and soil; it is oftener the quiet expansion of frost which is not so much as heard on a cold quiet night.

Did Nathan storm and threaten when he most effectively spoke the Word to David after the affair with Bathsheba? He told a little story about an imaginary neighbor; and I often wondered if it was more than barely audible when Nathan managed to say "Thou art the man." A challenging tone of speech might have led to speedy liquidation of Nathan, for the mighty David was a bloody man when he was riled, but he was touched by the quiet truth. Jesus melted Peter into salty tears of repentance with a look. We could do well with a tear in our eye when we must reprove a brother. I myself witnessed once the most embarrassing discomfiture of a defender of the Common Confession when he heard the irenic secretary of our union committee quietly testify to the truth. The official was so taken aback that he could hardly find the threads of his arguments—he was so upset by this quiet speaker that he gasped how good it was to see this Wisconsin committee member speak as a very "man of God." Tears and pleadings are the tones of the Gospel; the woes of Matthew 23 and the sharp denunciations of the prophets are words of judgment.

Now we turn over the coin. Where once the orthodox spoke boldly, and perhaps too boldly—as when the Gospel has been preached with a clenched fist—there comes the time when they are tempted not to say the final word with firmness when it ought to be spoken. It is a temptation to us, is it not? Have we fallen for the temptation to speak boldly when the consequences are not imminent, perhaps not even apparent, and then turn dumb when we must and ought to speak? It is easy to fall under the condemnation of the Homeric line, "Thou dog in forehead, but in heart a deer." Is it easier to be firm and final when the crisis is upon us, if we have not talked too much before? We are only asking.

Is it not tempting to use religion as a tool of punishment, as a sadistic outlet for something within, against which people are helpless—to use it somewhat as the unhappy maladjusted teacher does who dominates his little sphere some six-seven hours per day; or like the preacher who from time to time mercilessly manhandles his automobile, driving like Jehu? Well, it isn't so funny to see someone emphasize pure doctrine with a curl of the lip, and close sermons with a whining amen and slamming the Bible upon the pulpit! Likewise, is not communion some times used as a club? What is this but a persecuting attitude? It is easy to sit back and denounce; twice as hard to go and win someone with meekness and fear as Nathan. Do we sometimes desire to score a point more than to win a soul?

Roland Bainton once more:

Nor is persecuting religion to be regarded as insincere. Dostoevsky misrepresented the Spanish Inquisitor when he portrayed him as cynically ready to burn even Christ should he return. The Torquemadas were not cynics, but passionately sincere fanatics. All of which should make abundantly plain that virtues are not without their vices. A concern for truth can end in inhumanity and love itself can be perverted into cruelty. This, too, is obvious: that Christianity as such cannot be

regarded as the panacea for all the ills of the world. It all depends on what kind of Christianity. And whatever else may be added, this certainly is an appalling reflection: that the barbarities practiced in modern times to ensure conformity to the program of a party are but refinements of the methods employed by those who invoked the name of Christ. (52-53)

[Similarly, columnist Dorothy Thompson said:] “Nothing, it would appear, more induces cruelty than a sense of righteousness. Cruel acts performed for a noble cause—such as the salvation of humanity—permit the perpetrators to have it both ways: to satisfy their unconscious sadistic natures and save their consciences.

“No wars are so brutal as religious wars, such as the Thirty Years war of the 16th century, or the last two world wars to make the world safe for democracy, or the four freedoms, or end the exploitation of man by man, and thus one way or another usher in the millennium” (Thompson).

Latourette writes this of C. F. W. Walther in his new *A History of Christianity*: “Characterized by an extraordinary combination of organizing ability, a genius for friendship, magnetic charm with audiences large and small, generous hospitality..., a skill in vigorous polemics, and a self denial which was content with frugal living..., he exerted a continuous and pervasive influence” (1245).

Our plea is for watchfulness that we do not get in the way of our own testimony, that our manner and tone do not justify anyone’s not listening. We need not sound desperate nor make as though we are on the defensive. Our words shall judge the world! Somewhere I read that a contemporary called Luther’s voice sweet, melodious, and winning. He could also thunder at the right time! We are not probing orthodoxy, but its perversions.

Who said that our vices often stem from our virtues? “Men fired with what they believe to be devotion to the will of God as seen in Christ have been nerved to prolonged and mortal combat, not only with non-Christians, but also with one another” (Latourette 881). It was as much the great warmth of Peter’s heart that got him into that jamb Thursday night as it was his weakness. Those who stand must take heed lest they fall. If they are not afraid of falling, they are neither good theologians nor good Christians. Every position and situation has a way open to abuse. The grace of God itself suggests a way to abuse it. Every good thing can be misused. Men can readily become proud of their humility. A new car is a good thing, but don’t drive it so fast you kill yourself. Live in a glass house, but don’t throw stones. Paradise was a grand place, but there was one thing not to do. We do have orthodox Christian faith; a great danger is not to be aware that we have special temptations therewith.

One of the greatest temptations is to become passive and to neglect the activism that is Scriptural. Sometimes our opponents must call our attention to this perversion. “Kierkegaard insisted that true Christianity demands decision and action, a commitment which abandons the role of the spectator” (Latourette 1141). Perversion of Kierkegaard’s point, in turn, is found in the Arminian movement, the Reformed, and the holiness sects—also in Lutheranism that trims doctrinal definitude so that its much activity might be seen of men.

Can we not have the blessed balance of doing the one and not neglecting the other? The Bible speaks encouragingly on this point. We need not go to the Reformed Fundamentalists or to Unitarian great men like Horace Mann for inspiration. The Gospels with their Jesus “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38) and the apostles with their many directives (as 1 Corinthians 13) are our source of power. There is no better summary than Micah 6:8: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Lutheran imbalance in this matter is pointed out in someone’s remark that Lutherans are the best fed and the least exercised of all Christians on earth. F. Pieper was once quoted as musing, “Why is it that so many others have too much of that of which we have too little?” The answer can hardly be that we have too much of that of which they don’t have enough!

Our own thinking has suggested one possible explanation and solution. Both lie in the area of method. Has our habit of dealing in abstractions dulled the stimulating facts of the naked Word of God?

Generalizations do not have the flavor and appeal of the facts from which they are made. The objection might be that bread and cakes are better than the ingredients from which they are made, but our rejoinder is that bread and cakes are not the abstraction of their elements but the happy eating of things well put together.

Just so, Christian living is the happy working out of a blessed eternal living made of the bread of life broken unto us in the revelation of God to us in the Word. Unless we go through the process of finding its ingredients ourselves, of digging for the treasures, of thrilling to their discovery, of being edified and inspired by their direct action upon us, of being enlightened by the sometimes electrifying contacts made in studying the Scriptures first-hand—unless we have gone through the process ourselves there is something second-hand about our profession. Think here of the people in our parishes and in our schools. It is so easy for them to say as did the Roman Catholic who did not know what he believed, but he emphatically believed what the Church believes! Pastors have been known to be at a loss to explain the errors of the Boy Scout religion, but they have defended their stand by saying that the synod is against it. The parent who keeps his boy out of Scouts only because the pastor doesn't like it is really practicing Boy Scout religion by that very act—he is doing a good turn. Neither has gone through the process of coming to personal conviction. And what merit is there to any other sort of confession or conviction?

But to preach and teach the findings, the generalizations, the abstractions of earlier Christians is the temptation to which we fear that we of the orthodox persuasion are put. To succumb to it is fatal in the end. "Let it be our one concern to make sure that our loyalty is not to human tradition, but to God Himself and to what He would teach us. Here we need not cast about in uncertainty and doubt..." (Reim 233). Is it possible to have vigorous, informed, and committed Christianity that is not born of knowledge of the naked Word, of struggle, of prayer, yes, of agony and perhaps even of near despair at times—of decision, of surrender (those are good words!), of having come to grips individually with the facts as they stand in the revealed Word?

We have an analogy in education. Students may memorize what the books say and what the teacher tells them in chemistry, biology, English, or whatever—but they do not really become learners unless they dig for themselves and do for themselves. How do we manage to kill the curiosity and the zeal to know which children have from home before they come to school? Are we not tempted to give them the generalizations, the conclusions, the confessions, the creeds, the intellectualizations of others also in the Church? A few hardy souls dig for themselves and they keep the teacher up front jittery with their questions and understanding and answers. Is it not with your parishioners who ask questions that you feel that there is really Christianity astir? When active minds whet one upon the other, there is learning going on, also strengthening, stablishing, and settling. I got much of my most useful theology from two brilliant women in a parish one time who sent me home every time I called with more questions to study than I picked up anywhere else. One of them used to read Luther when she had to stay home alone evenings; she felt so safe then, she said.

It will hardly do just to sit back and wish for more Aquilas and Priscillas in the churches. It were better to ask if we have fallen into some practices that are common to those who have inherited a good confession. Have we fallen into satisfaction that we have Abrahams as our fathers, forgetting that people have to wrestle as did Jacob on the banks of the Jabbok to keep the faith and to grow in it? Joseph didn't coast into the kingdom, and it wasn't exactly a picnic for Paul. Wasn't Luther so excited about the faith because he had to dig it out for himself? The way to heaven isn't by the comforts of a Pullman coach. Billy Sunday used to say that if you think so, you had better not be surprised if you find yourself in the dead of night on a siding with a hot-box! We wonder whence we can get back the Spirit. The best way I have found to get people interested and sparked into committed devotion to our cause is by original study of the bare Bible; and if testimonies are in order, I want to say that I have tried it and found it to work.

We firmly believe that talking about these things can be a catharsis for ourselves. We would like to add the suggestion that in our orthodox Church we are tempted to make certain wrong reactions. We should be glad that we are required at times to restate our faith in meekness and in fear. There are seven remarkable confessions of faith in Christ recorded in the New Testament, and more. Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Nathaniel, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). The woman of Samaria: "... a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). Peter: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). Martha: "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27). Thomas: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The Ethiopian eunuch: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Suppose each congregation had to declare its faith from time to time! Suppose it had to write its own creed, say, every ten years! There would be more merit to that than in having one delegate represent some twenty churches and vote on the *Common Confession*. Do we react with our own confession when questions of faith are asked? That would make us sweat, but there might be some merit in that method of making known what we believe.

Perhaps it is not an idle dream. For it is a temptation of the orthodox to think that orthodoxy is accepted by a vote. We ought to do more work at the grass-roots. We are tempted to look upon the Church as a Church of the clergy, to find our faith confessed by "utter purity" there. The orthodox faith must dwell in the hearts of Christians; they should require that the message of their shepherds be the true voice.

Writing of the decadent period in Germany, Hurst says in his *History of Rationalism*, page 84: "It was very evident that the Lutheran Church would require a long period of self-purification, if indeed she could achieve it at all. The shorter and more effectual way would be to operate *individually* upon the popular mind. And does not the entire history of the Church prove that reform has originated from no concerted action of the body needing reformation, but from the solemn conviction and persevering efforts of some single mind, which, working first alone, has afterward won to its assistance many others?" (84-5) Then he quotes the opponents: "But we would rather see the whole matter done in a perfectly systematic and legitimate way" (85). Make your own application to our times.

The matter of method is well put in Brubacher's *A History of the Problems of Education*:

Ever since the social culture had been reduced to written symbols and education had taken the social short cut of vicarious learning through the written or printed word rather than through direct experience, one of the most persistent aberrations of education had been that the oncoming generation had often memorized the literary form of their social culture without always comprehending its actual meaning. Of this difficulty reformers of nearly every century had been aware. Yet, though many had urged that comprehension and memorization go hand in hand, little or nothing had been done to mark out the steps in facilitating understanding. Few teachers realized, as Pestalozzi so clearly did, that "When a third person, to whom the matter is clear, puts words into my mouth with which he makes it clear to *people in his own condition*, it is not on that account clear to me, but it is and will remain his clear thing, not mine, inasmuch as the words of another cannot be for me what they are to him—the exact expression of his own idea, which is to him perfectly clear."

The only way to correct this misunderstanding between teacher and pupil, according to Pestalozzi, was for the teacher to commence with sense impressions of the object of the lesson. Only after time for these impressions to take effect had elapsed should the teacher proceed to the naming of the object. Once named, the object could be studied as to its form; that is, its various qualities could be discussed and compared.... In this way language and observation or experience are always so closely linked that education should henceforth be well on its way to eliminating forever rote memory without comprehension.

Obviously, from the foregoing, activity of the pupil is an essential part of learning. Without activity he can hardly get lively sense impressions. It will behoove the teacher, therefore, not to develop the lesson in the spirit of dogmatic exposition. On the contrary, he will conduct the lesson as to encourage the pupil to exert his own powers. Teaching, instead of creating vicarious experience for pupils, will have to create opportunities for firsthand experience itself. For this same reason Pestalozzi early abandoned emulation as a way of motivating learning. He held that the child should learn to feel pleasure in exercising his own powers for the discovery of truth rather than in comparing himself with others.

Pestalozzi's lay public did not always see eye to eye with him on his activity program. While he was trying to develop children's potentialities by an exercise of their capacities, the public was anxious about how well the children knew their ABC's. While he was interested in how children were learning to think, feel, and act, they are inquisitive about what the children knew of their catechism. (Brubacher 208-209)

It is a temptation of the orthodox, who have well-defined and well-stated truth in their hands, to transport people to their intellectual destination; we would do better to help them arrive on their own. We make it easy for them to assent to the truth which we point out; thereafter it is easy for them to go to sleep as they hear us repeat it—every day the clock makes you not hear its ticking, but it is ticking off the time truthfully all the while; you don't even pay attention to its efforts until something goes wrong. But religion that doesn't stir us until something goes wrong with its even hum and working is pretty insipid stuff. Only let us grant that in the orthodox communions we have over the centuries been tempted to go to sleep. We will be thankful, then, for anything that stirs us to see how we are doing.

The mistake is to regret that we are being stirred. Now the Lord is not commiserating when His Apostle Paul together with Barnabas assure us that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). His apostles are there stating a principle by which the Church grows. Wheat simply is not produced in a field that is not plowed and where the grain is not cut down from time to time. "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19). We are sad when sickness and a fever agitates the body; but let us be glad that there is life enough left to make a fight for life. Without Arius, who knows how soon the Church would have spoken clearly about the deity of Christ? Renan's *Vie de Jesus* and Strauss' *Leben Jesu* were nasty things, worse even than the more recent "quests of the historical Jesus," but if they have reminded us not to neglect Jesus as our Brother, they have done the Church a service. Grisar brought out a scandalous life of Luther, with the result that Koestlin and many others produced their monumental studies, several of them definitive. Exercise is the growth of a muscle, and heresy brings forth the truth, even as Toynbee insists that challenge brings forth a civilization. Let us not be tempted to whimper when a stir in the Church sends us back to our books. Recently I was told that a certain preacher didn't know that there is a doctrine of election. And a young minister came to me once for assurance that he did right in not praying with a Presbyterian woman in the hospital because his synod was against unionism, wasn't it. Anything that stirs us to stick with the right tools is a blessing in disguise. The pastor who recommended starting adult classes with Genesis 1 was on the right track. Genesis goes right down the groove of realities.

We will avoid the dangers that beset the orthodox if, when we cross the sure bridge of salvation over the chasm of death, we still cling to it firmly with a fear of falling. The bridge is firm, but we dare not wax fat and careless, kicking up our heels as Jeshurun of old (Deut. 32:15). If any is afraid, let him be assured; if any is assured, let him be afraid that he fall. If we are tempted too much to lean on the formulations of our heads, let us be reminded of the place the Word puts upon the heart; if the heart leads us astray, as it surely can, let it learn to take correction from the head. The temptation to breathe controversy needs to be corrected; the tendency to gush "sweetness and light" needs correction

likewise. Being battered from pillar to post is not bad when those obstacles are passages of the Word. Even as the act of walking is a continued prevention of falling, so our walk unto the land of eternal day is by constant watchfulness against the errors that beset us.

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The Kingdom of God **John Schaller**

* The conclusion of the series "The Kingdom of God" had originally appeared in the *Journal's* second volume as two installments printed in February and April of 1962 (2:1, pp. 13-26, and 2:2, pp. 1-13). The translation done by Egbert Schaller is given here as one reprint. Original use of underlining has been retained and original footnotes have been converted to endnotes.¹ Words in brackets have been added by the editor. Unless indicated otherwise, Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

In foregoing portions of this study we demonstrated the fact that the concept "kingdom" in its combinations of "kingdom of God," "kingdom of Christ," "kingdom of heaven" primarily and essentially designates the kingly ruling of God per se, that is, the continuous activity of God whereby He attains the objectives which He has fixed. Our investigation further revealed that Holy Scripture, in keeping with its character as a revelation of the Gospel, never directly refers to the pure exercise of divine omnipotence—for example, God's perfect and constant control of all laws of nature as well as of all external affairs of men and angels—as His "kingdom," although certainly all of that, too, is included in God's βασιλεία. Rather, the term "kingdom of God" in Scripture designates that activity of God wherein He establishes the Gospel in the world and by means thereof carries out His plan for the salvation of His elect and the establishment, maintenance, and glorification of His Church.

All that men with their earthy sense of values regard as the chief substance of world-governance, namely, the invariable, regulated operation of the forces of nature, the constant, sometimes gradual and often catastrophic changes which occur in the circumstances of individuals and of nations, in brief, all that the unbelieving world considers pertinent when it presents the picture of natural and world history is indeed, as Scripture comfortingly assures the Christian, subject to the absolute sovereignty of God. But the Scripture considers all this magnificent, divine administration to be so second-rate in comparison with the activity of God through the Gospel and for the sake of the Gospel that the designations under consideration are reserved for this latter phase of divine activity. Whoever therefore desires to understand the sayings of Scripture concerning the kingdom of God may never lose sight of this true and primary meaning of the term.

Inasmuch, however, as Scripture undeniably employs the expression "kingdom" also in a metonymic sense, even our sketchy study of the subject would be inadequate without a review of this derivative manner of expression. In conformity with the outline proposed in an earlier installment

(*Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 16-17), we are at this point to consider the many passages in which the “kingdom” is described as a place to which people may come, or a possession to which they may attain. To this we are obliged, by way of dissent from the Romanizing and Calvinistic viewpoints, to add the evidence which indicates that the concept “kingdom” never embraces anything purely material or external, but ever only the spiritual gifts mediated by the Gospel.

Before proceeding, we again affirm the fact that Scripture knows nothing of that metonymy so current among us, by which we refer to the creatures to whom God ministers in a special manner as King, and thus specifically to the Church on earth, as His kingdom. No one may say that such a metonymy is not justifiable; it comes to mind readily and so definitely expresses a correct idea that there is little ground for an objection to its use in the casual speech of the Church. But it is not proper to transport this metonymy into the Scripture and let it determine the meaning of this or that passage. It is not indigenous to Scripture. The few passages which in my estimation might conceivably be adduced in evidence with some show of right against such a claim are Exodus 19:6; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; and perhaps 1 Peter 2:9. The New Testament texts here listed obviously have reference to the passage from Exodus; and a comparative study brings us to the correct interpretation. God says through Moses: “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests (מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים).” The Revelation says: “He hath made us a kingdom, priests unto God and his Father; thou hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall be kings upon earth.”² Peter says: “Ye are a royal priesthood.” When one reads these expressions, which unquestionably refer to the same matter, in immediate context with each other, it would be difficult to arrive at the conclusion that with “kingdom” Moses had in mind “subjects of the king.” Rather is it manifest that the priesthood is regarded as the chief characteristic of the persons named, the stipulation being added that these also rank as kings and perform kingly work. God describes these persons whom He made priests as genuine “associates in the kingdom,” not in the sense of subjects, but as co-regents who participate in His regal rule. This might impress us as a rather strong hyperbole, but only if in human fashion we have in mind primarily, or perhaps exclusively, God’s administration of the universe. If, on the other hand, we keep in mind that in the language of Scripture the kingdom of God is His ruling through the Gospel, and that His spiritual priests are the very ones who have been entrusted with the proclamation of the Gospel on earth, the impression of an hyperbole is dissipated. God has indeed so ordered His kingly Gospel-administration on earth that it takes place through the ministry of His Church!

It would be even less justifiable to find in Matthew 13:41 an instance of the metonymy: kingdom of God = Church, although this passage is repeatedly employed in that sense. By its context (“the field is the world”) one would be forced into the inconsistency of regarding the world as kingdom of Christ or at best to externalize the concept “Church” to the point where it includes also “all things that offend and them which do iniquity.” In this instance, also, the proper perspective is immediately gained if we recognize the “kingdom of the Son of man” as His reign through the Gospel. For the people described as tares the time period will run out in which the Son of man as Savior seeks to influence and rule over them by means of His Gospel. Thereupon they leave His “kingdom”; their time of grace is over.

But let us proceed to a study of those statements of Scripture in which the expression “kingdom” is actually employed metonymically. Let us begin by assembling the passages in which the kingdom is described as a place to which men may come. Thus of the kingdom of heaven: The least (or the greatest) in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:1); to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23); to sit in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:11); the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19); “ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men” (Matt. 23:13). Further, the kingdom of God: “The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (Matt. 21:31); “to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye” (Mark 9:47); “how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23-25; Luke 18:24-25); the least in the kingdom of God (Luke 7:28); “ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in

the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come ... and sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28-29); "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15); "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22); "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12); "that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God" (2 Thess. 1:5). Of the kingdom of Christ: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42); "that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30); "hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5); "who hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13); "the Lord will deliver me ... and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18); "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior" (2 Pet. 1:11).

For our purposes it is not necessary to examine each and everyone of these statements in their immediate context. The discussion of a selection from their number will suffice to demonstrate the correctness and applicability of our understanding of the terminology under consideration. As a unique example we turn first to the word of the malefactor (Luke 23:42), which the Lord acknowledged as perfectly correct in concept and expression. After his suffering, then, Jesus came into His kingdom. When this is said of Him, it naturally means something entirely other than when we say of ordinary men that they enter the kingdom of God—not alone because it is His kingdom into which He comes and which properly belongs to Him, but primarily because it is here only the verb that creates the impression that we might be confronted with a metonymy. Perhaps the malefactor actually thus visualized the procedure, as though Jesus would be transported from the locale of His suffering to another place, just as we ourselves readily see the removal of the Lord from His State of Humiliation to the State of Exaltation in glory as a process involving space and locality. It is more probable, however, that as a Jew he intended the expression "kingdom" in the sense that was current among His people; and doubtless we correctly understand his saying when we see it as a direct reference to God's kingly ruling. Accordingly it is wholly responsive to the intent of the petitioner if we thus paraphrase his words: Remember me when after Thy suffering and death Thou enterest upon Thy kingly-divine rule. In faith he had laid hold upon the truth that the Crucified One possessed divine omnipotence which He would presently and fully employ. In this light the appearance of a metonymy in this passage vanishes entirely; "to enter into His kingdom" means, for Jesus, the assumption of His divine rule-activity.

But what is the meaning of passages which ascribe to ordinary people an act of entering into or sitting in God's kingdom? Manifestly these expressions make reference to a change that occurs relative to the sinner in question. But no spatial change can be meant, for in most of the instances under consideration the persons remain localized in exactly the same circumstances in which they had existed previously; and where a change of place does seem to be involved, a careful investigation reveals that the change is not an essential feature of the entering into the kingdom of God. This alone removes from such passages every factor that might seem to justify their use in application, for example, to the external participation in Christian worship or the act of accepting membership in a Christian congregation. In God's design such an act may well, as *actus paedagogicus*, physically bring a person nearer the kingdom of God, in that he is being exposed to the preaching of the Gospel; but no man enters the kingdom of God purely through such an external, spatial coming into proximity. Indeed, *localiter* he may be standing so near the kingdom of God that others may take him to be "great in the kingdom of God," whereas he may nevertheless be utterly far from it.

The Lord Himself plainly suggests this when He says of the rich that they shall hardly, that is, with great difficulty, enter the kingdom of God. This thought is so emphatically presented that the disciples were entirely justified in gaining the impression that it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God and be saved. Yet everyone knows that it is not at all impossible for wealthy people to belong externally to the assembly of confession [confessing] Christians and also that now and then, in the confessing group, someone emerges from a state of great physical poverty and attains to a

considerable degree of prosperity without thereby being separated from the ranks of church members. The issue in such passages, therefore, is not an actual change of location. It must further be pointed out that in some of these passages the kingdom of God is described as a place to which the respective subjects will attain only in the future (preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom; through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God), while in others the kingdom is a place in which the believers are already sitting with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who, after all, have long since departed this temporal life and are no longer subject to the limitations of space as we know them. The entering into the kingdom of God and the being therein, therefore, lies wholly outside the physical, bodily, spatial domain and deals with space, time, and matter only in the sense that we who dwell on earth cannot exist other than in a spatial, temporal, and material manner.

For the understanding of our metonymy the comparative study of our passages has not only provided us with the fact that not everyone who comes under the influence of the Gospel has therefore already entered the kingdom of God—although “kingdom of God” essentially denotes God’s kingly activity through the Gospel; we also come to realize that the entering into the kingdom of God does not specifically signify the process by which the sinner becomes a child of God. To enter into the kingdom of God does not mean to be converted or regenerated. Let no one misunderstand this as saying that conversion and regeneration have nothing to do with the entering into the kingdom of God. For when Jesus Himself declares: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” [and] “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” and when Paul asserts that God has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, we are thereby undeniably told that only those have entered the kingdom of God who by means of regeneration live in a new, spiritual life. On the other hand, in that very conversation with Nicodemus the Lord distinguishes between the seeing of the kingdom of God, the being therein, and regeneration itself, as between cause and effect. He who is regenerated is thereby and for that reason in God’s kingdom. The creative act by which God transports a sinner out of death into life must have preceded the state of his being in the kingdom in the sense of the passage here under consideration. Add to this the fact that the Lord occasionally describes the being in the kingdom of God in terms of a metaphor representing a festive meal: eating and drinking in His kingdom, eating bread in the kingdom of God. We are at this point not concerned with the actual sense of this metaphor; for the understanding of our metonymy involving space we are simply pointing out that with the imagery chosen by Him He is defining the being in the kingdom of God as a conscious state of enjoyment. The believer is not only new-born; he is also aware that he has become God’s child. He not only possesses all the treasures which Christ won, but consciously revels in the possession of them. “We know that we have passed from death unto life”; “I know whom I have believed.”

Thus we realize that the metonymy of which we speak is the *metonymia causae pro effectu*. The kingdom of God, the kingly ruling through the Gospel, is the actual cause. By virtue of this kingly activity a man is not only regenerated but is made aware of his transplantation under the Gospel. Through the Gospel God constantly works in His believers the certainty of faith, the consciously happy (festive meal!) enjoyment of the riches which God gives His people. To be in God’s kingdom, therefore, means nothing else than this: That through God’s gracious ruling one knows that one is under this rule of Grace. In keeping with God’s purpose, that is the normal state of those who have entered His kingdom; they know and by faith sense that they dwell under the gracious βασιλεία of God and Christ. This knowing and sensing is created by the Gospel and is dependent upon it. The hours of temptation during which a Christian seems to lose such awareness do not arise from the activity of God in the Gospel but invariably from this, that the Christian transfers his attention from the Gospel to himself and his personal merits—in other words, that he begins to withdraw from the kingdom of God.

We shall now apply this understanding of the matter to a number of the previously cited Scripture references. In so doing, we must observe that the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken as a specific reference to the next world with its full salvation, but as a synonym, for kingdom of God denotes

the gracious activity of the heavenly King through His Gospel. Christ says: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). It will not do to assume that this statement parallels that other rather mysterious remark about the least in the kingdom of heaven who is nevertheless greater than John (Matt. 11:11). The Lord in all likelihood meant Himself when speaking of the least in the latter passage; but this probability does not justify us in importing into the former passage the thought that Jesus is the One who teaches and fulfills the Law perfectly. In Matthew 11:11 Jesus is presented as the least because of the profound humiliation which He willingly assumed; in the former passage [Matt. 5:19] Jesus calls him the least who breaks and rejects but one commandment.

But we have recognized that they are "in the kingdom of heaven" who are aware of their position under the active influence of the Gospel. Their judgment is the prevailing point of view "in the kingdom of heaven." In other words, the teaching of Jesus is this: He that is under the Gospel influence can esteem no man highly who does violence to a single commandment of God. The spirit of the Gospel makes a profound regard for all words and commandments of God self-evident to those who are "in the kingdom of heaven." Governed by the power of the Gospel, therefore, they entertain a deep respect for those who live according to God's commandments and ratify these commandments as fully normative for all children of God. Indeed, the Lord at once presents the concrete application: "Except your righteousness shall exceed," etc. There is a tendency to interpret the "better righteousness" as a reference to the imputed righteousness of Christ, perhaps because one may involuntarily be reading: "...enter into heaven." But the Lord is speaking of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of His activity through the Gospel; and one "enters the kingdom of heaven" by being consciously made subject to the power of the Gospel. He is therefore here not discoursing on the process by which a sinner is saved from damnation, but is describing the state of those who have been saved. As long as one deals with the divine Law as the Pharisees taught it, that is evidence of the fact that one is not yet under the active operation of the Gospel. He who is to enter the kingdom of heaven must therefore experience a conversion by virtue of which he subsequently assumes an attitude toward the divine laws and their fulfillment that differs radically from the position of the Pharisees, the arch-representatives of natural man.

How precisely this view corresponds to that which was in the Lord's mind is revealed by the pericope Matthew 18:1-4 (Mark 9:33-37: Luke 9:46-48). There was a dispute among the disciples on the subject of which one of them should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Here, too, the Lord does not speak of the how of man's conversion; he discloses nothing of the process of conversion, but of its immediate consequence, namely, that then the person is in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever reaches for rank and honors in the kingdom of heaven and desires to be preferred above others is not yet therein. In the kingdom of heaven, under the Gospel rule of God, such thoughts simply do not arise. Whoever is under the sway of the Gospel rejoices in it as a child which is well aware of its weakness and inadequacy and therefore lays no claim to "greatness." "Greatness" in the kingdom of heaven consists in this, that one is happy in a child-like way to be under the regency of the Word of Grace, and the "greatest" of such is the one least conscious of his greatness, like a child. We therefore find also here, as everywhere in Scripture, the rejection of all trust and every pride in personal accomplishment. Through such trust and pride awareness of being in the kingdom is destroyed. At this point there comes to mind at once, then, that observation concerning the publicans and harlots who go into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous Pharisees—not because their achievements please God more than those of the

conceited, but because conceit, the confidence in personal strength and merit, excludes a joyful awareness of the Grace bestowed, while to the penitent just this awareness is a cause for rejoicing.

Another obstacle—one which indeed in the last analysis also has its roots in self-satisfaction and self-righteousness—is mentioned by the Lord when He speaks of the rich who shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. Here the obstacle assumes the shape of love of money or a reliance upon material possessions. In the context of this reference the rich is not the wealthy man whose possessions are above the prevailing average (after all, Abraham was such an one!) but the man of any status who allows his thinking and emotions to be governed by earthly possessions, Mammon, and deceitful riches. Whether his worth is reckoned in millions or by far lesser values is quite irrelevant here. Anyone who is motivated by what Scripture calls covetousness has as little inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God as harlots, adulterers, etc. His temperament cannot entertain that trusting confidence in the Grace of God by which alone a man attains to the joyful conviction that he is in the kingdom.

The “Keys of the kingdom of heaven” we have always understood to be the Gospel. Thus the statements of the Lord involving these are relevant to the point now under consideration, because the Keys are conceived of as the means of making the kingdom accessible as a place. Jesus gives to Peter and to His entire body of Christians the Gospel, by the ministrations of which sinners are brought into the kingdom of God. Not indeed in the sense that those entrusted with the Gospel can or should according to their whims or judgment authorize an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Where the Gospel is administered in accordance with Christ’s purpose, the Savior Himself is officiating with the intent of converting men to Himself and of awakening in them the faith-conviction of being under His rule. For him who has this conviction, the Gospel has become the Key to the kingdom. This divine truth, of course, also has a reverse side for him who despises it. If it is true that by His Gospel alone Jesus wills to place sinners under His rule of Grace, then the same Gospel automatically excludes from the kingdom of heaven those who will not submit to Him. The preaching of Grace assures everyone who hears it that God in Christ is truly reconciled to him; but by the same token it affirms that there is salvation in none other and that no man can find another deliverance.

We now proceed with the listing of those Scripture passages in which the kingdom is described as a possession of which a person may become a partaker. Thus we read of the kingdom of heaven: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10); “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12); “suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). We immediately recognize the latter passage as a parallel of Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16, where we read “kingdom of God” in place of “kingdom of heaven.” Other passages describing the kingdom of God as a possession: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein” (Mark 10:15, as also Luke 18:17); “blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20); negatively: “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9); “... that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50); “they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21); “no whoremonger ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5).

It is at once evident that this second metonymy invokes essentially the same concepts called forth by the metonymy of place. Here, too, the issue is not the manner in which men are placed into a proper relationship with the gracious rule of God in the Gospel; even less does it involve a physical, material possession. Rather, the nearest reference of all these passages is to the subjective ownership, the awareness in faith of the fact that in the Gospel one actually possesses the fullness of grace and love of God in Jesus Christ. The distinctive characteristic of this second metonymy lies in this, that by it our thoughts are involuntarily led to address themselves to the treasures which accrue to us under the gracious ruling of Christ. Wherever Jesus speaks of eating and drinking in his kingdom, he paints the

picture of a table laden with manifold refreshments that await our pleasure without charge. The imagery of an inheritance points to a possession of rich variety, a treasure-trove of many priceless items which we gladly enjoy again and again with deeply satisfying contemplation. He who has been led to an enjoyment of these precious gifts of the Gospel in the conviction of faith has the kingdom of heaven, possesses the kingdom of God as an acquired inheritance. Yet here, too, it will be profitable to submit some individual statements to a closer scrutiny.

Because of certain similarities the following two beatitudes shall be considered jointly: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10); “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). It will not be wholly superfluous again to point out that the Lord is not here speaking of the way by which souls are rescued from the corruption of sin, but is describing such who are already delivered. Here, as in all beatitudes, “blessed” does not mean saved, but is an exact translation of μακάριος.³ The persecuted and the poor do not enter the kingdom of heaven because of the persecution and the poverty, nor do they have a better claim than others to the kingdom of heaven because of the persecution and the poverty. Nor do the words of Jesus say this, and thus they do not conflict with the scriptural doctrine that there is nothing in man, of man, or in his external, earthly circumstances which can contribute to the effort of bringing him into a proper relationship with his God. Jesus affirms that those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and the poor of whom he speaks, are subjectively happy, because they possess the kingdom of God; he does not say that they shall at some indefinite future time attain to the possession of the kingdom.

We can here concern ourselves only briefly with the meaning of “righteousness” and “poor” as used in these passages. One may not simply affirm that “righteousness” in this context means “the imputed righteousness of Christ,” although it is to be granted that those who are so persecuted are such as have accepted this imputation. The Beatitudes actually and consistently describe something which the persons so addressed are, or suffer, or do; and thus righteousness will here be understood as a reference to the active righteousness of the believers as expressed in their lives. In the sense in which Jesus speaks, then, the situation is this, that they are being persecuted because of certain actions or conduct which, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, they recognize as righteous, approved of God. Persecution does not rob them of the blessed awareness that they stand under the gracious ruling activity of their Lord; no persecutor can lay hands upon this treasure-trove of their faith, for his attacks, after all, exert purely external force (cf. Acts 5: 41!). Rather, inasmuch as they are acting in the cause of faith by the power of the Gospel and in manifest accord with the Lord’s will, they recognize the persecution of the ungodly which assails them as additional evidence for the fact that they stand beneath the kingly sway of their Savior. The poor whom the Lord declares blessed are not such who lack some earthly possession or other, or control a lesser fortune than other people of comparable status. Poverty and riches in that sense are purely relative concepts. Jesus speaks of real poverty, absolute poverty, which renders a person literally “penniless.” He means that poverty which Paul paraphrases when he presents the Christians ideally as “having nothing” (2 Cor. 6:10) and “as though they possessed not” (1 Cor. 7:30), that is, such who have learned and are actually thus minded, that earthly possession of whatever sort is not essentially relevant to their true blessedness. This frame of mind is the opposite of covetousness by which the heart is slavishly chained to material goods. Whoever through God’s goodness is endowed with that “poverty”—and it is foreign to the natural heart—is accounted blessed by Jesus. Such people own the kingdom of God; for only he can take this stance over against earthly possession who truly lives under the ruling activity of the heavenly King and is conscious of his state of grace through faith. Any temporal loss may pain him too, yet “they that weep, as though they wept not” (1 Cor. 7:30).

The word concerning the little children whose “the kingdom of heaven is” (Matt. 19:14, Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16) does not signify that all little children without exception will be saved; but neither does it announce that the little ones of whom Jesus speaks, namely, those “who believe” in him, merely

hold title to a heavenly blessedness to which they shall perhaps attain only after many years. On the contrary, he specifically declares that the kingdom of heaven has become their possession. Only this interpretation corresponds with the supplementary observation: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Not every child receives the kingdom of God; certainly not those children who remain untouched by the Gospel, the single means of God's rule of grace. But the children who receive the kingdom of God through the Gospel (perhaps in Baptism) lay hold on it in the manner of children, with a simple faith which is not given to reflection, reasoning, and a desire to reduce everything to logical, dogmatic formulas. In this respect the faith of little children is urged upon us, the elder Christians, as an example; the more nearly we attain to the simplicity of a child's faith, the more surely we shall attain to the joyous awareness that we are securely fixed in the hand of our Lord who saves us.

Understanding that the kingdom of heaven can be described as a possession only metonymically, we are thereby also brought closer to a comprehension of that obscure statement: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). We continue to maintain that our Lord never conceived of the kingdom of heaven as being something externally tangible, and that in this passage also He speaks of an inward, spiritual seizure of possession. The time-reference supports this; for between the days of John and the date of Jesus' statement there is no mention of a visible presentation of the kingdom of Messiah, and yet the Lord affirms that during that period certain ones seized the kingdom of heaven for themselves forcibly. Since He is not speaking of the false, national messianic hopes, His words also cannot be construed as a criticism. They are to be related to that authoritative recognition which He conferred upon His forerunner John, whom He ranked with Moses and the prophets as a messenger of God and in certain respects wanted to have regarded more highly than they. The significance of this statement, then, will most likely be appreciated only when we see in it a description of the actual success of the preaching of John. Jesus observed that this preaching aroused a violent desire in some (He does not say, in many!) Jews to enter the gracious sphere of influence of the Messiah to whom John had pointed them. They practically compelled Jesus to take them into His care; and whoever thus laid siege to Him and importuned Him did not go away empty, but carried away as booty the assurance of his salvation, the possession of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus employed strong terminology, not to imply complaint against such importunity, but with a certain inner jubilation, although the press of those excited hearts oftentimes cost him exhausting physical effort (cf., for example, Mark 3:20-21; 5:24-30). May we not compare this with the case of a mother who might scold her noisy brood of little ones because of their impetuous demands upon her attention, but who actually would not want to have it any other way? And as such children gleefully carry off like loot the gifts which the mother cheerfully distributes, so did Jesus with great joy observe among the people those souls who with a violent hand of faith grasped and took unto themselves the salvation which He so gladly proffered.

We shall now briefly look at the passages in which the negative thought finds expression that some do not acquire the kingdom of God as their inheritance or possession. The Holy Spirit pronounces this judgment upon all who live in manifest works of the flesh (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). The future tense ("shall not inherit") ought not induce us to suppose that the object of the verb represents the heavenly possession, as though the thought were that for such persons the time of grace has ended and the possibility of deliverance is past and gone. Scripture indeed teaches plainly that he who remains captive in such works of the flesh to his last hour will be eternally lost; but in the passages mentioned this is not the principal issue. That is apparent not only from the passage in Ephesians where Paul in a unique presentation employs the present tense, but especially in the fact that in 1 Corinthians 6:11 he immediately adds: "And such were some of you: but ye are...justified..." etc. This his statement about the works of the flesh visualizes basically the same situation described by Jesus in His remark about the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is forgiveness neither in this world nor in the next. Jesus too

does not declare that persons lying in that sin cannot be converted and ultimately saved; but He assures us that they will vainly seek pardon if they disdainfully reject the one forgiveness that is offered by the Holy Ghost in the Gospel. He who lives in coarse, manifest works of the flesh cannot possibly have a part in the kingdom of God with his heart or possess it in faith as his inheritance. Devoid of all metaphorical coloring is our standard expression of this thought: Saving faith cannot exist side by side with such sins. For the conscious possession of the kingdom of heaven, the awareness of living under the gracious rule of the Savior, is attained only through the genuine faith of the heart; therefore faithless sinners whose unbelief becomes manifest through their public conduct have no share in this priceless heritage.

The closing portion of our treatise shall be devoted to a development of evidence for the fact that with the metonymic use of the expressions which we are considering, Holy Scripture never points to external, material circumstances, goods or treasures, but ever and only to those gifts which are mediated by the Gospel. In other words: In the manner of speaking employed by Holy Scripture, the external circumstances within which we have our being here on earth are never involved in the concept kingdom of God; not family life, not life as citizens under government, not even the external fellowship association which God's children establish among themselves according to certain forms. The natural endowments of body and soul are not involved; neither the subjective ones which are inherent in the physical organs and in the attributes of the soul, nor the objective ones, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Certainly all of these, too, are in every sense under God's ruling activity and the supplying of such things belongs to the limitless rule exercised by Jesus Christ, as Scripture abundantly testifies; and if we occasionally include all of them in speaking of God's kingdom, of His βασιλεία, we are not thereby contradicting Scripture. But for God, who regards His Savior-fame as His glory supreme which He will share with no other, those grand, immeasurable demonstrations of His power are, humanly speaking, to be accounted of secondary importance, in a sense quite self-understood, and in grandeur far inferior to the majesty of his plan of salvation and its execution by means of the Gospel—so inferior, indeed, that only upon the latter does He in His Scripture confer that name of distinction, calling it His kingdom, and that in His own manner of speaking possession of this kingdom is acquired only with those treasures which the Gospel offers and conveys.

We may be brief here; for if God's kingdom comes alone through the Gospel, then only those things are included in its possession which the Gospel confers: righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, in general the inner conversion of man's heart unto true fear, love, and trust in God, etc. It should suffice here to demonstrate the correctness of this view by means of the lone statement made by Jesus before Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world..." (John 18:36-37). His kingdom, His kingly rule, does not have its origin in earthly, external conditions ("is not from hence") and therefore is not "of this world," has nothing to do with this world as such, does not concern itself with cosmic, that is, physical, worldly, external matters. Thus Pilate was immediately given assurance that the rule of the Lord would not enter into conflict with the activity of the temporal government. We note that Jesus could at the same time with divine authority point out to Pilate that human authority may not exercise unlimited dominion ("Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John 19:11); and we know that implicit herein lay the claim that in the matter at hand Jesus Himself would speak the deciding word, for He controls also all external matters. But He does not call that His kingdom; this expression He reserves as designation for His activity through the truth, that is, by the Gospel. By means of witness to the Truth, by the preaching of the Gospel, He administers His kingly office; by this Truth He works in men what He wills to work. Now He continues: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice." That is to say: He who has been won by this Truth (or: whosoever by means of the Gospel has come to faith in Me) heareth My voice, is under My control, is governed by the Gospel, is in My kingdom. Not only the metonymy of place, but the metonymy of possession thus finds a conclusive interpretation; he receives the kingdom of God as a gift who receives the Gospel within himself, that is, who in the pregnant sense of Christ's word "hears" acquires it for himself as a spiritual possession. All

things cosmic are excluded here, everything for which the earthly-minded compete and wage bloody war. No outward material possession, no external, cosmic circumstances can alter the fact that those who hear the voice of Jesus possess His kingdom and live in it under Him. With his disdainful “What is truth?” Pilate served notice that while he indeed had no understanding whatever of the Truth of which Jesus spoke, he did realize that Christ’s kingdom dealt only with spiritual and not with physical, material matters and conditions that are the sole concern of secular government.

A few references to certain antitheses which confront us here will reveal how far-reaching is the correct practical application of the understanding outlined above. The venerable Ad. [Andreas] Osiander rightly says of that statement of Jesus that in and of itself it suffices as refutation of the claims of the Roman Church, which insists that the kingdom of Jesus Christ and of God is represented by its external organization. This claim is part and parcel of the structure of the true, real Antichrist. He has not only assumed the authority of the βασιλεία of Christ to rule the consciences; he has not only blasphemed, rejected, and perverted into its own antithesis the Gospel, the means by which Christ administers His kingdom; he also insists with perfect consistency that his external rule is the true kingdom of God, and that only those who recognize him as spiritual dictator are in God’s kingdom. With the Antichrist external membership by means of the observance of external rules and statutes, external “morality” without an internal change of heart replaces that which Christ describes as the genuine form of membership in His kingdom. The entire concept of God’s kingdom is there externalized; not one iota of its fundamental principles as defined by Scripture remains in the Roman system. Even there, of course, Christ rules in the midst of His enemies. The liturgy of the Roman church contains the Gospel by which Christ exercises His kingdom; it remains likewise in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Thus we may assume that even within the Roman communion many a soul lives in the kingdom of God and possesses it. But the Roman church as such, as a system, as an external structure stands outside this kingdom and is indeed the expressed enemy of the true rule of Christ.

But with its system the Roman church has merely capitalized upon a universal trait of human nature, and exploits it. By nature every human being tends in the same direction. That Jesus alone effects and creates everything, that the kingdom truly belongs only to Him and is administered by Him, that under this rule man can only receive and can never contribute—this truth is so foreign to natural man that even those Christians are few in number who are able to appreciate it in its fullness and to bring it to bear with total penetration upon their religious views.

For this reason even our Lutheran church manifests numerous signs of the trend toward externalization of the kingdom of God, wherein the activity of man is supposed to be of some consequence. In our enlightenment we know, of course, that the kingdom of God is being built only when through the Gospel hearts are drawn to Him and placed under His regime. Yet withal it comes to pass that we quite inadvertently describe the outward increase of our congregations, their organization and congregational activity, as a building of the kingdom of God. Theoretically we are well acquainted with the proposition that a local congregation is not as such, that is, as a visibly integrated communion, a part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and that even all Christian communions in the world put together, insofar as they may be numbered and recognized, do not comprise the kingdom of Christ; in other words, theoretically we understand that Christ’s kingdom is invisible, a spiritual influence in hearts over which we have no control whatever. Yet again and again we speak of a visible church and try to determine membership in the kingdom of God by all manner of external marks, for example, by participation in the public worship and the Sacraments, by formal membership in a locally recognizable congregation, by the generosity and, in general, the upright conversation of the church members. In short, by inadvertence we make of the kingdom of God an external, cosmic thing determined by legalistic forms, whereas we ought steadfastly to abide in the truth that Jesus’ kingdom is present where His Gospel is preached because everywhere and always by the Gospel alone He rules the hearts of men. In this matter, too, we are constantly encumbered by the nature of the flesh that clings to us, which

prompts us, if only surreptitiously, to ascribe significance to human, external doings in cooperation with the divine activity. We shall not refrain from making the observation that the current drive toward amalgamation of all Lutheran church bodies into one external fellowship of largest possible size, as well as all distasteful boasting about the achievements of our denomination, are products of the fleshly weakness to which we have referred. In our own circles, fortunately, it is still true that we reject such cosmic representations of Christ's kingdom as soon as we recognize their true nature; and thus this tendency of human weakness is repeatedly counteracted by a firm reaffirmation of the truth that the kingdom of God comes to us in the Gospel alone.

Since the doctrine of the Reformed bodies does not coincide with what Scripture teaches of the power of the Gospel, they have in consequence been unable to resist the trend toward the externalization of the concept kingdom of God. The entire doctrinal system of extreme Calvinism is oriented in the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God, to such degree that by logical consequence God must be held responsible for the existence of sin and regarded as actual originator of all individual sins. Because this system does not allow the Gospel to be the all-powerful means of God's rule in His kingdom, but considers it to be a mere proclamation of divine truths which, however, lack the power of exerting a vivifying influence upon the human heart without a separate operation of the Holy Spirit, the Calvinist, when he undertakes to discuss the kingdom of God, places all activity of God in the universe into one category. The ruling activity by the Law and the ruling activity through the Gospel intermingle in his thinking. Consequently he automatically imports the concept kingdom of God into all earthly relationships and so utterly externalizes it that he finds it possible to speak of the laws of this kingdom, of conditions for reception into this kingdom, and even of the establishment of a universal kingdom of God on earth. According to this view those people possess the kingdom of God who finally succeed in compelling all other persons to accept the restraint of certain "moral" zones which are then very arbitrarily marked.

This Calvinistic conception has permeated all Reformed denominations and outside of the confessional Lutheran church has become dominant in our country. The kingdom of God is for them an external realm which can be established and maintained by force. So it is reported that in these disturbed days the pulpits of the sects almost universally proclaim that our entrance into the war [World War I] was a matter of religious necessity, in order that the cause of the kingdom of God might be defended against its foes and led to victory. Through this religious misapprehension, which with its legalistic spirit so readily arouses hearts to fanaticism, our freedom of religion is at this moment being threatened more seriously than by any danger which might confront our nation and land from extraneous sources. Indeed, this confusion of concepts prevents our people from taking to heart the fearful preachment of repentance pronounced by the war, so that they might humble themselves before Almighty God; instead, a pharisaical concept plainly manifests itself, as though we Americans were better people than our present enemies. Thus the false preachment concerning the kingdom of God helps to bring to pass, here as in all countries participating in the war, a fulfillment of the dreadful word: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction" (Jer. 5:3).

May God protect us against this commingling of spiritual and purely materialistic concepts with reference to His kingdom, lest we come to mistrust His promise and make room for some type of chiliastic hope which does not rest upon His Word. The coarse form of chiliasm, which expects a millennium wherein God's people will be blest with every imaginable kind of earthly enjoyments, has claimed many adherents in our nation. Far larger, however, is the number of those who by means of a synthesis of Biblical thoughts and the most up-to-date evolutionism have composed for themselves a fanciful picture of the future, supposing that a day will dawn in which man will at long last have hoisted himself out of the morass of selfishness and have brought it to pass that universal charity, righteousness, and peace actually reign on earth. By this time they have somewhat recovered from the

consternation occasioned by the outbreak of this world war; they concede that civilized humanity had, after all, not yet progressed as far as they had imagined; but they regard the war as a final flare-up of the battle of all against all and confidently expect the establishment of a peace which shall eternally endure. In their view, that would be a moral victory. While it does indeed appear to be an impossible task to stem the powerful current of those false notions, we who by God's grace have a better understanding of the Gospel of His kingdom cannot be excused from the obligation of combating such universal confusion of concepts with our testimony. If it please God, such witnessing shall not be in vain; in any event, there is no means other than the Gospel for coming to grips with the error.

In conclusion let us not fail to take note of the great comfort which we derive from our understanding of the truth. After a long period of time during which, in our land of freedom, we were privileged to develop our church system in peace, the Lutheran church has now become an *ecclesia pressa* almost overnight. We need not explore the course of events which led to this situation; it will suffice simply to say that we are experiencing difficulties and have reason to fear that despite its blatant violation of the bill of rights and, indeed, of every consideration of equity, the oppression may yet assume proportions even more disagreeable. Because we must obey God rather than men, hostile fanaticism could conceivably bring it to pass that our church life would be shattered and its external forms destroyed. Would the Lutheran church then have ceased to exist? According to the Calvinistic view which regards Lutheranism as nothing more than an historical concept, a name for an outward mode of existence, the question would have to be answered in the affirmative. But if we are agreed that Lutheranism in its essence constitutes possession and confession of the Gospel of Christ, a spiritual treasure immune to purely fortuitous external events, and if we hold that those Lutherans who with all their heart believe the Gospel are in the kingdom of God and possess this kingdom, that we therefore, as genuine Lutherans, are under the gracious regency of the Savior, then, while persecution may sadden us and the loss of certain beloved, traditional external forms cause us sorrow, we shall in joyful confidence abide in the assurance that the goods and treasure which we as Lutherans possess in the kingdom of Christ and of God will remain untouched by outward vicissitudes. No earthly foe and no devil can touch our real possession of faith. Thus Luther saw it, and therefore sang:

And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child and wife—
Let these all be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth!

May God preserve us in this faith and thus in His kingdom. Amen.

Endnotes

¹ On page 26 of Issue 1 in Volume 2 (Feb. 1962) the following footnote appeared as a reminder to the reader: "For the sake of its contribution toward an understanding in the discussion in Lutheran circles relating to the doctrine of the Church, we are offering this translation of an article written by the late Prof. John Schaller. The original may be found in the *Quartalschrift*, Vol. 15, Nos. 2-3."

² [It seems that the author provided his own translation at this point; note especially the choice of "kingdom" rather than "kings" in apparent recognition of the Greek word used, βασιλείαν. The rest of this endnote is the original footnote.] Following another reading, Luther translates the first passage: "kings and priests before God and His Father." The A. V. here says: "He hath made us kings and priests"; the R. V.: "he hath made us to be a kingdom, to be priests" etc. In the second passage, also, Luther and the A. V. follow a variant reading: "Thou hast made us unto God kings and priests and we shall be kings upon earth." The English Revision, however: "Thou madest them to be unto God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth."

³ It represents the same concept expressed by the Hebrew **יְשׁוּעָה**—e.g., in Psalm 1:1. In the English Bible **σωτηρία** and **μακάριος** are carefully distinguished: the former is consistently translated “salvation,” the latter, “blessedness.”

Book Review

Jon Sweeney: *Verily, Verily: The KJV—400 Years of Influence and Beauty*, Zondervan Publishing Company, 2011, hardcover, 219 pages.

It is only in recent years that the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (NIV) has surpassed the *Holy Bible, King James Version* (KJV) as the best-selling book in English of all time. Many of us learned our first Bible passages from the KJV and still remember them in that translation. 2011 being the 400th anniversary year of this venerable work, it “behooves” us to learn a little something about where and how it came to be.

Author Jon Sweeney takes the reader on a tour of the KJV, beginning with a history of English Bibles that came before it. For some 1100 years (AD 400-1500) Jerome’s Latin Vulgate was the only vernacular translation of the Bible in use. Over time, as Latin became more and more the language of academia, fewer and fewer people knew for themselves what the Bible actually said, relying on the Roman Catholic Church to interpret it for them and inform them as to what was to be believed. “The Bible was deemed too important for the uneducated to handle,” says Sweeney on page 45.

The winds began to change in the late 1370s when Oxford theologian John Wycliffe began distributing copies of English translations that he and his students had done. It was important to Wycliffe that everyone in England have the Bible in his own tongue. He “wanted to remove the spiritual serfdom of a people who couldn’t understand the Bible” (Sweeney 49). Wycliffe claimed that the church had gone beyond the words of Scripture in many of her teachings and customs. He was right.

The church, however, was reluctant to give up its power over the people, and the civil rulers, in their complicated entanglements with the church, were also unwilling to see the boat rocked by a more knowledgeable laity. In 1401 King Henry IV made it a capital offense to possess a copy of the Bible in English, and in 1407 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel (once named by *BBC History Magazine* as one of the ten worst Britons of all time), made the outrageous statement that they “couldn’t have these lay preachers and teachers going about the countryside explaining the Bible in a language that the people understood!” (Sweeney 50). In addition to this, English was considered by scholars to be a barbaric language neither appropriate nor precise enough for conveying the high thoughts and theology of God. So it was that English translations of the Bible didn’t have much going for them just 200 years before the KJV appeared. Not much had changed a hundred years later. In 1513 the dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London lost his post for translating the Lord’s Prayer into English.

Enter William Tyndale, who in the 1520s took another shot at the English Bible by publishing (illegally, of course) his own translation. Tyndale’s English copies gained circulation and greatly irritated the authorities. He also had famously translated Matthew 16:18 as “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my congregation.” Not surprisingly, this outraged the pope. Tyndale was burned at the stake in October of 1536, not quite twenty years after Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses had appeared in Wittenberg.

But God works for the good of His children, and around the time of Tyndale’s death the very interesting story of the English Bible takes a sudden turn when a most unlikely character arises to champion the cause of translation. His name: King Henry VIII.

Henry was interested in an English Bible for political reasons, realizing that something needed to be done to bring a measure of peace to his subjects, who continued to struggle against each other over

the matter of vernacular Bibles. He could also see that the Church of England was on a course to separate from Rome and felt it now made sense for England to have her own Bible.

Henry was also interested in an English Bible for very personal reasons. He wanted to use it as grounds for a divorce. His 16-year marriage to Catherine of Aragon had failed to produce a male heir, and he had entered into that infamous relationship with his mistress, Anne Boleyn. In reading his Bible, Henry had taken special note of the passage in Leviticus 20:21: "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing...." "Aha!" Henry thought, "Since Catherine was once married to my brother Arthur before he died, it is an ungodly thing for me to have her; so the marriage is annulled!" Henry also began using the Bible to support his contention that kings were to be God's supreme rulers on earth. He based this on 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors..." (KJV). He liked that translation. He was convinced it supported his belief that as king he held the rule over all people (Pope and clergy especially take note!). Henry now needed English Bibles to be copied and distributed so that he could teach the people about the so-called *divine right of kings*.

So, finally, with a king's blessing at their backs the English Bibles began to flow from the pens of translators. First the Coverdale Bible in 1535, then Matthew's Bible in 1537, then the Coverdale Second Edition in 1539 (known as the "Great Bible" because of its physical size). Henry VIII shrewdly issued a decree in 1540 that the Coverdale translation was free from heresy and thus put a Coverdale Bible in every church. Rome was incensed and issued a counter-decree that only the Latin Vulgate could communicate the Word of God and that people should never be "presumptuous enough to think they can interpret the Bible on their own" (Sweeney 69).

In 1560 came the great English Bible before the KJV. It was the Geneva Bible, translated by English Protestants in Switzerland. The Geneva Bible was a crucial version in history for four reasons. 1) It was the first study Bible with notes, maps, and the like. 2) The notes unashamedly pointed to the papacy as the Antichrist. 3) The notes reinforced Calvinist theology and stirred up Puritans against the Church of England. 4) The translation and notes did not support the divine right of kings in the way Henry VIII had envisioned it.

It was especially for the fourth reason above that King James I thought it was time for another English Bible, the one that would end up being the most famous translation ever. "King James longed for a vernacular, English-language Protestant Bible that would unite his English people without undermining his kingship. Within ten months of assuming the throne, James called for a new translation" (Sweeney 74). The rest, as they say, is history.

The KJV was the first Bible to be translated by a committee, and one can still visit the so-called Jerusalem Chamber where much of the work was done from 1604 to 1611. It was the work of some 50 translators. Author Jon Sweeney has an interesting chapter on the translation work itself, mentioning some of the philosophies of translation that went into the King James Version. He points out that the committees included a mix of experts in Biblical languages, writing, and oratory. Often these different disciplines would collide. The language scholar would want a particular translation, but the orator would think it did not sound good in English. Sometimes the linguists would win. Sometimes the orators would win. During this process it was generally recognized that this translation would be a Bible read aloud in the churches. So it came to be that much thought was given to the way it sounded.

As anxious as the translators of the KJV were to give the people of England an English Bible, they were not too interested in giving them a Bible in the common speech. To them it was more important that the Scriptures sound magisterial. The translators were not inclined to let people think they could approach God like they would approach a friend on the street. It was not unusual for them to choose a more difficult English translation when a simpler one could have served. They wanted their Bible to sound the way they imagined the voice of God to sound—that is, not very ordinary. It was also felt that laity should have to expend a little effort in the reading of the Word. After all, it was worth some effort

to hear God's voice, was it not?

Since the invention of the printing press in 1450, the English language had undergone enormous changes. By 1611, for example, pronouns such as *ye*, *thee*, and *thou* had already disappeared from common speech. But since they were still considered poetic and more literary, they found their way into the KJV.

For all the political machinations that led to the production of the Bible and all the principles at work in its translation (which may cause us to raise an eyebrow today), the KJV is nevertheless the single greatest contribution ever made to the English language. There are many, many passages that are simply beautiful to listen to in the King James Version. Undoubtedly the Lord has used this translation of the Scriptures mightily for the furtherance of His kingdom, and in many ways it can rightly be called the mother of all our modern English translations.

Sweeney's book is especially interesting through the first five chapters. After that he finishes with the history and leans more toward anecdotal commentary and lists of favorite passages, in which he does not always do a good job with the exegesis. Nevertheless, this is a book worth looking through so that we can appreciate a little more what God has done in putting His Word (in whatever translation it may be) into our hands.

– David Schaller