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What Is Repentance?

Matthew 6:16-21 and Acts 20:21

Frank Gantt

* Beginning with this issue of volume 53, a Lenten series on repentance is hereby offered to readers of the *Journal*. The series "Repentance Questions Answered" was preached at St. Luke's congregation in Lemmon, South Dakota, during the midweek Lenten services that were held there this year.

"Ash Wednesday" is what the calendar says today is. Why *Ash* Wednesday? Because it's the day that, historically, Christians have applied ash, the remnants of some burned-up material, to their foreheads. Many still do so today. In Old Testament times ashes signified sorrow and grief and came to be used as a ceremonial symbol of human sorrow over sin. Today many people continue to apply ashes to their foreheads as an outward sign of something spiritual, namely, repentance.

Though the outward part is not necessary, repentance is held up in the Bible as an integral part of the Christian life. In fact, we are told in the Gospels that the message which John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus both preached was a message of repentance. The word "repent," or some version of it, occurs often in both the Old and New Testaments. The Apostle Peter, the disciple who denied knowing Jesus three times during the evening of His trial, declares that it is part of God's good and gracious will that all people should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

In our midweek services during Lent this year, we are going to discuss the importance of repentance by asking six questions that get to the heart of what repentance is and what it means for us. The first question we ask and answer tonight, on this Ash Wednesday, is this: What is repentance?

In our texts for this evening, the first taken from Matthew 6:16-21 and the other from Acts 20:21, we receive the answer to this most important question. We read, first of all, what Jesus said as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

> ***"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*** (ESV)

In this text Jesus addresses what was for the people of His day another outward sign of repentance; it was the custom of fasting. The act of fasting wasn't just a sign, but was considered to be a physical aid to the spiritual discipline of repentance. But in our text Jesus makes it so clear that repentance is not something to display to the world. It is something between the individual and God. Outward signs of repentance are just that: outward signs. The essence of repentance, however, is invisible to anyone else but God. It lies hidden within the human spirit.

The wearing of ashes and the custom of fasting have, historically, served Christians as bodily reminders of the spiritual reality that we are mortal. We are mortal because we are sinners. God said to Adam: "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Ezekiel said: "The soul that sins, it shall die." St. Paul wrote: "The wages of sin is death." We can thus recognize both fasting and the use of ashes as helpful reminders of our mortality and our utter dependence on God. But neither of them can ever make one truly repentant. Repentance is between the individual and God. Repentance begins with an acknowledgement that we have brought upon ourselves our own destruction. Repentance ends with the sinner's firm reliance on the God who saves by grace.

And so we realize that repentance is two things joined together: contrition and faith. Contrition is sorrow over one's sin, which, to be clear, is not sorrow over the pain that sin brings. It is not sorrow over the consequences that our sins bring upon us. It is not sorrow for getting caught in the act of committing sin. Contrition is sorrow over the sin itself. It is wishing that we never did it. The contrite heart hates the sin on account of it being an offense against God. It wants to avoid the sin in the future. There will certainly be a conflict because the one who is truly contrite, who is genuinely sorry for his sin, still has an old man within him that yearns to sin. But in spite of that being so, true repentance will involve sincere admission of one's guilt and condemnation and a genuine sorrow for the ugliness of sin in one's life.

The other aspect of repentance—just as important, just as necessary—is faith. That is, the divinely worked confidence in the Gospel that proclaims the forgiveness of sins. Faith is not hoping that God might forgive us. Faith is not resigning ourselves to whatever God chooses to do with us. Faith is not even a resolution to avoid the sin. Faith is none of these things. Faith is trust. It is trust in the gospel that declares to us that God, for Christ's sake, forgives us all our sins. Faith looks to Jesus' suffering and dying for the sin of the world and says: This was for me too; it was for my sins that He suffered and it is my sins that are washed away by His blood

These two elements, contrition and faith, combine to form repentance. With that in mind we turn to our second text from Acts 20:21, which records what the Apostle Paul said to the elders of the congregation in Ephesus: *You know how I testified . . .* ***"both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (ESV).

What is repentance? It is literally a change of mind and heart. We hate the sin, which according to the flesh we love. We run to the God from whom we have turned away. What we regarded as precious we dismiss as worthless. Faith is born and renewed as God smashes the idols within our hearts and engenders in their place a confidence in Christ as our Savior from sin, death, hell, and the power of the devil. This change He accomplishes through the preaching of His Law and Gospel.

The word *repent* can also mean to "turn around." God chose this word to describe the change of direction in the sinner's life. A life once headed to hell is turned so that the person now heads toward heaven. The things of this world that so enthralled us, that captivated our hearts, that controlled our affections and claimed our loyalty, are all seen as temporary and disposable pleasures and are also recognized as unnecessary and even detrimental to our relationship with God. Through repentance God has taken their place. Our treasure is in heaven with Him. The Gospel of Christ's suffering and death for us to take away our sins and to reconcile us to God is more precious to us than the things of this world, which all can be broken, lost, stolen, and destroyed. Since our treasure is in heaven, so also will be our hearts.

This too is what repentance entails. It's not about showing our neighbor that we have repented. It's not about putting on a show so that others can know that we are authentically religious. True repentance is hidden from the world, but known to God. Jesus tells us to bring our repentance to our

Father in heaven privately, secretly, and without fanfare. Repentance is always personal, between the sinner and the Lord.

The essence of repentance is always the same no matter who is repenting. It always involves contrition and it always entails faith. There can be no true repentance when someone refuses to acknowledge his sins to God. Thus when liberal churchgoing people attempt to defend those who have fallen into fashionable sins by insisting that those sins are not sins, they actually do harm by standing in the way of repentance. In Christ God forgives homosexuals, fornicators, liars, thieves, and every other kind of sinner. But those who refuse to repent throw God's forgiveness back at Him, as though they have no need of it. They reject God's forgiveness, which is also to say that they do not truly believe. Without contrition there is no faith in God's forgiveness.

But we can't look to our sorrow for any assurance that our sins are forgiven. We look to Christ who bore our sins away on the cross. For His sake God looks upon us and absolves us of all our sins. For His sake there is no wall of separation that would keep us from Him. This is what repentance teaches. It is also why Lent is known as a season of repentance. During the six weeks of Lent we again focus on the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus. We hear again about all the stripes, the beatings, the piercing of hands and feet, and the agony that came upon Him as He made payment for our sins on the cross. Confronted with the wages of our sin but also made the recipient of God's amazing grace toward us in His Son, we turn in sorrow from our sin and by faith unto Him who says: "*I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"* (Ezek. 33:11).

This is what repentance is, and it is a great gift that our God has worked in us through the preaching of His Law and Gospel. In our hearts He has worked contrition and faith, and so He has caused us to lay hold of what He gives us to receive: treasures in heaven, for Jesus' sake. Amen!

(To be continued)

Heaven Is For Real

(A Sermon for Maundy Thursday: 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Frank Gantt

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

For the past few weeks I have heard announcements on the local radio station and I've read in the *Dakota Herald* that plans are underway for the Burpo family to visit our community this summer. For those of you who do not know who the Burpos are, it's the family from Nebraska whose little boy was in a life-and-death struggle and now claims to have gone to heaven during his surgery. The little boy's father, Todd Burpo, wrote a book about the experience with the title, *Heaven is for Real*.

Now my purpose for bringing this subject up tonight is not to disparage the book or the many claims that Todd Burpo makes in its pages. My reason for bringing this up is the title itself and what it implies. By implication the title states that we can finally be sure that there really is a heaven, and the reason we can be sure is that this boy, Colton Burpo, has been there. The author's own summary of the book says as much when he writes: "*Heaven is for Real* will forever change the way you think of eternity, offering the chance to see, and believe, like a child."

Well, heaven truly is for real, but we have something far better than the unproven claims of a man and his son. We have the testimony of the sacrament that we celebrate tonight, what is known as the Lord's Supper. This sacrament assures us in a divine way that heaven is for real. On this evening of Maundy Thursday we turn to our text in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 to hear what this testimony reveals in the inspired words of Paul:

> ***For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the***

Lord's death until he comes. (ESV)

At first reading it may seem that our text has nothing at all to say about heaven, and so it may seem strange when I say that it affirms to us that heaven is for real. It does, though. More than that, every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are receiving our Lord's own assurance that heaven is for real. In fact, that actually is what this sacrament is about: assuring to us that heaven is for real. How so?

I) First of all, consider what it is that we receive in the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul tells us that what we receive is not just bread and wine, but also Christ's body and blood, the very same body that He gave to bear the punishment for our sins and the very same blood that He shed for the forgiveness of our sins. He writes: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" This shouldn't surprise us because Jesus told His disciples exactly what they were receiving with the bread and wine when He said, "Take eat; this is My body. . . . Drink from it, all of you; this is My blood of the new covenant." By His own word of promise and the miracle of the real presence, Christ gives us Himself in this sacrament.

But consider where Christ is. Is He still on a cross on a hill outside of Jerusalem? No. Is He still buried in a nearby grave? No! He has, in the words of the Apostles' Creed, ascended into heaven. Therefore when we receive into our mouths the bread and the wine, Christ also gives to us, in a miraculous way, His own body and blood from heaven to us on earth. Clearly, if Christ's words are true, then heaven must be for real.

II) Secondly, let's consider also the purpose for which Christ has given us this sacrament. It's not, as many suppose, so that we can earn forgiveness for our sins by eating and drinking the bread and the wine. Nor does He give us this sacrament so that we can demonstrate the sincerity of our faith by remembering Him. That also is a commonly held error. Both of these errors make the sacrament into a good work rather than treasuring it for the true means of grace that it is.

So why did Christ institute the Lord's Supper? He instituted this sacrament because even though the payment for sins is already complete, Jesus understood that His believers would continue to carry with them the sinful nature that they have inherited from Adam. Every day we rise and seek God's power to live as His dear children, but every day we still fall into temptation and commit sin. Because sin is so prevalent in our lives, our faith often begins to waver as we wonder if God truly loves faithless and disloyal sinners like us.

I recently read an article about Vidal Sassoon, the famous hair stylist. Mr. Sassoon had adopted a son earlier in his life, but sadly it was a decision he came to regret. His son was undisciplined and foolish, causing the Sassoon family many emotional hardships. Finally Vidal had had enough and essentially disowned his adopted son, cutting him out of his will.

Our Father in heaven has graciously adopted us into His family by working in our hearts a saving faith in Jesus. Yet how often don't we lack discipline in regards to sin and foolishly rush headlong into sin? In becoming ware of our waywardness, we sometimes wonder if God Himself won't finally get fed up with you and me and disown us. That is, not allow us to receive the inheritance of everlasting life in heaven.

This is precisely why Jesus gave this blessed sacrament to us. By it He assures to us that our God's love is much deeper than the love of sinful, earthly parents. His love for us is so great that He laid the fullness of the world's sins upon His only-begotten Son and had Him bear His wrath and anger because of those sins, though Jesus Himself was innocent of sin. Because of the suffering and death of Christ on the cross, God has forgiven the sins of all mankind. The Bible is clear on this point throughout; God has reconciled the world to Himself by not imputing any of our trespasses against any of us.

In the Lord's Supper this forgiveness of sins is given and assured to each of us personally so that we do not, because of our sin, lose confidence in what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross or lose confidence in the everlasting love of our God. This is the new covenant, of which, Jesus says, is in His blood. It's the covenant of full and free forgiveness to all and on all who believe. And "where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation," as Luther aptly says in the Small Catechism. In other

words, since our sins are forgiven, there is nothing keeping us from heaven. Heaven as our future home is for real, and we know it is so because Jesus died on the cross to take our sins away. We know it is so because in the sacrament we receive His body and blood to assure us that our sins are forgiven and thus also to assure us that heaven is ours.

III) Finally, we also consider what this sacrament requires of each of us, for therein we are also assured that heaven is for real.

What does the Sacrament of the Altar require of us? Sadly, there are some who think that the Lord requires us to be holier people as a prerequisite for communing. During the course of my ministry I've had people actually say to me, "Pastor, I didn't come to Holy Communion last week because I committed a serious sin." What is that, if not to say that the Lord requires us to be holy before we can receive His Supper? That, of course, would either make our Lord a cruel jokester in telling us to do what He knows we could never do, since we can never stop sinning; or it would make Him a short-sighted buffoon for instituting something in which no one could ever participate because we all are always guilty of sin.

The truth of the matter is that Jesus instituted this meal knowing full well that we would never be deserving of His gift, yet by grace He invites us to it all the more. More than that, this holy meal is the very power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. What that means is that this sacrament does not merely testify to God's forgiving grace so as to convince us to believe and behave. Rather, through it God the Holy Spirit works to strengthen our faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin, death, and hell. It is, as Paul writes in our text, the proclamation of the Lord's death. It's not just information about the Gospel or a picture of the Gospel; it is the Gospel in tangible form. And just as faith comes by hearing the Gospel word of God, so also faith is preserved and strengthened by that same Gospel attached to our eating and drinking, our receiving of Christ in the sacrament. And what does the sacrament require of us? Nothing but believing hearts, which God gives to us through the Gospel.

So it is that once again the Lord's Supper assures us that heaven is for real, for faith is, as the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter eleven, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What do we hope for that we cannot see? Certainly the forgiveness of sins. But ultimately heaven itself, to be with our Lord where He is and to see Him as He is. This sacrament sustains that faith, by which we are certain that you and I will, when Christ comes again, be received by Him into the eternal kingdom "prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Thus the fact of the matter is this. We don't need the testimony of a little boy and his dad to know that heaven is for real. Tonight, in the sacrament that our Lord instituted on the night He was betrayed, He Himself assures in no uncertain terms that heaven is for real. Heaven is not a shadowy abstraction or some distant dream. Under the bread and wine and by the power of His Word connected to them, the Lord of heaven hand-delivers heaven to you and me, inviting us to eat and to drink that which was given and shed for you for the remission of sins and thus also for our admission into heaven. Of that we can be sure because *He* says so and *He* makes it so. Amen!

The Lord Solves the Christian's Identity Crisis

(A Sermon for Mission Festival: 1 Peter 2:9)

Michael Schierenbeck

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In the name of Jesus Christ, in whom alone we glory, dear fellow redeemed.

Many people experience a time or perhaps multiple times in their lives when they suffer from what is called an identity crisis. It can happen to parents after all of their kids move out of the house. If much of their identity has been wrapped up in being parents, they may feel lost. If one has identified

himself with his job and that situation changes, say, with retirement, then he may hit a rough patch. The results for some can become as damaging as a divorce, a mid-life crisis, or the onset of depression.

Christians are not immune to such problems, but the difference between them and the world is that the Lord provides a solution for believers. He defines for us who we are. He identifies us as His people, and this is sufficient. It answers our questions enough so that we are not dependent on any situation on this earth to be the basis of our identity. Once the question of identity is answered, we know the essentials of what we're supposed to be doing on this earth. This is so important that we set aside a Sunday at least once a year to remind us of our mission, which simply is as we hear in our text, "*proclaiming the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.*"

1. You ask: Who am I? The Lord says, "You are My people."

In the Old Testament age the Lord chose to name the descendants of Abraham as His people. This was quite an honor, but the Lord was clear on the reason why. It was not because of Israel's greatness that He chose them. It was entirely because of His love for the world and for them, the nation through whom He would send the world a Savior. Since they were His people, God protected them. He gave them His Law. He gave them the promises of the One who would redeem them from their sin. He sent them prophets to warn and encourage them as needed. And to them He entrusted His Word in its written form of the Old Testament.

You as believers today are the true spiritual descendants of Abraham. You are the people of God, chosen, elect, and precious— again, not because of your worthiness, but because of God and His grace. He has chosen to identify Himself with you and me. In our text we hear the identification in the term "*His own special people,*" which literally means "a people for possession."

Now there is a part of us that chafes at such a description. According to our flesh we'd rather be independent and not belong to God at all. But the claim God places upon us is a great blessing. We're under the protection of our almighty Father. This gives us a sense of belonging and a lasting identity. It's comforting to be God's people because we have a tremendous support system with the heavenly Father, our brother Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Your true identity is with Jesus. And so you are named a Christian, literally, a little Christ. This is your true self. In Romans 7 we read of the battle that the Apostle Paul and all Christians experience as they struggle against the old man in favor of the new man. And it's clear that the real you is to be that new man. Your sinful flesh will be left in the grave, and the true you will be with your Father forever in heaven.

God also defines us in this text as a "*royal priesthood.*" You are kings and priests of God. While Jesus is the great High Priest, every believer also is a priest of God. And that means that you and I have direct access to Him because Jesus cleared the path with His sacrifice on the cross. You can talk directly to God on behalf of yourself, your fellow Christians, and unbelievers too.

He calls you a "*holy nation.*" Consider how incredible it is that this is so! You know full well that you're not holy. You disobey God every day. If you're like I am, you have already made a mess out of today. In various ways we have ignored God. We have acted as ashamed of Him and have denied Him. We fail to follow through on His commands. All of those things are the very opposite of holy. Yet because of the work of Jesus in your place, you have been declared holy and righteous in the sight of God. Even though all too often we have failed to identify ourselves with God, He has chosen to identify Himself with us.

One reason that we have our failings is that we are not yet home. As God's people we are strangers and pilgrims in a foreign land. In our present weakness we are overly cautious to stand up and say, "I'm a Christian. I'm one of God's people." We fear standing up for our Father and our Brother. Yet our identity with God is something to be cherished, not disposed of. It is to be looked at with zeal and excitement and incredible gratitude. If you don't understand who you are and how you came to be that person, then you cannot proceed with your mission in life. Instead you'll proceed down other paths, with different goals, basically following the course of the world. It is crucial to know God's grace and its effect on you. Once that is realized, then you are ready to have the answer to the next question.

2. You ask: What am I doing here? The Lord answers: You are here to proclaim My praises.

God made you His people for a purpose. If you wonder why you're here on this earth, why you have a pulse, it is answered in our text: "*to proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" The reason that you're not in heaven now is the fact that God still wants you to report on who you are and how you came to be that way. You are here to report on what you know about God and to glorify Him. That's it. It's that simple. Earning money, having a career, raising a family—these things that we think give us our identity are actually secondary and subordinate to the purpose and mission God has given us.

Though the Lord could have whisked you and me away into paradise already, our work is not yet done. In His heavenly wisdom He has established that human beings would convey His message about sin and grace. Nature glorifies Him by its existence as do the angels, but the Lord has more in mind for the crown of His creation. We might have wanted Jesus to stay on the earth to do this work, but that's not the way that He chose, as we hear in His Great Commission. The entirety of your purpose, the reason that you are one of His people is to "*proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*." No matter what your age, intellect, or wealth may be, this is to be the mission of every Christian until He returns.

Reporting the facts of our new life in Christ can't help but be a form of proclaiming praises to God. We were in the darkness; now we are in the light. Yes, there still are moments when we have glimpses of what life was like in the darkness. The pain of a guilty conscience, a fear of the future, and thoughts of discontentment are all shadows of the darkness that we once had without Christ. Many, many people are in that darkness now, and it's not just a shadow; it is their life. They know nothing else. They have no peace and no hope. Though some may show a veneer of peace on the surface, deep down inside terror is still present for the unbeliever.

In the light of Christ it is a very different story. As one who is part of the people of God, you have a conscience set free from guilt. You realize that Jesus scrubbed you clean from your sin by His precious blood, which gives you true peace instead of fear. You have joy and satisfaction in your life because you know that the Lord loves you and has prepared a place in heaven for you.

With that perspective at work in your heart and mind, you are sent to let others know what life is like in the light. People can then be thunderstruck at the greatness of God as you describe what you have. People can even see the greatness of God reflected in you. This happens when your actions and words are influenced by the light and people take notice. They may even ask you what makes the difference, which gives you the chance to point to the glory of God and the great things that He has done for you.

This is where the rubber meets the road. This is why you and I are here. The Lord has given that task to each of you. It is not up to your pastor to be the only one in the congregation to talk about our life in the light. In fact, he has fewer contacts than you do. I can't count the times in my ministry when people would say, "Can you talk to so and so?" I was glad to do it, but you yourself are equipped to be that spokesman as a priest of God. You know the difference between darkness and light and how you got to be where you are. It's not complicated. It's why you are here. You have a heaven-oriented, Christ-centered purpose for your time on this earth.

One may say that he is too young, another that he is too old. But notice that nothing is mentioned about age in our text. You are not helpless. Even if the Lord took away your voice and your ability to communicate, you still can pray for others to come out of darkness into the light. As a priest of God you have that right; and if you do have your voice, you can take time to pray for God to help you and others proclaim His praises. You don't have to preach a sermon. You can simply say what you know. You can tell your story as one of His people and live that story before others. The Lord puts people into your life day by day for this very purpose. And with such opportunities given you won't tell the wrong person about the greatness of God.

You're not the first and you won't be the last to have doubts about what is going on in your life, that is, who you are and what your purpose is supposed to be. We're fighting enemies who would like to obscure our focus and derail our mission. My grandfather had a motto that appeared in his sermons from time to time: Lift high the banner of Christ. That's why you're here. You are one of God's people, elect,

precious, put here on earth to proclaim His praises. There's no need for any identity crisis. The Lord has solved that problem for us. Let us praise Him for His grace! Amen!

The Historic Thrust of Christ's Resurrection

Egbert Schaller

* The article below is offered here as a reprint of the same in the June 1963 issue (*Journal* 3:3, pages 1-14). In place of the writer's original footnotes, citation of sources is documented per MLA guidelines. See Works Cited on page 25. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. Insertions by the editor are enclosed in brackets.

The Christian Church of the New Testament has always recognized the unique significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"Intrinsically Christianity is an Easter religion" (Woodrum 6). This observation is merely a more casual restatement of the conclusions voiced by the Apostle Paul in more earthy and blunt language: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17, 19). This automatically disqualifies as fraudulent the claims to the Christian title made for their religious systems by those who expend time and effort in an attempt to cast doubt upon the historic fact of the Easter miracle.

Dr. C. J. Cadoux may say, with psychological plausibility: "Once the disciples were convinced by the visions they had had that Jesus was alive and active despite His death on the cross, their belief that His tomb must therefore be empty would follow inevitably as the night the day, whether there was any actual evidence for it or not" (qtd. in Bruce 66). W. R. Inge, in that classic patois which is the double-talk of the denier, can write: "The inner light can only testify to spiritual truths. It always speaks in the present tense; it cannot guarantee any historical event, past or future. It cannot guarantee either the gospel history or a future judgment. It can tell us that Christ is risen, and that He is alive for evermore, but not that He rose again the third day" (qtd. in Bruce 67). A. Loisy may voice the opinion that Christ's body was cast into the criminals' pit in the valley of Hinnom and was thus no longer in evidence, while D. F. Strauss entertains the probability that Jesus never actually died at all. But these, and many others, will never succeed in making of the Christian faith a "miserable" religion; they can only reveal themselves as of all men the most pitiable.

The arch of Christian truth stands secure; and its keystone is the fact of the Resurrection. Do you hope to be saved? Paul anchors this hope upon the Resurrection against all storms. In Phillip's translation we hear him say: "If you openly admit by your own mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and if you believe in your own heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9-10). Is there a new life to those who have been awakened from the death of sin and delivered from the bondage of the Law? Hear from Paul the story of the woman who after her husband's death is free to marry another and observe how he applies it as a simile: "Thus, my brethren, you too have died unto the law by means of the body of Christ, so that ye can belong to another, namely, to the one risen from the dead, so that we might bear fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). Do you who died with Him desire to walk in a new life? How natural; "for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

Everywhere, in doctrine and in life, the impact of the Resurrection is constant and determinative, like the beat of a riveting hammer that welds the Christian to God's power. In a periodical which habitually marks the conclusion of each of its articles in a formal manner, the typesetter quite inadvertently contradicted the spirit of an article by printing its final words thus: "Every day is Easter with (the Christian). He is a witness to death's Vanquisher. His life is a part of the Resurrection story. END." But that story has NO end. It permeates every Gospel truth and every cranny of the Christian's faith, and its power endures through the terminal gates of earthly life, as it is written: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4:14). And indeed, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up

Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

While the dominant character of Christ's Resurrection as a central feature of the Gospel is recognized by Christians everywhere, its most definitive quality is often not sufficiently noted. To be sure, we take pleasure in saying with Paul that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). We also affirm the singular nature of this Resurrection when we confess with Scripture that by it Jesus Christ is "become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). And we recognize with Peter the primacy of that event in the divine plan and promise, saying: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:24-26). Yet this Resurrection was unique in that it was the first, and until this day the only, resurrection.

Habits of thought and association have caused it to be loosely said that our Lord, after having in His earthly ministry restored the dead to life, did Himself return to life. Our Bible Story books speak of the resurrection (raising) of the widow's son at Nain and of Lazarus of Bethany. Thus it becomes easy to take for granted that the Easter sun revealed only the wonder of yet another resurrection; greater, indeed, as the subject was greater and the results of profounder significance, but in nature identical. Jesus was restored to life as Lazarus had been. As soon as that is said, of course, we recognize it as quite untrue. What certain human beings experienced by the power of God both in Old and in New Testament times was revivification, not resurrection. For of whom save Jesus Christ could it have been said that "death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9)? Elisha restored a widow's son to life, and Lazarus returned to his home in Bethany from a four-day sojourn in the grave. But the life to which these were awakened was a mortal life, and the bodies so marvelously resuscitated were doomed to turn to dust eventually. "Christ," on the other hand, "being raised from the dead dieth no more." This not merely makes His experience different; it sets it apart as an event that is utterly without parallel in history and that, more than any other, was determinative in molding the history of the New Testament Church.

At the time that the Christian Church burst into Pentecostal bloom and began its phenomenal growth, it was able to flourish in the midst of a Judaism which had long since become adjusted to diversity in its own ranks. Within the shadow of its major theological premises of monotheism and the Mosaic law code, numerous sects and schools of thought were tolerated. We hear of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Zealots and the Essenes; and there were others of lesser prominence. Among them existed tensions, ideological and theological conflicts; yet within the framework of nationalistic Judaism all were accorded the right of existence. In this patchwork of schools and parties the new "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) initially seemed to have secured for itself a proper place. When it leaped into prominence with a rushing sound, the event occurred in the holy city at a season holy to all Jews; and very soon, if not at the outset, its public worship was held in the sacred precincts of the temple. As a new and different movement it did, of course, become subjected to a certain amount of heckling that bordered on derision (Acts 2:13). But by and large the party of the Nazarenes found an astoundingly large acclaim: "fear came upon every soul. . ." and they were "having favour with all the people" (Acts 2:43, 47). And the great Gamaliel could wax philosophical about the whole thing. Months after Pentecost he arose in the true spirit of Judaism and issued a policy statement that prevailed for some time thereafter: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it . . ." (Acts 5:38-39).

This cautious concession to the new movement in Judaism was remarkable in view of the nature of its message. From the first, without hostility yet with uncompromising bluntness and reiteration, the men who called themselves Apostles had been issuing an indictment of manslaughter against the Jewish council. The church officers and theologians, they insisted, had unjustly killed Jesus of Nazareth. They had thus slain the Messiah, the Holy One of God. They had, indeed, committed theocide! (Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 4:10). Naturally such charges were not well received by the Jewish dignitaries. Yet since the

apostolic proclamation found so many adherents, it seemed inopportune to proceed against the sect; and such was the latitude in Judaism that even a party so unsympathetic toward the ruling class could be tolerated with a wait-and-see attitude. Thus the situation might well have remained static even under those tensions if another factor had not been involved.

The first decisive and overt opposition to the Christian congregation arose after it was already firmly established; and significantly, it originated with "the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, . . . being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:1-2; note in context Acts 3:26). The Sadducees constituted the liberal party, the "modernists" with whom the Savior had crossed swords over this very issue of fundamental importance in a debate that excluded the Pharisees except as interested observers (Matt. 22:23ff., cf. v. 34). The priestly hierarchy in Israel at this time, including the families of the high priest and chief priests, were members of the sect of the Sadducees, although not all levitical temple priests were so aligned and a number of them had become obedient to the Faith (Acts 4:36; 6:7). The initial attack upon the Church, nevertheless, was mounted exclusively by the priestly clan of Sadduceean persuasion, which obviously controlled the majority vote in the Sanhedrin. Except for their intolerance, who can say what course the history of the Church might have pursued?

Certainly the thrust of the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection was decisive here. Prominent men could withhold their hands from violence and revenge even in the face of the most grievous accusations hurled against them and under a barrage of doctrines with which they were utterly at odds. The hated Nazarene was being proclaimed as the stone which the builders had rejected but which became the Head of the Church's corner as the Judge of heaven and earth, as the One who could save men from this, the "untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). All that they could endure. But from the date of Peter's first sermon in which he dwelt upon the evidence, scriptural and historical, of the Resurrection of the Lord, the Sadducees found this truth unbearable. And when the arrests began, they were initiated by the foes of the Resurrection (see also Acts 5:17). The great violence which culminated in the death of Stephen reached its climax at the moment that the martyr announced: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This vision necessarily and by definition of its context with Stephen's sermon had the Resurrection as its premise; and at that point the enemies "stopped their ears" [Acts 7:56-57].

Then there was Herod. With him the persecutions through secular authorities had their inception. His aggression, as he knew it would, "pleased the Jews" (Acts 12:1-3). But it pleased particularly that certain sect of the Jews with which Herod identified himself. In Matthew 16:6 a warning of the Savior to His disciples is recorded: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." It is meaningful that when Mark reports the same incident, he offers a further version of the Savior's remark: "Take heed, and beware . . . of the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15). In his liberalistic views Herod was closely allied with the party of the Sadducees; and we are aware of his superstitious fears in connection with the thought of resurrection in general (Mark 6:14). Thus it was through the hostility aroused by the persistent preaching of Christ's Resurrection that James was lost to the Church on earth at a critical time.

As has been stated, the Pharisees in general took a more phlegmatic attitude toward the rise of the Christian sect in their midst. Yet in the number of disciples of that school there arose a young man who, as his own reports and those of others would indicate, was destined for a brilliant career after concluding his studies at the feet of Gamaliel, but who chose at this time to break with his illustrious teacher on the matter of the Nazarenes. If Gamaliel believed that time would decide the fate of this group, Saul did not share that comfortable theory. As a Pharisee he had no personal reason for rejecting the doctrine of a resurrection. But he was shrewd enough to see that, if men in large number continued to become persuaded of the truth that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the grave, the result could only be the ultimate destruction of the religious system to which he was committed. When therefore he stood among the multitude and heard Stephen once again proclaiming the living Messiah at the seat of power in heaven, he was filled with a resolution and held out his own arms as hangers for the clothes of the man whom the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection had doomed to execution by stoning. Had it been said that

Jesus died unjustly and remained dead, doubtless there would never have been a persecuting Saul, as indeed there would have been no Church. Again it was the Resurrection that activated a man, and with him the whole of subsequent church history. It was most appropriate that this breather of hatred against the Church should have been stricken to the ground at Damascus a bit later by the vision of that very Risen One into whose service he then entered "as one born out of due time." And we can appreciate the delectable historical irony of the fact that at the moment of crisis in his apostolic career he was able to assure a court of inquiry that "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question," and thus find a stay of sentence in the resulting development of "a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees" on this issue (Acts 23:6-9).

The singular power of thrust with which Christ's Resurrection penetrated and molded the shape of history in the Church has not lost its impetus. The struggle between Church and world has become infinitely more complex today than it was in apostolic times. Yet in its basic outline the discerning Christian may still recognize the ancient disposition of forces on that battlefield of Truth where the Church militant is so deeply engaged. Judaism in the historic sense is, of course, no longer a major contender; but the spirit of its schools and sects lives on in the schools and sects that have proliferated in Christendom. The cult of the Pharisees is perpetuated in the alliance of movements "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). These assume a tolerant, Gamaliel-like stance toward apostolic teaching, professing only that they would seek further confirmation of its accuracy. Yet all the while they are resolutely going forward in their course of synergistic devotion to self-salvation, debauching the faith of Christians foolish enough to make common cause with them. They lay claim to a Bible-centered theology even while they are divesting the Scriptures of their authenticity, authority, and objectivity. Unlike the Pharisees of old, the devotees of this cult are a motley crew. No longer do they appear in uniform dress. Confessionally they are clothed in all colors of the rainbow and in several pastel shades as well.

Sometimes they are difficult to distinguish from the Sadduceean family with which their party fights and lives in alliance even while an uneasy truce prevails between them. The modern Sadducees also appear on the battlefield in variegated costume; but they can usually be identified by their greater boldness and by their tactics. They always head the attack; their guns are trained upon the vitals. They do not rest until the Bible has been reduced to an archaic, anthropological exhibit and until Jesus Christ has been completely deprived of His true identity.

Weird and anomalous as it seems and has always seemed, Pharisee and Sadducee have made common cause of the fight to obliterate Christian apostolic orthodoxy. They may war between themselves; but at the apex of their forces they mount a joint attack. Meanwhile, in this struggle, Herod and Pilate again become friends. Secular government, especially in our own country, when it intrudes itself upon the religious conflict, consistently contributes its forces to the ranks of Sadduceeism. The recent Supreme Court decisions in the public school prayer and devotions issue, for example, were met by howls of wrath among the Pharisees while the court actions themselves were initiated by the people espousing Sadduceean principles and were decided in their favor. It is a fact, moreover, that the nature of the decisions, while eminently constitutional and thus satisfying to those who truly cherish and understand our freedom, tends ultimately to promote the secularism which accords with the aims of a Sadduceean culture.

The same is true of the governmental policy which maintains the chaplaincy. The Pharisees, of course, applaud this institution; but only because by their denial of the Truth they have been blinded to the fact that the chaplaincy and any religious promotion of government so oriented must in the final analysis destroy the distinctiveness of the Christian faith, level out all differences and settle the nation down to an amorphous, essentially hedonistic religion which retains nothing more than the merest semblance of Christian character.

Confronted with the welter of religious ideologies working in concert against the Truth, where shall the Christian Church center its counter-attack? Our defense has from time to time been concentrated

at several vital points on the battlements of Truth. We have rushed forces to the wall where a breach has been attempted in the doctrine of inspiration. We have fought weary skirmishes in behalf of the vicarious nature of Christ's life and death. We have struggled to shore up the defenses of Genesis 1. And certainly none among us would say that such efforts were unnecessary or without the victories which the Lord has promised. Yet while the issues involved were thus clearly drawn, the ultimate, decisive question, the line at which the battle becomes white-hot and the forces of faith and unbelief then quickly disengage in manifest impasse, lies directly athwart the open, empty tomb of our Lord.

The truth of this observation may not always appear on the surface; but a brief analysis will confirm it. The weapons of our warfare are the words of life. They are not carnal, but spiritual, and the power of truth is inherent in them. Yet in this world there are other words also: false words, counterfeit words, deceitful words, vain words; and in the battles that rage, these fill the air like confetti. At any given point on the field they are hurled in broadsides until the issues become confused amid the haze. Debate Genesis 1, and immediately hearers or readers are enveloped in a storm of scientific jargon, exercises in Hebrew, logical smokescreens and evolutionary premises that bewilder and obscure. Discuss the significance of the birth o£ Christ, or His death, or His ascension, and there will be a general, pious nodding of heads followed by a barrage of pseudo-theological explanations which have the form of sound words but in their total effect undermine and nullify every truth which these events proclaim, leaving the very historicity of Christ in doubt; yet in such a manner that many may be deceived into mistaking opponents for brethren and a state of war for a state of peace.

But on the doctrine of the Resurrection the fog of battle rolls away and the line is seen clearly drawn. There is no evasion or subterfuge possible at this point. To be sure, the enemies of the Gospel seek to mask their hostility at this juncture also. The Pharisees may display a tolerant attitude and let the matter pass in order to proceed to areas more fruitful to their efforts, as did the Judaizers of old. But the Sadducees become violent; and they draw their colleagues into the fray. Here they must show their colors, and teeth begin to appear between the velvet lips. Any effort at talking this truth to death and burying it under a heap of philosophical speculation must fail. Such rhetoric becomes as unbelievable as was the lame explanation of their predecessors (Matt. 28:13). It is simply not responsive to the issue when men glibly explain that the living Christ was a figment of the tortured disappointment of His disciples, or a deliberate deception by unscrupulous leaders of a new sect. In view of all the circumstances and the evidence of history itself, the lie is more incredible than the facts even to the natural human mind. The facts and the words allow no logical distortion. Either Christ rose from the dead bodily and literally, or the dominance of Christianity in every year of our Lord since that time becomes a monumental absurdity.

The Resurrection is not merely a link in the chain of events since Creation; it is the pivot upon which the past revolved and the future has mobility. St. Paul wrote, and we repeat, that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching (τὸ κήρυγμα) vain, and your faith is also vain" [1 Cor. 15:14]. But must we not then also recognize the corollary proposition, namely, that it is the Resurrection which validates the kerygma and all of the objective truths thereof on which our faith rests? Our hope of salvation is utterly dependent upon the fact that Christ "was delivered for our offences"; yet even the cardinal truth of redemption is secure only if we may also affirm that He "was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). And then we may begin from the beginning. Then, with inexorable consistency, Adam was the fallen creature of a loving God and not an evolutionary late-comer. Moses and the Law, the Prophets and their anticipations, were harbingers of a new and better covenant. Then the birth of Jesus was "on this wise" and no other. Then the life of a Paul becomes intelligible and his doctrine a divine judgment and savor of death unto Pharisee and Sadducee alike. All of this must stand in its inspired fullness because the Resurrection supplies its incontrovertible support.

Small wonder, then, that the Apostles persisted in raising the point of this massive weapon against all gainsayers of their message, and with such success. There is not a New Testament book which does not, expressly or by implication, rest the cause of its preaching upon this event.

[Thus Paul has declared in his Epistles:] ". . . raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 4:25-5:1). "He died for

all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal. 1:1). ". . . that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what [are] the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. . ." (Eph. 1:18-20). "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. . ." (Col. 3:1). ". . . how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead. . ." (1 Thess. 1:9-10). "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8).

These are but samplings from the rich store of direct and indirect allusions to the Resurrection with which the apostolic writings are replete. Our own preaching ought to follow their example. Too often, perhaps, we accord to the Resurrection a large place only at Easter time and at funeral services. A pastor might well ask himself in retrospect: How often did I not merely refer to, but extol the Resurrection of Christ in my sermons during the present Trinity season? How often did I seek to elicit a response to God's call unto sanctification from my hearers by painting for them, not merely the love of God which spared not His own Son, but especially the glory of the resurrected Savior, as Paul so frequently did?

Let us remember that in the mighty resurgence of the Church at Pentecost and in the days thereafter, with its vigor as well as its purifying trials, the message of the Resurrection was dominantly causative; for believers and unbelievers alike recognized in it the verification of the entire Gospel. And it will continue to hold this place to the end of time. If we must uphold and confess the inspired character of the Word against its detractors, the Resurrection is the ultimate confirmation of its integrity. If we needs must carefully distinguish the vicarious nature of the atonement from the vapid ethical theories which rob us of reconciliation with God, the Resurrection serves as conclusive proof of God's design in the death of His Son. And if we are to comfort and inspire penitent sinners in their crosses and trials, we shall, on the one hand, indeed not conceal or diminish the content or force of the amazing truth that "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"; but we shall unfailingly and in detail rehearse also the sweetly triumphant assurance of Peter that this was He "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" [Acts 2:23-24].

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The Failure of Unbelief

Egbert Schaller

* The reprint below, taken from the February 1963 issue (*Journal* 3:1, pp. 1-7), had the following as part of a subtitle: "A sensitive study of our approach and performance in the vital area of Christian education." With the exception of the quotation of Matthew 17:14-20, which is added by the editor, Scriptures quotations are from the King James Version. One other insertion by the editor is enclosed in brackets.

Matthew 17:14-20 *And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How*

long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (NKJV).

The Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, together with what follows it in the sacred record, provides an absorbing study in contrasts. Geographically, we are taken from the lofty peak of the Transfiguration to the deep, hot shores that lie in the valley of the Sea of Galilee—a journey from above the clouds to below sea level; spiritually, we are transported from the transcendent majesty of a Christ taking counsel with Moses and Elijah concerning His forthcoming sufferings to the pitiful squalor of human unbelief wrestling in futility with the problem of sin.

We could hardly fail to be thoughtfully impressed as we compare the powerful, purposeful advance of the Savior from the hour of His Transfiguration into the valley of His Passion—and His effective treatment of the first human casualty that met Him upon His return to Capernaum—with the fumbling, hapless, ineffectual efforts that His disciples had been expending upon a solution of the same problem. And when we note that this problem involved a child, those of us who are called to deal with youth, at home, in school, in the church, begin to suspect that this Gospel account may have some specific bearing upon the difficulties of our task and could help us toward greater efficiency in its performance.

I) From the exaltation of His experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, the heart of our Savior seemed to plummet to a new low as He came back to Capernaum to be confronted by overwhelming evidences of the burden He was committed to bear. It appeared to Him in the tragic form of a child whose condition we can fully visualize only when we set together the various descriptions given of him by the three Synoptists. This boy was controlled by an evil spirit. As a result, he was completely unmanageable, had lost his speech, his hearing, his mind, and was subject to horrible fits which cast him, sometimes into the burning hearth, sometimes into the water. A remedy for the disastrous dislocation was quite beyond the reach of ordinary human powers or skills, for it was primarily a spiritual affliction. The child was beset by a devil. That is the blunt, factual diagnosis, affirmed by divine inspiration and not to be called into question merely because it has found no place among the theories entertained by modern psychiatry.

Here was a living witness of the towering kingdom of darkness which dominated the earth and whose destruction would cost the Son of God His life. But was it this prospect which assailed the spirit of Jesus when the distressed father brought the child to Him with a cry for mercy and help?

Christ was prepared to face the entire might of Satan's dominion. In the strength of His Transfiguration He was marching forward with utter firmness of step and certainty of purpose. The presence of one little devil would not stagger or depress Him. He was ready to shoulder the spiritual burden of the whole world, and could not be crushed by the affliction of one child. The defeat of this devil and the deliverance of his victim would be but an incident in the mighty Redeemer's journey through suffering to victory.

And yet the light of joy seems to flicker and die in His eyes as the Savior stands before the wretched child and cries: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long must I suffer you?"

The true cause of this outburst is a matter of record. It came with the information that the disciples had tried to restore this boy and had failed. They had failed despite the fact that the Lord had commissioned them and empowered them to this very end, that in His Name they might perform such works of deliverance (Matt. 10:8). Though they were devoted to Jesus, though they took their calling seriously, though without doubt they applied the right words and accepted measures, they had failed. With what harshness did not this defeat underscore the fundamental uselessness of men in the war against the prince of this world! Well though He know it, Jesus in this hour must have felt with redoubled force the truth that He trod the winepress alone.

If only the disciples had been more fully aware of this. They were much aroused and considerably

disgusted by the futility of their labors with the afflicted child. Had they not done the right things? Of course they had! Then why didn't they work? After the Lord had delivered the child of the enemy, the disciples requested an explanation of their failure. It was immediately forthcoming. It was brief. It was a resounding indictment and a revelation:

"Because of your unbelief"!

Let us seek to grasp the import of this shattering accusation. We would not be justified in assuming that Jesus intended to denounce His chosen Apostles as heathen, as men without faith. Such an interpretation would be monstrous and entirely unwarranted. The Lord did not say that His disciples had no faith. He said they had unbelief; and this unbelief operated against them in the hour of their effort to cure the afflicted child. As in the case of the father who cried: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," Mark 9:24, so there could be and there was unbelief in the hearts of those who were most devoted to the Savior.

What was the nature of this unbelief? Perhaps we may put it this way: The disciples, who believed in Jesus as their Savior, did not regard Him as the real and only rescuer of the devil-ridden child. For the moment, at least, they had lost the sense of being mere applicators of the saving power of the Lord and attempted to meet the challenge of the devil by virtue of their commission and their methods. In the physical absence of Jesus they had substituted their persons for His. No matter how small, how weak and imperfect their trust in Jesus' power over Satan was, if only they had acted in this faith and called forth the power, they could have accomplished anything. Sadly the Lord assured them of this.

II) We know that it is always unwise to draw too sharp a parallel between the disciples and ourselves, or to compare our experiences too exactly with theirs. But the light of such an event as the one we have been studying does indeed cast a gracious and welcome radiance upon the dark corners of the field in which we labor as servants of Jesus, and sometimes outlines certain principles with startling clarity.

Despite their terrifying and unusual details, the affliction of the demoniac boy and the disciples' struggle to free him bring with them a certain feeling of warm familiarity. In a less spectacular but no less emphatic manner those who are entrusted by Christ through the Church with the schooling and training of our youth are confronted by such child-problems continually. It is their very life and calling to meet with Satan in the hearts of children and drive him out. I am not thinking now especially of so-called problem children, although such cases certainly must be included and our conclusions will apply to them in fullest measure. But all children are problem-children. Their hearts are scarred by sin, their flesh is flesh, and their souls and bodies are Satan's choicest prey. Do we not seek to cast devils out of them every day? And do we not sometimes fail?

Essentially the building of Christian character, which we as educators consider to be our primary task, is a contest with the forces of evil, the devil, the world and the flesh, for the control of young bodies, souls, and minds. To this task we prayerfully endeavor to bring each day such measure of consecration, loyalty, and devotion to Jesus and His Gospel as the Holy Spirit generates and maintains in us. And in the application of our strength to the task, we avail ourselves of tested and accepted forms and methods. These receive much attention in our midst. They come in for lengthy discussion, debate, and analysis. For we must deal with the complexities of child psychology and discover or rediscover adequate ways and means of integrating our approach to those whom we teach through an understanding of their intellectual and emotional life. Since it is our task to train them to "put away childish things" as they become men and women in Christ, we need to appreciate to the fullest the peculiar traits of the young; to understand, for example, that characteristic of childishness which Toynbee has called "momentary momentousness"; to adapt to its brief powers of concentration; and to set the pace toward the heights of Christian maturity by the length of the child's stride. Moreover, we have certain convictions regarding the relative merits of the various technical instruments by means of which we apply the power of God at our disposal. We rate the Christian day school, the Sunday School, the Saturday School, the Summer school, the Bible class as they severally seem to answer the purposes to which we set them.

Yet in the midst of all this concern over individual consecration and outward form, however

fruitful it may be in its place, shall we lose sight of the fact that, as and when we fail in our contest with Satan for the children that are brought to us, it is because of our unbelief?

Those of us who operate a Christian day school and work with its superior facilities are apt to be complacent, considering our success as assured and our failures as due to causes beyond our control. Those of us who are not blest with a day school incline toward gloomy reflections on the inadequacy of our facilities and heap the blame for lack of success upon the known weakness of the Sunday School or Saturday School as a means for dealing with the overwhelming forces of Satan.

In view of this attitude it seems necessary to point out what should be self-evident: that the methods and systems so essential to our work are human implements. They are imperfectly developed to put muscle into human effort and are adapted to meet the limitations of earthly dimensions of time and space. Thus the Christian day school is the best possible system for Christian character-building simply because we are what we are and because the conditions under which we and our children live are what they are. In like manner, consecration and loyalty are essential factors in the task, but only because without them we could not properly apply ourselves and would not be able to answer before God who requires of stewards that they be found faithful.

But neither consecration nor system is the determining factor in the question of ultimate success or failure. Loyalty does not drive out devils, and neither does the method of operation. The experience of the disciples established this beyond argument.

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior; but do we tend to deny in practice His power to be the saving force in the children entrusted to us? I ask this because we sometimes find ourselves seeking to deliver them from the power of the evil one by indirection. We want to channel Christ's saving grace to the child through the adequacy of our faithfulness and our methods. We are inclined to elevate our loyalty and our systems to the status of conductors of the saving power of God. In our minds we are tempted to rest our cause upon the quality of these conductors; if they are good, we succeed, if they are poor, we must expect failure.

That is a form of unbelief. We fail to appreciate the marvelous, all-sufficient power of the Christ who alone was glorified unto the suffering and death which achieved the victory. He has already succeeded, for us all, and for the children under our care. It is futile and reprehensible to consider our contributions to the task as booster stations through which we must wire the saving power of Christ and step it up to effectual voltage. Christ is effective; we and all that we have, our personal attitude or our self-developed methods, add to Him not one whit. While it is true indeed that through indolence, through a lack of attention to duty or by a refusal to employ the means within our reach or at our disposal, we prove to be obstacles rather than instruments for the power of God, we ought not draw the conclusion that success is dependent upon our contribution to the processes of Christian growth and sanctification.

We have but one course to pursue: to trust implicitly in the absolute power of Christ to drive out devils and to bring this Christ with His authority and love to the hearts of the children. Simply put Christ and a child together and keep them together by the Word, and regard the result as a foregone conclusion. If we short-circuit the mighty grace of the Redeemer by grounding it in our personal effectiveness, we exhibit the unbelief which results in failure even under the most favorable circumstances.

Let us bear this ever in mind: That when the glorious Christ descended into the valley of men and directly contacted the curse-ridden child and his enemy, the issue was settled instantly. It will always be so. We have no child-problems. We have only personal problems [that require the following remedy]: To adopt the best methods of work as God makes them available to us, and to be altogether faithful in the use of them; but above all, to believe without qualification, to believe implicitly and utterly, that Christ can and will put to rout the kingdom of darkness in the hearts of our youth and set up His rule of grace in them, under all conditions and by any methods, if we but faithfully speak and live the Gospel of Him before their ears and eyes in season and out of season.

An Overview of Christian Apologetics and Its Usefulness among Us

Frank Gantt

We begin with a hypothetical pastoral dilemma which, sadly, is not so hypothetical for many. A young member comes home from college. He hasn't come to church yet and it's been over a month since his return. The pastor calls him and schedules a visit. During the course of the visit the young man reveals that he has been struggling lately with some questions regarding what he was taught in Catechism class. His questions begin simply enough, but as the pastor responds to them, the questions become more disturbing. Finally he blurts out: **"How can there be a God when there is so much evil in the world?"**

The young man obviously is going through some troubling spiritual issues. It is tempting at this point to rest head in hands and decry the public school system. Of course, that will not help this young soul at this moment. He needs answers. More than that, he needs (desperately!) to have his thinking corrected. "I have the answers," you think. "They're in the Bible. I will simply remind him what the Bible says and that will be that." But what good will it do to read to him a Bible passage that he has heard many times before and probably can recite as well as you can? It's not that he doesn't know what the Bible says. The problem is that he's questioning its verity.

So where do you go from here? It may be tempting simply to apply the Law to him and tell him that as long as he rejects the existence of God, he is going to hell. That may be true, but is it what he needs to hear at this moment? Should we be content to let Satan drag this blood-bought soul to eternal death? God forbid! What this young man needs now is a pastor, one who will work to pull him out of the wolf's teeth. He needs you to defend him. He needs you to "*make a defense . . . for a reason for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:15 ESV). He needs you to give an *apology.*

APOLOGY / APOLOGETICS

No, not an "I'm sorry," but a literal apology. How or why the word *apology* came to be used as an admission of guilt and an expression of sorrow is irrelevant here. The literal, original use of the word is our interest today. In the Greek *apology* is a compound word conjoining ἀπό (away from) and λογία (speech or speaking). Quite literally it means *a speaking away from* one's self. It, and also a related verb (ἀπολογέομαι), came to be used as a legal term in Greek and Roman courts. After evidence had been presented against the one accused of a crime, he would then be given a chance to *speak away* from himself the accusation, or to give his defense. Of course, a simple "I didn't do it!" would hardly suffice. Logical, consistent, factual testimony is the surest way to prove one's innocence.

In the early days of the Christian Church the Apostle Peter witnessed the increased hostility of Jews and Gentiles alike against the Lord and His Church. One of the tactics her enemies used to stir up aggression against her was to make accusations before secular rulers. Both the New Testament Scriptures and the secular writings of the day relay to us some of the outlandish and grotesque accusations that were made against Christians. Perhaps in recognizing this recurring tactic the Apostle Peter had written to the dispersed Christians the words italicized above. Here they are again, together with their immediate context: "*But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:14-15 ESV).

This is not the only place that ἀπολογία or its related verb ἀπολογέομαι are used in the New Testament. A form of either word occurs seventeen times from Luke 12 to 1 Peter. On a few occasions it is actually used in reference to testimony that is given by Christians on trial for their faith, either officially or unofficially. In the majority of occurrences it is used in reference to Christians living out their faith in a way that brings no blame on Christ or His Church.

The distinction between apologetics and an apology should be noted. Apologetics is the study of rules or laws by which one may give an apology. An apology is the application of those laws to a particular issue so as to present a logical, consistent, and factual defense of a position taken in relation to it.

THE PLACE OF LOGIC

Yes, such an apology is logical. The application of *logic* is essential to Christian apologetics. This universe is governed by immutable laws, some of them being absolute and some that have been "subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:20 ESV). When God created the world, He made vegetation dependent upon sunshine and water. Without sunlight and water all vegetation would soon die. Yet because of sin sun and water can also destroy plant life. So the laws governing the sun and the water have been subjected to futility. This is not the case with all laws governing the universe. The laws governing logic fall into this second class and as such are fundamental to our existence in the universe. They also are fundamental to how we understand the Bible and so also are fundamental in apologetics.

Do not misunderstand. To say that the laws of logic are absolute and fundamental in our understanding of the Bible and in apologetics is not to say that we give *human reason* a place over Holy Scripture. Reason is not the same as logic. The laws of logic are absolutes (like the laws of morality, if you will). They are outside of man and above man, unaffected by sin. Reason, however, while given to man by God at creation, is inside of man and a part of man. It was corrupted by sin as was man's moral nature. In his sinful state man can make logical arguments (just as he can make moral decisions), but his reason is unreliable, often detrimental, in spiritual matters (as is his conscience).

So we must be careful to differentiate between human reason and the laws of logic. Human reason has been corrupted by sin; the laws of logic have not. They are as reliable as the rules of mathematics (which actually are based on the laws of logic), even though the individual may not always understand and properly apply those rules. The laws of logic are absolutely consistent. They are self-evident and are so simple as to be not provable; i.e., there is no law upon which one can lean to demonstrate the absoluteness of them. They simply are true. This is the crux. Ultimately, one cannot prove that the laws of logic are absolute; he can only demonstrate that every negative to them is untrue. The flip side is that no one has ever been able to demonstrate one of the laws of logic to be false.[1]

In listing the three laws of logic below, we should note the amazing interconnection as essentially the same law expressed, but in the form of three distinct laws, which are these:

The law of <u>identity</u> (A is A); e.g. *If it is raining, it is raining.*

The law of <u>non-contradiction</u> (If A, then not not A); e.g. *If it is raining, then it is not not raining.*

The law of <u>excluded middle</u> (If either A or B, then not C); e.g. *Either it is raining or it is not raining (there is no other possibility).*

Every non-truth in some way violates one of the three laws of logic. This is true of atheism and humanism. This is true of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This is also true of every false teaching that has brought about such division within external Christendom as we witness today—from the denial of infant baptism to the claim that the Bible is not inerrant, from a denial of the deity of Christ to the acceptance of homosexuality. No law of logic contradicts any teaching of Holy Scripture and no teaching of Holy Scripture contradicts the laws of logic.

This is not to say, of course, that one could, on the basis of the laws of logic alone, perceive all of the truths of Holy Scripture (the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, eternal election, etc.), though there are some truths of Holy Scripture that could be perceived by applying the laws of logic (intelligent design, global flood, oneness of God, etc.). Yet all the truths of Holy Scripture are consistent with the laws of logic and any rejection of the truths of Holy Scripture in some way violates one of the three laws of logic.

Some would argue that only the Bible is absolutely true. Such a sentiment is neither logical nor biblical. It is illogical because it is self-refuting—being either self-*in*clusive, which means the statement is itself one of the many other things that are not absolutely true, or it is self-*ex*clusive, which means that the statement itself is also absolutely true though it is not the Bible. In either case we face a statement that is logically false. It is also an unbiblical statement because the Bible itself does not make such a claim. The Bible claims to be truth, but it doesn't claim to be the sum total of truth. Everything it says, of course, is absolutely true (six-day creation, world-wide flood, Jonah and the great fish, virgin birth of Christ, etc.), but not all truth is revealed in the Bible (e.g., What was God doing in eternity? Exactly how many angels did God create? When will Judgment Day be?).

Ah, but what about the Trinity? Does that not defy the second law of logic, the law of non-contradiction? The Bible says that the Lord, our God, is one; yet it clearly also teaches that there are three Persons, each of whom is fully God. Skeptics of the Christian faith and skeptics of logic would both claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with the laws of logic, saying, "If one, then not three." However, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a mathematical equation, but a nature of being. The Bible doesn't teach us that God is both one *and* three, but rather that God is three *in* one, that is, three in diversity of Persons but one in substance of being. Plugging this truth into the second law of logic would read more like this: If three in one, then not not three in one. In other words, neither polytheism nor pantheism nor Unitarianism (to say nothing of atheism in its various forms) are a logical fit with the triune nature of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. Would we have known this apart from Holy Scripture? No. Can we even fully comprehend it? Not in our sin-corrupted state. But what Holy Scripture presents concerning the nature of God does not negate any of the laws of logic. Or to put it another way, when we know even as we are known (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12), we will not thereby become illogical, any more than God Himself is illogical.

Another objection that some raise to logic's place in the Christian faith is in connection with the doctrine of the *vicarious atonement*. Yet it is absolutely in keeping with the laws of logic. Sinners cannot make atonement for themselves to be reconciled to God. This is in agreement with the first law of logic, the law of identity, which says that if one is a sinner, that's what he is. Every attempt to make atonement will prove futile because he is a sinner. This certainly is biblical, for "there is none who does good" (Psalm 14:1). Christ, on the other hand, is righteous. Human reason, darkened by sin, would argue that it is illogical for a righteous man to die for the guilty, but the laws of logic tell us that a righteous person would do exactly that, because he is righteous. Christ is righteous and He did the righteous thing by giving His life a ransom for all. It is therefore not against logic that Christ was our substitute under God's wrath, but is rather consistent with logic. Apart from His revealed Word, would we have guessed that God would do such a thing? No. That inability is due to the corruption of our reason by sin, not because of an inconsistency between the laws of logic and God's revealed truth or because God is inconsistent within His own nature.

The point here is that logic is not the enemy of truth, but goes hand in hand with it. Without logic and the rules of logic we could make no defense at all of any truth, not even the truths of Holy Scripture. An absence of the laws of logic would permit one to "prove" anything that his sinful reason invents. This is the nature of *relativism*, which makes truth *relative* to one's own experience and perspective. As confessional Lutherans we are accustomed to hearing that Holy Scripture is our only rule and norm for truth, and so it is. Yet Holy Scripture conveys the truth to us through human language, and the rules of logic are foundational to human language.

One modern apologist, William Lane Craig, made this applicable statement: "We know Christianity is true by the self-authenticating witness of the Holy Spirit. We show Christianity is true by demonstrating that it is systematically consistent."[2] And just in case anyone believes Luther to have defended the Christian faith without logic, listen to this thoroughly logical paragraph in his *apology* to Erasmus of the doctrine of the bondage of the human will:

> Upon this point, the Sophists have now laboured hard for many years, and being at last conquered, have been compelled to retreat. All things take place from the *necessity of the consequence*, (say they) but not from the *necessity of the thing consequent*. What nothingness this amounts to, I will not take the trouble to show. By the *necessity of the consequence*, (to give a general idea of it) they mean this—If God wills any thing, that same thing, must, of necessity, be done; but it is not necessary that the thing done should be necessary: for God alone is necessary; all other things cannot be so, if it is God that wills. Therefore, (say they) the action of God is necessary, where He wills, but the act itself is not necessary; that is, (they mean) it has not *essential necessity*. But what do they effect by this playing upon words? Only this, that the act itself is not necessary, that is, it has not essential necessity. This is no more than saying, the act is not God Himself. This, nevertheless, remains certain, that if the action of God is necessary, or if there is a necessity of the consequence, every thing takes place of necessity,

how much soever the act be not necessary; that is, be not God Himself, or have not essential necessity.[3]

Luther was a skilled defender of the hope that was poured into him by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. That he was so was due in large part to his genuine faith in Christ for salvation. Yet it was also due to his God-given wisdom to see the absurdity of the positions of the papists and enthusiasts and to present in clear, intelligible, and, yes, logical statements the very truths revealed in the Bible.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF APOLOGETICS

Though *apologetics* as a distinct area of study and theological discipline is relatively modern, its roots can be traced back to the first century AD, to Polycarp (AD 69-155) and to Justin Martyr (AD 100-169). These early Christian pastors developed not only oral arguments to be used in mission work and debates and court cases, but also written arguments to be used in Christian education and pastoral training.

When Christianity became a legal religion by the edict of Constantine in 313, Christian apologetics in the form of polemical writings would increase. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, was undoubtedly the greatest apologist of the ancient church, whose pertinent writings include *On the Predestination of the Saints, Tractatus on the Gospel of John,* and *Confessions*. His Christian world-view was expounded most completely in one of his final works, *The City of God*, which gives a defense for the existence of God and is regarded by Christian apologists as one of the most prominent books in the history of Western thought.

Three hundred years after Augustine, Anselm, bishop of Canterbury, arose to prominence as a defender of the Christian faith. He argued from a position that viewed faith as being necessary before understanding. "For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand," he wrote.[4] He often fell into the trap of presenting rational proofs designed to convince atheists.

Following Anselm, there was Albert the Great, who wrote *On the Unity of the Intellect against Averroes* to combat the rise of Aristotelianism at the hands of Averroes, the Spanish-Arab philosopher. But it was Albert's student, Thomas Aquinas, who "would change the course of Christian philosophy and apologetics."[5] The extant works of Aquinas are many. His *Summa Theologiae* was written to instruct Christian students in theology and is considered of great importance in presenting a systematic approach to theology and apologetics.

The period of the Reformation in some ways brought about the height of apologetics as Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and others defended the Christian faith against assaults from both without and within the Church. But in other ways the Reformation gave rise to an altered approach to apologetics, one in which human reason became the arbiter of truth, even while claiming loyalty to Holy Scripture. John Calvin, unlike Luther, held that faith is always reasonable (i.e., in keeping with human reason), which is a subtle yet significant change from the emphasis that the ancient theologians and apologists had placed on the laws of logic. In our day apologetics has come to the fore in organizations such as Institute for Creation Research, Answers in Genesis, and Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.[6]

With the advent of the Enlightenment, Christianity was subjected to incessant waves of attacks. With the splintering of visible Christendom there was no longer a unified defense presented against these assaults, but rather each arm of Christianity produced its own apologetic hero. This, in turn, has lead to varying approaches to apologetics in more recent years, as we will see in the next section.

CLASSES OF APOLOGETICS

Apologetics has three distinct aspects or functions. These three functions are 1) *defense* – to show how the Christian faith is related to and consistent with reality, 2) *refutation* – to show how conflicting ideologies do not relate to or are not consistent with reality, and 3) *vindication* – to show the Christian faith to be superior in explaining reality. Though some modern apologists would claim a fourth function, *persuasion*, it is not included here because of its development from Reformed doctrine. More will be said on that later.

In addition to these three functions (and because of the inclusion of the fourth), there have also

developed four major classes of Christian apologetics. These four are 1) *rational*, 2) *empirical*, 3) *authoritarian*, and 4) *intuitive*. The differences between these classes can be subtle, yet extremely important.

Rational apologetics is the method that was developed and used for centuries both prior to and during the Reformation. It is rational because it is based on the three laws of logic. These laws of logic are, by the rational apologist's estimation, "self-evident," needing neither a defense nor an agreement upon them. According to the rational apologist no intelligent communication is possible apart from the laws of logic. Though rational apologetics has been practiced by many of the ancient theologians, Thomas Aquinas is considered to be its most well-known adherent. The rational apologist will apply the laws of logic to an issue and will then demonstrate Scripture's consistency with the conclusion drawn.

The *empirical* apologist bases his main arguments upon empirical and verifiable facts. Placing those verifiable facts alongside Holy Scripture will demonstrate the Christian faith to be correct. This approach to Christian apologetics has developed in the last hundred years out of a desire not to get bogged down in proving the self-evidence of the laws of logic, though the laws of logic are still employed. Dr. John Warwick Montgomery (of LC-MS) is considered to be the foremost empirical apologist.

Authoritarian apologetics begins with Holy Scripture as authoritative in all things, and so argues that reason ought to be grounded on biblical truth rather than the other way around. The authoritative apologist begins with fundamental presuppositions and then makes a case for his understanding of reality. For example, the laws of logic find their greatest usefulness to an authoritarian only insofar as they are what one would expect in a universe created by the God described in the Bible.

Intuitive apologetics, though perhaps from a technical point of view not apologetics at all, does not deal with logic, consistency, or facts; it rather seeks to compare the personal, subjective experience of the individual with the testimony of Holy Scripture. The intuitive apologist believes that to understand what one sees and experiences, a person needs a simple trust in the Bible, which has all the answers. His emphasis is on humanity's need and how Christianity fulfills it.

APOLOGETICS AT WORK

It may be helpful to understand the differences between the four classes of apologetics with a demonstration. If we apply each one to our original pastoral dilemma, we will better see their distinctions. The following is how apologists from each class of apologetics would respond to the question, "How can there be a God when there is so much evil in the world?"

Rational Response: The recognition of evil in the world implies the recognition of evil's opposite, which is good. The recognition of the existence of good implies the existence of a definite moral standard. This moral standard must have a source. Furthermore, it is not the source of the moral standard that is committing the evil, but rather people who commit evil. The Bible tells us why people commit evil and also gives God's solution to it.

Empirical Response: Yes, there is much evil in the world. Have you stopped to consider all the good that is also in the world? Many people may be starving, but many more have food. Many may die of cancer, but many others live long lives. Yes, cruel dictators do arise, but far more leaders protect their citizens. The good far outweighs the bad. If you are going to say that God doesn't exist because of so much evil, then you must reconsider His existence on the basis of so much good. The Bible shows us why this evil is present, but it also shows us why there is so much good.

Authoritarian Response: Why do you think you have the ability to decide what is evil and what is good? You can't make such an accusation against God's existence because you are arguing on the basis of a moral standard that is only consistent with a world-view that recognizes God's existence. To continue to argue against God's existence on the basis of evil in the world is to admit the existence of God. You are therefore inconsistent.

Intuitive Response: Is there some evil in your life that causes you to doubt God's existence, or is it just because you feel sorry for others who have suffered at the hands of evil people? Understand that God also has compassion, even more than you do, on those who suffer. He could stop it, but He doesn't force anyone to do anything against His will. The Bible teaches us that God will finally bring about

justice at the last day. Just trust Him.

CHOOSING A CLASS OF APOLOGETICS

Perhaps after noting the responses of the various classes of apologetics, you now have a different opinion of each of them than you did just a moment ago. What may have seemed cold before now seems evangelical. What may have seemed silly now seems pastoral. What may have seemed shallow now seems thoughtful. What may have seemed firm now seems weak. Can we discern why there has been a shift in perception? The answer is interesting and enlightening.

So what is the answer? It has nothing at all to do with the authority of Holy Scripture. Any faithful Christian apologist recognizes the inerrancy of Holy Scripture. He who does not is hardly capable of making a defense for it. The real reason for the difference in effectiveness, this writer believes, is due to the place one gives to the laws of logic. The greater the emphasis one places on the laws of logic, the greater the defense for the existence of God in the above scenario. Conversely, the less importance one places on the laws of logic, the less effective is the defense for the existence of God. Astounding! Also astounding are the more common names by which the above classes of apologetics have come to be known. In order they are ***Classical*** (relies heavily on laws of logic), ***Evidential*** (makes use of laws of logic somewhat, but empirical evidence is given more weight), ***Reformed*** (laws of logic are simply a means to an end, i.e., they presuppose a law-Giver), and ***Fideism*** (mostly indifferent to the laws of logic as subjective experience is given more credence).

It is ironic, isn't it, that the Reformed apologist, who puts reason over faith in so many ways, places less value on the laws of logic when it comes to apologetics. Meanwhile, the Lutheran apologist, who places faith in Holy Scripture as one of three mantras of his Reformation heritage, has a higher emphasis on the laws of logic than the Reformed when it comes to apologetics. Is this an inconsistency? Not at all. In fact, it is precisely here where the Reformed theologian goes astray (giving place to reason) and where the Lutheran theologian remains firmly grounded (in following the laws of logic) on the truth of God's Word. It is also here that we witness the weakness of Reformed apologetics, which, sadly, is the predominant class of apologetics used by the likes of Answers in Genesis, Institute of Creation Research, RZIM, and others.

THE PURPOSE OF APOLOGETICS

It was mentioned in a previous section that some purpose a fourth function of apologetics that is called *persuasion*. By *persuasion* is meant a rational agreement with the biblical presentation of an issue. For example, in the previously mentioned issue concerning the prevalence of evil in the world and the existence of God, those who contend that the final purpose of apologetics is persuasion would consider an issue adequately apologized if, and only if, the opponent is led to concede the point on the basis of a so-called "reasonableness" of the apology.

However, we ought to keep in mind that the work of the Church is not merely a matter of persuading minds, but to make true disciples of Christ. This is more than a matter of offering logical arguments. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that *"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Christian faith does not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4-5). That power of God resides fully in the Gospel and in no other place: *"For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16).

The purpose of apologetics, then, ought never to be elevated to the level of—and certainly not over—the Gospel. Its function is merely preparatory. Its function serves within the function of the Law, to expose the ignorance and pride of sinful man. As such it is a Christian discipline that is especially useful for demonstrating the consistency of Holy Scripture with the reality of this sinful world.

One thing to be kept in mind in this discussion is the difference between an apology and an argument. An argument is a defense of a person's point of view, which means that it may be and often is rather subjective. An apology is a defense of the truth that is completely objective. Since the truth that Christian apologies defend is ultimately the Gospel of salvation for sinners, there is no room whatsoever

for personal, subjective arguments.

Historically, apologies have sought only to examine an issue logically and thus demonstrate that what Scripture says is in keeping with logical conclusions. Consequently, an apology was not given to persuade one into believing that what the Bible says is true. It was rather to demonstrate that biblical solutions are superior to non-biblical solutions or to anti-biblical solutions. Apologies were not given to win an argument, but to "*contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 1:3 ESV), the very faith by which alone sinners are saved from sin, death, and hell.

CONCLUSION

We can think of modern people as lost in two senses. They are lost *evangelically* in the sense that they are condemned sinners without Christ; but they are also lost *purposefully* in the sense that their lives are without meaning. With the widespread acceptance of evolution there is no discernable purpose to life or to man's existence. Morality is indefinite. Spirituality is irrelevant.

Well, in this post-modern era more than ever before, apologetics is a theological discipline that this writer believes ought to be cultivated. We are bombarded on an almost daily basis with abstractions, half-truths, and outright falsehoods regarding man's place and purpose in the universe. Relativism has permeated education, ethics, art, architecture, politics, science, economics, and the criminal justice system, even though relativism itself is logically indefensible.[7]

Neither the world nor Christ's Church has outgrown the need for the Holy Spirit's admonition for us "*to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you*."

End Notes

[1] Classical apologists are generally in agreement that the three laws of logic are not only self-evident but also not provable.

[2] Gregory A. Boyd, David Hunt, William Lane Craig, and Paul Helm, *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 48.

[3] Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976, 1983) 41-42.

[4] Anselm, *Proslogion*, quoted in *Faith Has Its Reasons* (Boa and Bowman—see endnote 5) 17.

[5] Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005) 19.

[6] RZIM is a quasi-religious organization whose motto is: "Helping the thinker believe. Helping the believer think." Dr. Ravi Zacharias is a captivating speaker whose desire to reach unbelievers is evident in the way he responds to their questions and addresses them in dialogue.

[7] The mantra of relativism is: All truth is relative. This statement cannot stand. It is either self-inclusive, making the statement itself relative; or it is self-exclusive, making the statement itself false.

Brief Notices of Books by Lutherans

For this reviewer there has not been enough time to read all of the following books in full; and there is not enough space in the *Journal of Theology* to print detailed reviews of them. But we do wish that our readers be made aware of these recently published works that have a common feature of being written by various Lutheran authors. The following notices are not given in any order of importance.

Arthur J. Clement: *Lutheranism: From Wittenberg to the U.S.A.—Luther, the Reformation, and Lutheranism in America—A Conservative Perspective*; Lutheran News, Inc., New Haven, MO, 2012, hard cover, 912 pages and nine introductory pages.

After giving a summary of Luther's life and the early Reformation, this book concentrates on Lutheran developments in the United States. There are chapters on the earliest Lutheran pioneers, the work of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg in organizing these early Lutherans, and the origins and histories of the early Lutheran synods, which include the General Synod, the General Council, the United Synod in the South, and their merger into the United Lutheran Church in America. There is an extensive discussion of the Scandinavian, German, and Slovak Lutherans that emigrated to America and organized various church bodies, which separated from each other and merged with each other at various times and places. In keeping with the stated aim of looking at this history from "a conservative perspective," particular attention is given to those groups that stressed confessional Lutheranism, such as the synods of the Synodical Conference.

One whole chapter (pages 783-815) is devoted to the Church of the Lutheran Confession, even though our church body is relatively small in comparison with the others. Pastor Clement, who died in 2011, explains: "Note that an entire chapter has been devoted to this small Lutheran body because of the role it had in the great controversy within the Synodical Conference, which finally resulted in the WELS and the ELS suspending fellowship with the Missouri Synod and the eventual breakup of the Synodical Conference. Not only did the organizers of the CLC sever fellowship with the Missouri Synod, they also left the fellowship of the WELS and the ELS over the doctrine of Fellowship" (p. 889). Pastor Clement is well acquainted with the early history of the CLC, for he himself was a participant in the early meetings that led to the formation of the CLC. Most of Pastor Clement's ministry was conducted in congregations of the WELS.

A book of this kind is obviously an extensive project undertaken by author and publisher, which contains information not easily available anywhere else. It is worthy of consideration for purchase by pastors and students of Lutheran history and is available from the publishers of *Christian News*.

Daniel and Sarah Habben: *The Bloodstained Path to God—Experiencing Worship with Old Testament Believers*; Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 2012; paperback, 137 pages.

Mark J. Lenz: *Four Portraits of the One Savior—Discovering Why the Bible Has Four Gospels*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 2012; paperback, 98 pages.

Both of these soft cover volumes are included in the more recent Northwestern *Bible Discovery Series*, which is explained on the back cover of either book as providing "background resources to help you read and understand the text of Scripture." The Habben book takes the reader through the book of Leviticus, explaining the elaborate rituals God gave to His Old Testament people as well as their fulfillment in the work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Various charts and illustrations are provided to aid the reader in picturing what actually took place.

The Lenz book shows the different perspectives and aims of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in their portrayal of Jesus Christ. The intent is to help Bible readers understand why the four Gospels are not identical. Yet according to God's wisdom each one contributes to our full picture of who Jesus of Nazareth was and the work He did for our salvation.

John A. Maxfield, editor: *Who Is God? In the Light of the Lutheran Confessions*; The Luther Academy, St. Louis, MO, 2012; paperback, 157 pages.

This book contains ten essays written by ten Lutheran scholars who are mostly, if not entirely, from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The essays have been published by the Luther Academy in its continuing series of papers presented at free conferences known as the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions. The 20th such conference, for which these essays were written, was held in April of 2009 in Bloomington, Minnesota.

The essays deal with topics of current interest such as the "God" of Civil Religion, the "God" of Evolution, the "God of Liberation Theology," and the "God of American Evangelicalism." It is clear that for many persons labeled as Christians, the concept of God is vague and shadowy. One wonders how many church-going people actually know who the true God is—the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God who is Creator and Preserver of all, the true God who alone is Savior of the world. As

revealed in His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ, He alone is God; and He will not share His glory with the "God" professed by Judaism or with Allah of Islam or with any other false god that is known by their followers under one name or another.

Of note is the first essay, which deals with unionism and syncretism and shows the dangers of compromise in matters of doctrine. We only wish that the good words of these authors would translate into the God-pleasing action of separation from that which is false. How long can the Missouri Synod continue to be a church body whose leaders and teachers differ from each other in major points of doctrine and practice? Nevertheless, we can appreciate all the good words that truly set forth Scriptural and confessional Lutheran teaching. In this book, however, there is to be found some hay and straw mixed with the gold, which probably makes it less appealing as something to be bought and used by pastor and parishioner.

Peter Preus: *And she was a CHRISTIAN—Why Do Believers Commit Suicide?*; Northwestern Publishing, Milwaukee, WI, 2011; paperback, 183 pages and seven introductory pages.

This particular book must have been very difficult to write, for its contents dwell on the matter of suicide and how Christians think about suicide. The author, a Lutheran pastor, learned about suicide in a rather personal way when his own beloved wife, the mother of his six children, took her own life at the age of 41. Part One, "My Story as a Survivor," presents the facts of the case in a very moving way. After ten years of marriage and a seemingly happy and productive life as wife and mother, Jean Preus fell into a deep state of gloom and despondency. Her condition, labeled by doctors as severe clinical depression, grew worse and worse until it ended in suicide, in spite of all efforts by husband and doctors to bring about a better outcome.

The rest of the book is an attempt by the pastor (and husband and father) to address from a Scriptural point of view various issues related to suicide, particularly the suicide of confessing Christians. He takes issue with the view held by some in past and present that all those who commit suicide are by that very act doomed to eternal damnation. The stigma attached to depression and suicide led both Jean and her husband to hide from others the facts of her depression and the admission of her suicidal thoughts. On the back cover one can find the following: "How can Christians, who by definition rest their eternal hope in Christ, seem to give up hope and take their own lives? Too often church leaders fail to recognize the role the illness of depression plays in suicide, resulting in the assumption that Christians who commit suicide have lost their faith in Christ and have gone to hell." Also found on the back cover is the opinion that Preus "offers a helpful scriptural correction to views of the past that emphasize the law more than the gospel."

The purpose of the book is to assist pastors and counselors in their dealings with survivors of relatives and friends who have taken their own lives in a state of depression. Although I have not read the book in its entirety, it would seem, given the prevalence of severe depression in our communities and congregations, that our pastors should acquire it and consider its contents carefully in study clubs and small groups.

L. Dale Redlin: *Sheep & Shepherds*, D & H Publishing Company Co. , Mankato, MN, 2011; paperback, 315 pages.

Anyone who has read Pastor Redlin's entertaining book on growing up in South Dakota (*It Takes Cow Chips to Make Dinner*) can recognize that he is a good story-teller. Anyone who has read his *Poems of Prayer & Praise* (2008) can likewise see that he is a Bible student who likes to think about God and the words and works of God, particularly the salvation He has won for us through the death and resurrection of Christ. Both his capacity for story-telling and his contemplation of the words and works of God are combined in his more recently published book, *Sheep & Shepherds*.

The eleven sections of *Sheep & Shepherds* generally begin with a story about real sheep and their human caretakers, real shepherds. Pastor Redlin can speak from experience, having served as such a shepherd in his younger years. After the opening story each section in the book moves towards a discussion of spiritual shepherds (pastors) and their flocks (members). Again Pastor Redlin can speak from experience, having served as a Lutheran pastor for most of his adult life.

This book is loaded with Scripture exposition and practical application on many topics such as marriage, parenting, dealing with problems and disappointments, pastoral challenges, plain Christian living centered on the faithful use of the means of grace, death, and the glorious eternal life that is promised us through Christ. Along the way some reference is made to some of Pastor Redlin's teachers, who include Norman Madson, Sr., C. M. Gullerud, and Edmund Reim. At the close of each chapter is a brief prayer.

Pastor Douglas Libby, a fellow church member and colleague of the author, says in the Foreword to the book: "While we often speak of Christian pastors tending their flocks and their congregants as sheep, there are not many pastors any longer who have actually cared for and tended the animals upon which the Biblical comparison is based. When you come across one who has, the experience will likely have left an impression and yielded many apt analogies. Such is the case with Rev. L. D. Redlin. From his experience with both kinds of flocks, *Sheep & Shepherds* illustrates that in his retirement years he is still teaching lessons for this life and the next based on his many years of Scripture study and his work of shepherding His sheep."

This book is available at the CLC Book House, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Uuras Saarnivaara: *They Lived in the Power of God—Lutheran Revival Leaders in Northern Europe*, translated from the Finnish by Rodger N. Foltz and Aila Saarnivaara Foltz; Ambassador Publications, Minneapolis, MN, 2011; hardcover, 343 pages and eleven introductory pages.

Uuras Saarnivaara (1908-1998) was a Finnish theologian associated in the United States with the Free Lutherans. He is perhaps best known for his account of Luther's evangelical breakthrough entitled *Luther Discovers the Gospel*. The American heirs of the free Lutheran tradition, known as the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, have appreciated Saarnivaara's seminary handouts on Lutheran revival leaders. These brief biographies were published in Finnish in 1976, but were not previously available in English. Saarnivaara's daughter and son-in-law, Rodger and Aila Foltz, have recently translated fourteen of these biographies for publication in this interesting book.

Some of these leaders are well-known Pietists, such as the German men Philipp Spener (1635-1705) and August Francke (1663-1727). I was especially interested in reading about Gisle Johnson (1822-1894), who was influential in guiding some of the Norwegian Lutheran pioneers in this country into sound Lutheran doctrine. There is no doubt that many of these Pietists went too far in their emphasis on feelings and lifestyle and some of them became legalistic in their church practice. But it must be remembered that in these northern European countries they were contending against a form of Lutheranism that resembled what Jesus condemned in the ancient congregations in Sardis and Laodicea (Revelation 3).

Among the others whose stories are included in this volume are Carl Rosenius of Sweden, Lars Laestadius of Finland, Vilhelm Beck of Denmark, and Hans Hauge and Ole Hallesby of Norway.

Reformation Books in Review

In the previous issue (Dec. 2012, 52:4, pp. 40-43) under the same heading "Reformation Books in Review," a review was given of the first hardcover volume (*Galatians, Ephesians*) to appear in the new series *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*. The book covered in the review below is a companion volume to that same series.

Timothy George: *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*; InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2011; paperback, 269 pages.

Timothy George, the general editor of the new *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, has written this interesting book as an introduction to the series of twenty-eight volumes that contain excerpts from commentaries written by the Reformers.

In the first chapter ("Why Read the Reformers?") George notes, in stark contrast to the skepticism and doubts of many Biblical scholars today, the following facts: "The reformers of the sixteenth century shared with ancient Christian writers and the medieval scholastics who came before

them a high regard for the inspiration and authority of the Bible" (p. 18); "the exegetical debates of the sixteenth century were carried out within a common recognition of the Scriptures as divinely given" (p. 19).

In the second chapter ("*Ad Fontes!*") George sets the stage for the age of the Reformation by pointing out the Renaissance return to the ancient sources. The medieval Bible students were hampered by a lack of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, the languages in which the Bible was originally written. George says: "Of the two original biblical languages there was less knowledge of Greek than Hebrew in the centuries leading up to the Reformation. From the fall of Rome in the fifth century until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the ability to read and understand the Greek language was virtually unknown" (p. 69). The recovery of the Biblical languages was enhanced by the invention of the printing press, as noted by the author in these remarks: "By 1500 there were nearly 250 printing establishments across Europe" (p. 63); "Protestantism was the first religious movement to take full advantage of the new powers of the press" (p. 64).

The third and fourth chapters present the work of Erasmus and the printing of new editions of the Greek New Testament. In 1516, the year prior to the 95 Theses, Erasmus' first edition of the Greek New Testament was published. Erasmus was also responsible for printed editions of the writings of church fathers like Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, and Jerome. It is quite obvious that God prepared the world for the Reformation by making the tools available for serious Bible study in a way that had not been possible previously.

Two chapters, five and six, are devoted to the work of Martin Luther and the faithful confessors associated with him. The gradual development of Luther's understanding is traced to the point when he became clear concerning the only way of salvation: justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the Law. George writes: "Luther's new insight was that the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness was based not on the gradual curing of sin but rather on the complete victory of Christ on the cross. The once-for-allness of justification was emphasized: 'If you believe, then you have it!' . . . Luther's doctrine of justification by faith was radical, for it challenged the entire theology of merit that was so central to the sacramental-penitential structure of the church. . . . Hochstraten [in his contention with Luther as a Roman Catholic inquisitor] was rightly shocked at the import of Luther's message. But Luther found an equally shocking statement in Paul: 'God justifies the ungodly'" (p. 159).

The Reformation, however, was not a one-man show. In his own time Philip Melanchthon had a more extensive influence than Luther. He was involved with scholars all over Europe, who wrote to him with their questions and opinions. "Between 1514 and 1560, Melanchthon wrote more than ten thousand letters, which is more than Luther and Erasmus put together" (pp. 173-74). "Neither a cipher for Luther nor an echo of Erasmus, he was a leading interpreter of Scripture and a creative formulator of the Reformation tradition" (p. 175). Luther certainly recognized Melanchthon's contributions to the cause and praised him highly. Regrettably, however, Melanchthon's weaknesses in doctrine and moral courage became evident after Luther's death and contributed to the controversies that raged among Lutherans until they were resolved by Scripture through the *Formula of Concord* in 1577.

The last two chapters, seven and eight, describe the Reformation as it played out in Strasbourg, the home of Martin Bucer; in Basel, the home of Johannes Oeculampadius; in Zurich, the home of Ulrich Zwingli; in Geneva, the home of John Calvin; and in Waldshut, the home of Balthasar Hubmaier, one of the Anabaptist leaders. Bucer was the great compromiser who tried to unite all the various factions. Oeculampadius and Zwingli were the fierce opponents of Luther on the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. John Calvin tried to occupy a stance between Zwingli and Luther, but finally he had to be denounced by the faithful Lutherans as a false teacher.

In this book Timothy George does not take sides between Luther and Calvin, but praises both highly. Of Calvin he says: "His preaching was informed by his superb exegetical studies and the many commentaries he wrote on nearly every book of the Bible. He was a brilliant public speaker who could express ideas, including very complex ones, with clarity and precision. . . . He always preached from the Greek or Hebrew text without notes or manuscript. He was a master of the French language and had an influence on its development comparable to that of Luther on German" (p. 244). There is no doubt that

the views of Calvin were spread far and wide, so that Lutheranism was in danger of being swallowed up by Calvinism, even as today confessional Lutheranism seems to be overwhelmed by a non-doctrinal Protestantism of which all of the Reformers would be ashamed.

In discussing the aftermath of the Reformation in his conclusion, George states: "The history of theology in the late Reformation, which scholars call the age of confessionalization, is marked by intensifying doctrinal disputes and church polemics. But the post-Reformation period of Protestant orthodoxy was also a time of cultural flourishing and spiritual fecundity. It gave us, to name only two of the giants, John Milton and Johann Sebastian Bach. The work of neither is comprehensible apart from the renaissance of biblical studies in the Reformation" (p. 257).

At the end of his conclusion George states that the "two poles of Reformation theology" are the Bible and the crucified and risen Savior. "Our task," he says as his final word, "is to point men and women both to the written Word in Scripture and to the living Word Jesus Christ" (p. 258).

- David Lau