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RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Twelve months ago we spoke of the year now past as "A year of Decision." (Vol. II, No. 2) It proved to be a momentous year in many ways--extreme weather, international crises, uncertain elections, globe-circling space flights, the first session of the ecumenical council in Rome. There were also some significant events in the ecclesiastical sphere in this country and especially in the Lutheran sector. One such event was the constituting convention of what is now the largest Lutheran body in the world, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). Of greater and more immediate concern to us were the developments within the Synodical Conference during the past year.

Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod re-affirmed its decision of 1961 to memorialize the Synodical Conference to dissolve itself. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod called a special convention to grapple with the educational problems facing it. But the crisis in the Synodical Conference prompted it to give earnest consideration to the forth-coming Synodical Conference convention, too; so that it resolved, almost unanimously, to call for the dissolution of the Synodical Conference. The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak) did not meet in convention in 1962; however, its doctrinal committee requested the other synods of the Synodical Conference to resume doctrinal discussions, in spite of the fact that two of the other synods had found it impossible to continue such discussions under the circumstances now prevailing in the Synodical Conference.

It had been hoped that there would have been some conservatively-pointed decisions made by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at its triennial convention in Cleveland, Ohio, last June. However, it seems that this convention succeeded in doing what we a year ago did not deem possible--it avoided coming to effective grips with a number of controversial issues. For example, the "Theology of Fellowship," a statement given to the Joint Doctrinal Committee of the Synodical Conference as the position of the Missouri Synod on that doctrine, was at Cleveland termed "a study document open to revision, clarification, or correction." Instead of being forthrightly rejected because it espoused un-lutheran principles, the document is either to be revised or supplanted by a new study on the subject.

Again, the same convention did not settle the Scharlemann problem. It forgave him, not for teaching false doctrine, which we maintain he did, but for having caused a disturbance in his synod with his exploratory speaking and writing. This was all his "confession" involved.

Again, the Missouri Synod thanked God for having permitted the India Evangelical Lutheran Church "to intensify its missionary outreach" with respect to its applying for membership with the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, which federation was at that very moment (through its Commission) proposing avenues of fellowship with the unionistic Church of South India.

Again, the Cleveland convention approved of the Missouri Synod representatives meeting with representatives of other Lutheran and Reformed churches, without any criticism or correction of the fellowship involved in such a meeting in the past. And, instead of seeking ways and means for healing the breach in its own immediate family, the Synodical Conference, the convention resolved to continue meeting with representatives from other Lutheran churches to set up a new Lutheran Inter-Church Association in the United States. It was these discussions and meetings with the Old National Lutheran Council, at the very time when the Synodical Conference Synods were discussing the matter of Fellowship and the related subject of Cooperation in Externals, which had much to do with bringing the discussions of the Joint Doctrinal Committee of the Synodical Conference to an end in 1960.

In general, false doctrine, false teachers, and false practice were not unequivocally rejected at Cleveland. Perhaps it is true, as a man in an influential position in said synod stated, namely, that the Missouri Synod conventions do not make any decisions; they only set policies. For ourselves we believe the judgment expressed by the Christian Century six years ago, after the St. Paul convention of the Missouri Synod, is even more apropos today,

. . . forces are building up within the church. Missouri Synod fundamentalism has never been run-of-the-mill fundamentalism. In the past at least, it was informed, reasoned, scholarly biblicism. For some time now, though, the denomination has been coasting theologically. It has lived up its theological capital. It has turned its brainy, busy, businesslike attention to other matters. It has built prize-winning plants and huge budgets and experimented with educational theory and gone in for art and triumphed in television. The state of Missouri may say "show me," but the Missouri Synod goes overboard wherever it goes. The one thing it ought to be good at, though, has lost ground all around. Theology is its stepchild. (July 18, 1956, p. 847)

Also the Synodical Conference convention in November was a disappointment. The resolution was passed to continue the Synodical Conference before there had been any discussion on the existing doctrinal divisions within the Synodical Conference. The convention as such also failed to come to grips with the doctrinal issues when they did come to the floor. In fact, what was resolved had in effect all been said in previous conventions, and much more pointedly, too. The overwhelming voting power of the Missouri Synod (about 75%) meant the Synodical Conference would only do and decide what Missouri wanted done and decided. The Synodical Conference as an organization has been preserved, but the thing that in the past set it apart from all other Lutheran groups, a genuine one-ness in conservative Lutheran theology, has long departed. It is, then, not amiss also of the Synodical Conference to say, "Ichabod!"

We are well aware of the fact that we have given considerable space to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and its part in the history of 1962; yet, it was necessary, for our fate is very closely tied up with the same. What she did or did not do set the stage for the course our Synod will have to pursue.

And so we ask, What are the prospects for the coming year and years? One cannot avoid saying, the die has been cast. The synods within the Synodical Conference can only drift farther apart. There can be no resumption of former work and worship when there is no yielding of position or change of direction on the part of those who have manifestly left the historic platform and principles of the Synodical Conference as well as those of their own Synod. The simple fact is that an impasse has been reached and because of it there no longer is any meeting of minds, all resolutions and protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. This may mean a smaller circle of churches with whom we can fellowship. That should not disturb us if we can have the good conscience, and we can have it, that our cause is the Lord's, for it is the cause of His Truth.

We would like to hear some more of the forthright testimony that we had come to appreciate from our brethren in the Slovak Synod. We cannot believe that they on the matters in controversy say one thing in the Joint Doctrinal meetings and another thing on those same matters when outside that forum. When we recall some of their noble history in the early days of their synod, we would like to believe that they would not, now when they are larger and stronger, act any less decisively and courageously. Neglecting to act in accordance with their former position and principles would mean that their former battles, some of them bitter ones, had in the end been fought in vain.

By way of a postscript we must mention that while we appreciate the pleas and admonitions of our Overseas Brethren not to "break up" the Synodical Conference, we in turn must also plead with them to review the facts and to seek to come to some decision with whom they would identify themselves in days to come. We honestly feel that they and we are very close theologically. If they will but follow their own theses, with which we can for the most part readily agree, we do not have any fears as to the conclusion to which they will come. We have also been more than once impressed by the fact that such Overseas Brethren as have had little contact with the Synodical Conference until very recently, are much more sympathetic to the position we and the Wisconsin Synod are espousing than to that of the "new Missouri."

May the Lord of the Church, Who does not depend on majorities or numerical strength, for His Truth's sake, throughout the year we have entered in His Name, graciously direct and bless the labors of every church and individual that is "contending for the faith once delivered to the saints."

--M. H. Otto

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THE LUTHERAN SYNOD BOOK COMPANY

## ARGUMENTS FOR JOINT PRAYER EXAMINED

Paul F. Bente

(Read to the Fort Wayne Pastoral Conference, April 1, 1946)

Before proceeding with an examination of the arguments in defense of Joint Prayer that have recently been raised in our circles, I shall present the position which our fathers took when they expressly formulated their position on this question, as on the larger question of unionism. It is recorded in the official declaration of the Missouri Synod of 1861, when the Predestination controversy had been under way for over a year, and when the lines had been definitely drawn. Fortunately the words are so clear as to leave no room for doubt.

"We tell everyone who champions a different doctrine among us, although he alleges his adherence to the confessions of the Lutheran Church, openly and honestly: We do not belong together, and hence have come to the parting of the ways. This does not mean that we declare our opponents to be heretics or that we condemn them. We do not even do this in the case of the Unierte and Reformed. Thereby we say only this: We can no longer walk together. HENCE WE CAN NO LONGER PRAY TOGETHER FOR YOU WILL PRAY FOR OUR CONVERSION AND WE FOR YOURS. BUT SUCH JOINT PRAYER IS AN ABOMINATION BEFORE GOD. (Capitals ours). If according to your conscience you cannot believe as we believe, we are not able to change that situation - creation of faith is not in human power; but this we can, must, and do declare unto you: Henceforth our ways separate" (gehen auseinander). (Allgemeiner Synodalbericht, 1881:31).

Those words evince beyond controversy what position our fathers took on Joint Prayer with leaders and teachers of doctrines which our fathers were convinced militated against Scriptures.

And that is also what we learned from our professors at the seminaries. It was conveniently summed up in the slogan: Keine Gebetsgemeinschaft ohne Glaubensgemeinschaft.

Entirely in line with this position also the Convention of the Missouri Synod of 1938 resolved that no prayer-fellowship should be practised with members of the American Lutheran Church until all matters requiring adjudication had been disposed of in the fear of God. This resolution was substantially repeated in 1941.

Since that time, however, members of our Synod have, according to the reports published in The Lutheran Witness, frequently joined with other Lutheran bodies in conferences which were opened and closed with joint devotional exercises, including joint prayers. Nor were these meetings always devoted to a discussion of doctrinal matters or called for the purpose of reaching agreement in doctrine. Alongside of this practise there has arisen in our Synod also a systematic defense of Joint Prayer without complete agreement in confession.

Toward Lutheran Union lays down the following principles to determine when joint prayer is forbidden.

"Our prayer must never become part of a public religious service or meeting in which Scriptural truth is denied, compromised, or ignored, in which error is propogated, or in which men who are present as the avowed exponents of error officiate." (TLU, p. 193).

The implication of the argument is that where none of these conditions obtain, joint prayer is permitted.

The argument is deceptive because it proves too much. It either permits or forbids all joint prayer. For

1. How can anyone tell in advance whether Scriptural truth will be denied, compromised, or ignored? If advance knowledge is not necessary, all joint prayer is permitted; if it is necessary, all joint prayer is ruled out.

2. How can anyone tell in advance whether error will be propagated? If that condition should turn up, the joint prayer is sinful. But if the fact that one did not know that error would be propagated legitimatizes the prayer, every joint prayer at the opening of a meeting is permitted.

3. And how does an ordained minister, member of a body which teaches or tolerates false doctrine, get rid of being "an avowed exponent of the doctrine of his denomination and hence of error"? Of course, by public repudiation and consistent testimony against the error. If that view is accepted, all joint prayer envisioned in the argument is ruled out. If it is denied, all joint prayer is ruled in.

In fact, the argument presented either permits all joint prayer with any and all teachers who call themselves Christian, or forbids all common prayer, even that between members of our Synod. It is certainly an all or nothing argument, therefore invalid.

Another method of defending joint prayer is illustrated by the following extract from a paper read to the conference (Meeting of the 44 -ACD) which met at Chicago last September. The method employed is to present in such a manner as to make ridiculous what is claimed to be the argument of those who hold with our fathers of 1881 that it is wrong to join "in prayer with a person with whom he is not in complete doctrinal accord."

"Such reasoning (i.e., that opposes joint prayer) is usually based on Romans 16,17 with an emphasis on 'avoid them' and on I Thess. 5,22, 'abstain from all appearance of evil.' It is argued: 1) Prayer is a confession of faith. 2) If you pray with someone with whom you do not agree in all points of doctrine, you are confessing that you are one with him in faith. (Thus far no Scriptural evidence is needed. This part of the argument is built out of human reason and by processes of deduction.) 3) But according to Romans 16, 17 you should avoid such people and not pray with them. 4) If you should not really confess unity of faith with one who does not agree with you in all points of doctrine, you are at least by your prayer with him 'giving the appearance' as though you did, and thus you sin against I Thess. 5,22."

Whether anyone ever argued in such rattle-brained fashion I do not know. It is certainly not the argument lined up in Eckhardt's Real-Lexikon, which is of course not authority for doctrine but is authoritative on history of doctrine in the Missouri Synod.

The arguments I have heard proceed along the following lines:

Major Premise: All who cause divisions and offenses by propagating and defending false doctrines should, according to Romans 16,17, be avoided.

Minor Premise: The members of Synod X, by reason of the fact that Synod X teaches some false doctrines and tolerates others, cause divisions and offenses against the Apostolic doctrine.

Conclusion: Members of Synod X should be avoided.

Major Premise: All those who must be avoided cannot be prayed with.

Minor Premise: Members of Synod X must be avoided.

Conclusion: Members of Synod X cannot be prayed with.

Sometimes the defenders of joint prayer stoop to gross misrepresentation of facts. An example occurs in Dr. Theo. Graebner's Prayer Fellowship. The top of p. 8 reads: "Yet it is such prayer that is denounced as unionism, etc." The prayer referred to is described on p. 7 as "prayer spoken in Christian trust to the true God." Now as a matter of fact, no opponent of joint prayer ever anywhere condemned a prayer characterized only by "Christian trust in the true God." Joint prayer was never condemned because it expressed "Christian trust in the true God," as the pamphlet reports. Everyone, including the author of the pamphlet, knows that joint prayer was condemned because it creates the impression of agreement where there is no agreement.

Prayer Fellowship offers the following arguments in support of prayer with heterodox Christians.

- A. "...prayer fellowship is incumbent upon Christians, also in the visible membership of corporate bodies, on the basis of Scriptural command and precept, when all conditions of the existence of an actual spiritual unity are satisfied, namely, a common supplication or petition to God, in common worship, on the basis of a common purpose." (PF, p.3).

According to the argument the conditions of spiritual unity are

1. a common supplication or petition to God,
2. common worship,
3. common purpose.

Now an examination of the Scripture passages which speak of spiritual unity mention none of the characteristics cited in the argument. According to Scriptures spiritual unity consists of being of one mind. I Cor. 1, 10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." So also II Cor. 13, 11. Phil. 1, 27 states, "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel"; and Phil. 2, 2: "that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." In view of this consistent testimony of Scripture no human being has any right to set aside like-mindedness in doctrine and agreement in confession when he sets forth "all the conditions...of an actual spiritual unity." These conditions are not satisfied by anything short of characteristics mentioned in Scripture. The argument must therefore be rejected; it is without Scriptural foundation at the very place where it must rest upon Scripture to be binding.

- B. Another argument reads: "None of the passages usually quoted against opening meetings with joint prayer, for instance with the representatives of the ALC, even distantly refers to such a situation." (Prayer Fellowship, p.4).

Romans 16, 17 is ruled out by the following arguments:

1. It "deals with enemies of the truth who come with the sinister purpose of deceiving innocent hearers...by means of specious talking and pretty words."

That argument wrenches the grammar. Out of an adverbial clause that gives a reason for the command expressed in the verb it makes an identifying adjective clause. It refers to the noun what belongs to the verb.

How would you interpret the following sentence: Beware of men who invite young girls to go with them to all-nite dances, for such men try to seduce girls and sell them into white slavery? Would you consider your daughter to be acting within the meaning of the sentence if she told you that before accepting such an invitation for next Saturday night she would make sure that everything was all right by asking the man who had invited her if he planned to seduce her and sell

her into white slavery? Why not accord the same common-sense treatment to the words of Scripture!

2. "The command not to have fellowship certainly applies to all and every kind of errors consistently defended." (p. 4).

Answer: The command is directed against the teachers of errors. This argument wrenches the text.

3. "Not every joint prayer is a token of fellowship." (p. 4).

Answer: What on earth can joint prayer express except agreement? And is not fellowship essentially agreement? How does joint prayer express any existing disagreement? And is it honorable to express disagreement in common words? Or are we to use the name of God just to be polite? That would certainly be using the name of God in vain.

Since the three arguments adduced to rule out Romans 16, 17 fail, the passage continues to stand as a bar against joint prayer without doctrinal agreement.

The argument to set aside Titus 3, 10 ("A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject") is a logical curio. The author makes the following point:

"Dr. Walther, following Luther in his understanding of Titus 3, 10 (as 'one who is delivered unto Satan'), therefore defines a heretic as a person who, 'in spite of repeated admonition and in spite of better knowledge and conscience, continues in his perverse conduct.' (Die Ev. Luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden, 1891, p. 24; also Kirche und Amt, p. 126; also Guenther, Symbolik, pp. 7-8) The same position is taken by Dr. Pieper in his Christliche Dogmatik, I. p. 101." (p. 5).

Having thus defined heretic, the author makes the application:

"The text cannot possibly be quoted against a relationship to those who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, who are recognized as Christians (since we do not proselytize their members) but who by tradition or weakness err in some point of doctrine." (PF, p. 5).

The argument is valid only if two unsupported assumptions are proved:

- a. That no members of the Lutheran Churches in America "err in spite of better knowledge and conscience" even though the errors found in the Lutheran Churches of America have been repeatedly pointed out and corrected from Scriptures, and even though all defense of these errors has been repeatedly refuted.
- b. That all Lutherans in America who err in some doctrine err "by tradition or weakness."

Furthermore, one must not overlook the fact that Dr. Pieper, loc. cit., makes the point that a person who has erred from weakness may in a religious controversy come to err deliberately and thus be subject to the sentence of Titus 3, 10.

Accordingly, since vital evidence is not furnished and since one authority cited in the argument testifies against the drift of the argument, the argument must be rejected. Titus 3, 10 has not been ruled out.

In order to establish his point that "none of the passages quoted against opening meetings with joint prayer. . . even distantly refer to such a situation" p. 4), it was all-important that the author examine every passage quoted and every passage that could be quoted on the issue. As a matter of fact he has done nothing of the



kind. He has by-passed two passages--and just those passages which expressly refer to being agreed.

Amos 3, 3: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Matt. 18, 19: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven."

The most significant thing about this matter is that the last quoted passage is the only passage which speaks of the prayer of two persons. And it expressly mentions their being agreed as a condition of the prayer's being heard. That passage should never have been passed up. It directly contradicts the author's claim. It lays down the condition for a joint prayer. And that condition is agreement. Applied to a meeting to discuss any doctrine in which prayer is to be offered that the truth may prevail, the passage means that the parties must first get together on what doctrine or teaching they mean before they can pray that the truth should prevail.

One is therefore forced to conclude that the author's claim, "None of the passages quoted. . . . even distantly refer to such a situation," is not warranted by the evidence submitted. Waiving discussion of the other passages referred to, there still stand (1) Romans 16, 17; (2) Matthew 18, 19; (3) Amos 3, 3; and Titus 3, 10 has not been completely invalidated.

C. Those who defend joint prayer with heterodox Christians offer also some constructive argument for which they adduce Scripture passages.

1. One argument is based on I Cor. 3, 10-15. It is employed both by the author of Prayer Fellowship and the essay read at the September Conference (of the 44 -ACD) in Chicago. Prayer Fellowship states the argument as follows:

"Here (in the congregation of Corinth) are people who have in their doctrine gold, silver, and precious stones, that is the fundamental truth of the Gospel, but they are also building 'wood, hay, and stubble'--doctrines not found in Scriptures, but contrary to sound teaching, not of such a nature, however, as to destroy saving faith. . . Now it is significant that Paul, . . . does not urge severance of all religious fellowship with such as employ 'wood, hay, stubble', but rather urges maintenance and continuance of Christian fellowship. . ." (pp. 6-7).

In order to give color to this argument the text is misrepresented. The passage in question is a conditioned sentence and not a declarative sentence, as the argument assumes. The passage makes its statement of the builders NOT AS SOMETHING TRUE IN FACT, but as something TRUE FOR THE SAKE OF THE ARGUMENT. The passage does not state that the builders of wood, hay, and stubble were actually at work in Corinth. Prayer Fellowship blandly disregards this situation and argues as if the apostle had stated the matter as true in fact: "here ARE (capitals ours) people who have in their doctrine, etc." An example may help to clinch the point. Suppose the statement has been made: If any professor of the Missouri Synod persists in denying the inspiration of the Bible, he must be removed from office. To assert on the basis of that statement that there are in the Missouri Synod professors--not just one but a number--who deny the inspiration would be a gross perversion of the statement made. As a matter of fact, it is always a violation of sound thinking and sound exegesis to deduce a categorical principle from a hypothetical statement.

Furthermore, the passage does not treat of our relation to erring Christians; in particular it has nothing to say of maintaining fellowship with errorists. Its words are not directed to the congregation in Corinth, but to those who may be doing bad

building. What Paul stresses is the enormous importance of building gold, etc., on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The point Paul makes is not that they who build wood, hay, stubble are still builders--as the pamphlet says, "but considers them to be builders"--; the point made is that they barely escape the consequences--disastrous consequences--of bad building.

To sum up, in order to make a case, the argument disregards both the wording and the scope of the passage.

Two other passages are referred to in this connection in Prayer Fellowship (p.7): I Cor. 1, 10.13; I Cor. 12, 13. Examination reveals the fact that neither speaks of any external fellowship or uniting in religious acts. Both speak of the inner unity of thought, speech, and spirit. Consequently neither applies.

2. The constructive argument is marred by some logical fallacies. The reasoning does not accord with sound principles.

a. Argument from silence is resorted to.

Prayer Fellowship states:

"One searches in vain to find a passage in Scripture which makes absolute agreement in sound doctrine the condition of a God-pleasing common prayer" (p. 13).

Hence, the implied conclusion runs, God does not require absolute agreement for common prayer, and therefore joint prayer is permitted, except when other circumstances forbid.

Now an argument from silence is never valid. It becomes doubly invalid and loses even a semblance of validity when an explanation of the silence can be made. And the explanation why the Bible is silent is furnished by the author of Prayer Fellowship:

"The New Testament was written before the present relationship of Christian bodies agreeing in fundamentals (including the Catholic Church, see Triglotta, p. 460) but differing in other doctrines, yet existing side by side, etc."

In other words, there was no reason why the Bible should speak directly on that question. Naturally you search in vain for a passage "which makes absolute agreement in sound doctrine the condition of God-pleasing common prayer." Self-evidently no argument made from a silence so readily explained is sound thinking or cogent reasoning.

b. Vital evidence is ignored.

On page 7 Prayer Fellowship declares:

"The first result of such a study (of the passages quoted against joint prayer) will be the realization that neither the texts nor the contexts in which they stand have anything to do with prayer fellowship."

The implied argument is that therefore these passages cannot be quoted against joint prayer. The argument ignores pertinent evidence, to wit, the fact that the peremptory commands expressed in these passages make a joint prayer impossible. The commands "avoid them," "an heretic reject," leave no room for joint prayer.

c. False analogies are set up.

Capital is made of the fact that Christ worshipped and taught in the Jewish synagogues and the temple even though the spiritual leaders

"were enemies of the truth proclaimed by Jesus Christ regarding His own deity and the necessity of faith in Him as a condition of salvation." (Prayer Fellowship, p. 10)

The paper read at Chicago stresses the fact that Paul preached in synagogues and at a philosophers' club in Athens. The implication is that if Jesus and Paul could worship in the Jewish synagogues and the Temple, we can pray together with heterodox Christians.

The situations are, however, not analogous. Christ taught the distinctive doctrines so emphatically that His infuriated audience at Nazareth tried to hurl Him down the precipice. To the Temple managers He said: "Ye have made my house a den of thieves." Paul was so strongly outspoken on the points of difference that his Jewish opponents resorted to riot, assault, and battery to stop his words. Now everyone realizes that no similar taking issue is proposed for the meetings that are to be opened with joint prayer now-a-days. Furthermore in the time of Christ the issue between Christianity and Judaism had not been finally drawn. That happened in the time of Paul. And if a synagogue rejected Paul, he did not return to it to worship. As far as Paul's address on Mars Hill is concerned, there is no evidence furnished that one of the philosophers or even Saint Paul opened the meeting with prayer in which the rest joined.

Prayer Fellowship argues furthermore:

"Read the record and try to imagine Aquilla and Priscilla refusing to pray with Apollos until he had become sound in his theology." (p. 14)

That argument again suppresses the factors that make the analogy invalid. Apollos came to be instructed. There is no intimation that Apollos led the prayer. Thus the case is not at all parallel to modern instances of joint prayer by members of different denominations, where the right to lead in prayer is accorded equally to members of both parties. And in an intersynodical conference, who comes to be instructed and by whom? Do the Missourians come to be instructed? Or the others?

d. The burden of proof is shifted.

A further argument reads:

"In other words, the burden of proof rests on those who pronounce sinful a certain act of participation of certain bodies or their representatives." (p. 10).

In other words, not they who participate in a joint prayer are under obligation to show that such prayer was right and proper, but they who denounce it as sinful must prove it wrong by reason of exceptional circumstances. Joint prayer is considered prima facie correct and is not ipso facto wrong. In fact, as stated on page 3 (Prayer Fellowship):

"Prayer fellowship is incumbent upon Christians, also in the visible membership of corporate bodies, on the basis of Scriptural command and precept, when all conditions of the existence of an actual spiritual unity are satisfied, namely, a common supplication or petition to God, in common worship, on the basis of a common prayer."

That is to say, members of different Christian denominations must take part in joint prayer in common worship when they have a common petition and a common purpose. And they who challenge such joint prayer have the burden of proof.

This position is supported in the first place by the claim that

"prayer is not essentially a confessional act." (PF, p. 8)

"None of these theologians ever held that prayer in itself... is a confessional act in the sense that it is by its very nature an expression of agreement in doctrine... no such definition of prayer as a confession of doctrine

to or before men is found in our confessional writings nor in Dr. Pieper's discussion of the nature and function of prayer, nor in our Synodical Catechism"..... "confession of faith to others and acknowledgment of their agreement with us is never an essential and inherent part, an unavoidable concomitant, of prayer." (PF, p. 8).

For one thing, the entire argument is beside the point. The essentials of prayer appear only in private prayer. In public prayer there is always the concomitant that people see us pray. That fact makes every public prayer a confessional act, as any factory worker who folds his hands over his lunch in silent prayer will soon find out. And they who in public make a joint prayer make a joint confession unless they have previously made clear where they differ and that their prayer is not to be understood as invalidating that declaration.

The fact that neither the Confessions, nor Dr. Pieper, nor our Synodical Catechism discusses the confessional element in prayer is readily explained. None of them discusses joint prayer with heterodox Christians.

In view of these facts, the burden of proof rests on those who make the joint prayer. They must be ready and able to show that not only a common purpose and a common petition but also a common confession prevailed.

Further support for shifting the burden of proof is offered by reference to the worship of Jesus in the Jewish synagogues and in the Temple. The speciousness of this analogy was pointed out above.

The final argument in defense of putting the burden of proof on those who challenge the correctness of joint prayer consists of an attempt to distinguish between

"prayer fellowship on the one hand and altar and pulpit fellowship on the other hand," - - - - -

The author argues:

"Pulpit fellowship is an act of doctrinal indifference if those exchange pulpits who are not in agreement in confessions." (p. 9).

"Altar fellowship must be defined as confessional fellowship..... Those who commune together thereby indicate that they are of the same personal conviction in the matter of Scriptural teaching." (p. 10).

To establish his point the author must also prove that joint prayer does not express or imply identical conviction; that it makes known doctrinal disagreement where that exists; that joining in the religious act of prayer does not establish a fellowship between those who partake in that act even though Saint Paul teaches that sharing the religious act of communing together, eating of the Old Testament sacrifices, and eating of the things sacrificed to idols in each instance sets up fellowship with the participants and the things in which they participated. (I Cor. 10, 16-21).

That has not been done. Hence the argument falls. There is no escape from the anomaly of the position: We can pray with you; but we cannot go to communion with you, and we cannot exchange pulpits with you. It will be either all or nothing.

Another argument reasons as follows:

"The difference between joint prayer and prayer fellowship is fundamental." (p. 14). Hence the mere fact that a group of people are praying together does not signify that they are actually in fellowship, are planning to enter into fellowship, or are expressing the belief that fellowship exists between them. "Though spoken in unison, the prayer is still communion of the individual participants with God, and must be defined as such." (p. 8). Only

when the purpose of a meeting is expressly declared to be indifferentistic and when it is "demanded of its members or participants, as a condition of membership or participation, that they view all religions there represented as equally commendable by the standard of truth" (p. 15) does the prayer become unionistic or expressive of fellowship that is known not to exist. "Whether it is an organization or an occasion, the purpose defines its essence, and where there is not a purpose to make a meeting expressive of a common religious sentiment and of Christian discipleship, we cannot speak of unionism in the proper sense of the term, nor can participation be condemned as unscriptural." (pp. 16-17).

It all boils down to the following: Not the religious act in itself--and prayer is always a religious act--but the purpose of the act is the criterion, and the determination of that purpose lies in our power.

The fallacy of the argument will appear from the following considerations:

First: Testimony against error dare never cease. Holy Writ nowhere gives us the authority even for one-half hour to give the appearance of not being in protest against error. Since joint prayer hushes dissent from error, it is not to be tolerated.

Secondly: The essence of an act is not defined by its purpose, but by the separate actions without which the act cannot be performed. Now an act that is right in essence may become wrong by reason of a bad purpose. If a bank teller embezzles 500 dollars in order to provide a necessary operation for his sick wife, the purpose of his act is laudable indeed. But that fact has no bearing on the nature and character of his act. It remains embezzlement because he mis-appropriates to his own use funds that do not belong to him. Similarly the essence of a joint prayer consists not of the purpose for which it is spoken, but of the details which make it up. And each of these details must be right if the prayer is to be right.

Thirdly: I Cor. 10, 16-21, Saint Paul teaches that participation in a religious act establishes fellowship and participation in that with which the religious act is concerned. Christians who commune enter into fellowship with Christ (v. 16). Christians who commune together enter into fellowship with each other (v. 17). Those who ate of the sacrifices in the Old Testament entered into fellowship with the altar (v. 18). Hence Christians cannot partake of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils, i. e., eat of the idol sacrifices, (v. 21; See I Cor. 8, 10). The fact that it was not their intention to recognize an idol by eating of an idol sacrifice did not prevent them from having communion with the idolatry expressed by the sacrifice. The apostle does not allow the notion that a person can participate in a religious act only to a certain degree, as far as he declares it to be his intention to participate. Participation is entire. Applying that principle to joint prayer between truth and error: That makes joint prayer essentially wrong. Joint prayer and prayer fellowship should go hand in hand. Joint prayer should not take place where there is reason to think that fellowship does not exist.

Sometimes the apologists of joint prayer cite the Augsburg Confession in defense of their view: "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." (Trigl. p. 47). In elaborating this point for the purpose of restricting the statement of the Augsburg Confession to fundamentals, Prayer Fellowship states:

"And the Apology (par. 20, Trigl. p. 232, 233) ... expressly takes doctrinal errors which do not overthrow the foundation into account as matters that 'are both forgiven them and also corrected,' hence as matters which do not destroy the requisite fundamental unity of the Church spoken of in the Augsburg Confession." (p. 20).

The position of the Apology is not accurately represented. The Apology does not employ the term "doctrinal errors," but "unprofitable opinions" (German text: "menschlische Gedanken und Opinonen mit welchen sie doch den Grund Christum nicht umstossen noch verwerfen." Human thoughts and opinions with which they indeed (doch) do not overthrow nor reject the foundation, Christ.)

Secondly, The Apology does not speak of "doctrinal errors which do not overthrow the foundation," as Prayer Fellowship puts it. The Apology says that "they (i. e., the men, "weak persons who build upon the foundation stubble that will perish") (Ibid., p. 233a, foot of page) do not overthrow the foundation." As the German text puts it, "Derhalben sie dennoch Christen sind und werden ihnen solche Fehle vergeben, werden auch etwa erleuchtet und besser unterrichtet" -- For which reason they are nevertheless Christians and such errors are forgiven them; they may perhaps also receive illumination and better instruction (Ibid.).

Thus there is no foundation in the Apology for the view expressed in Prayer Fellowship that some doctrinal errors do not overthrow the foundation or do not destroy the requisite fundamental unity of the Church. What the Apology says is that men may hold certain human opinions without destroying the foundation. The reason why is not given. It may just as well lie in the manner in which the doctrines are held as in the nature of the doctrines. The former view is supported by the fact that such men are called "weak persons." (The author here clearly is not referring to Scriptural doctrines, but to human opinions held--ACD).

Neither in this passage nor elsewhere does the Apology or any other of our Confessions state that errorists are to be fraternized after their errors have been pointed out and after they have rejected instruction. And just that and nothing else is the point at issue in a modern discussion of joint prayer. We are not dealing -- and the author of Prayer Fellowship is in a position to know that better than almost anyone else in our Synod -- with people who have strayed into error and have never had their errors pointed out to them, as was the case with Apollos.

The mode of conducting the Apostolic meeting recorded in Acts 15 has sometimes been quoted in support of the thesis that it is Scriptural to practise joint prayer at meetings between representatives of church bodies that differ in certain doctrines, especially when the purpose of the meeting is to consider the doctrinal differences for the purpose of reaching an agreement.

Defenders of the thesis argue that the apostles and the converted Pharisees came together for the purpose of discussing a point on which a serious difference of opinion had developed; that this difference of opinion concerned a very important article of Christian belief -- whether a man could be saved without submitting himself to Moses and to the ceremonial law of the Jews, at least to the point of being circumcised; that while the text makes no mention of prayer, it is unthinkable that the meeting should have been opened without a prayer in which all present took part.

At the very outset two things call for serious consideration:

1. The Scriptures give no hint of any prayer. Hence they who defend the thesis have no word of Scripture for their position.

2. The inference on which the argument rests is made from silence, not from something that was record, but from something that supposedly was omitted. Before going further they who make this argument must carefully bethink themselves and determine just when an inference based on the silence of a Scripture passage becomes so valid that it furnishes authority for our conduct, and just when such an inference does not furnish ground for legitimizing an act. If a person acts without deciding that question, he runs danger of eventually putting his entire theology on a shifting basis, which in the last analysis will prove to be not Scripture, but his own fancy. For all human beings have a strong penchant frist to decide to do

something and then to find the ground which legitimizes the action. Under such circumstances the temptation to accept apparent grounds when valid grounds cannot be adduced is almost irresistible. To preclude such possibility it is vital to establish definitely the principle on which the justification connected with the argument on Acts 15 rests, and to see whether that principle accords with the instruction given to the children of God in Holy Writ.

The defenders of the thesis set forth that it is entirely rational to infer that such prayer was offered; in fact, that such a meeting of the Apostles without an opening prayer is quite unthinkable. Next they argue that the same situation prevails at an intersynodical conference. In fact, they argue a fortiori: Since the question at issue in the Apostolic Council was far more vital to the basis of Christianity than are the questions at issue between Missouri and other Lutheran bodies, it is much more reasonable and in accord with Apostolic practise that a prayer be offered at the opening of such intersynodical conferences.

One must grant that the promise is quite rational. One must grant furthermore that just as the defenders cannot objectively prove their premise, neither can opponents objectively disprove it.

Before the inference made from the premise can be accepted, however, several additional matters must be weighed and considered:

The application to an intersynodical conference is an argument by analogy. Its validity rests on whether the two situations are identical in all the germane factors. On the surface the situations appear to be parallel -- two groups are met to discuss doctrinal differences. That was the case in Jerusalem; that is the case at an intersynodical conference. Still several questions need to be answered to test the cogency of the argument:

1. Was the difference between the two parties known to each other before the occasion which gave rise to the meeting? Were the Jerusalem meeting and a present-day intersynodical conference brought about by identical or similar causes?
2. At the time the meeting was called, was the revelation on the question of the status of the Mosaic law complete and fully understood? Is the revelation on the points that divide Lutheran bodies and Missouri completely and fully understood?
3. Who led the prayer? Is it reasonable to assume that leading the prayer was turned over to one of the ex-Pharisees? Or is it more reasonable to assume that the prayer was led by Peter or James?
4. Does Apostolic practise recorded elsewhere in the New Testament indicate that such prayer was practised when the ex-Pharisees persisted in their views after the Council of Jerusalem had been concluded? Or are there indications that a different practice prevailed under those conditions.

If the answers to these questions bring out the fact that parallel conditions prevailed, the argument can be granted as a valid analogy, which, like all analogies, however, leaves some room for doubt.

An examination of the items pertinent to No. 1 reveals the fact that the two meetings do not originate in exactly the same manner. At Jerusalem the first intimation of a serious difference, calling for an investigation, arose when Barnabas and Paul were making their report about the conversion of the heathen. While the same difference had arisen at Antioch, the text indicates clearly that no issue was made of that matter by Barnabas and Paul at Jerusalem until the difference was once more thrust forward at Jerusalem by their opponents (v. 5). Thus the discussion



arose from what was practically the first difference between the parties, or at least from that occasion which revealed that the difference was becoming fixed. Furthermore it was a difference that arose within the church organization, within the body met at Jerusalem to hear the reports of Barnabas and Paul.

To this situation an intersynodical conference is not an exact parallel. The contending parties are not members of the same organization; they do not occupy the same meeting place; there are no mutual leaders, whom both parties venerate, in position to speak with authority on the questions at issue. Nor is it the first time that the church bodies have disagreed on the questions under discussion. Nor are the differences now in the process of becoming fixed; they have been fixed these many years.

Thus the argument fails to hold on the first count.

Examination of the facts pertinent to No. 2 reveals the fact that the revelation regarding the Mosaic law had not before this meeting been clearly and fully given. It had been given symbolically in the vision Peter experienced before going to Cornelius and in the experiences he encountered there. But the full significance of that vision and of that experience, the universal validity of the implication of the vision and of the experience, were for the first time put into words on the occasion of this Council (vv. 7-11). Peter's interpretation was further corroborated by James as something in full accord with the prophets of the Old Testament. It was therefore just at this Council that the principle of Christian liberty from the Mosaic law was established expressis verbis.

In view of these facts one cannot maintain that the error of the ex-Pharisees was in contradiction to the established revelation of God, for that revelation was first fully made at the Council. The erring could be due to weakness.

Thus again the significant item does not apply to an intersynodical conference. The doctrines there discussed concern a completed revelation. Divergence means that someone is in contradiction to the established revelation. To say that the passages are differently interpreted does not establish similarity with the proceedings at Jerusalem, for at Jerusalem it was not a matter of interpreting a revelation but of establishing a revelation. The two meetings are on this point utterly dissimilar.

The argument does not hold on the second test.

The answer to No. 3 will involve some conjecturing: Who led the prayer? Still if one conjectures a prayer, he must not boggle at conjecturing the leader of the prayer. The most reasonable conjecture is that the prayer was led by Peter or James, or one of the apostles. It is certainly far from reasonable to assume that one of the ex-Pharisees, who were responsible for the rift, would be called upon to lead the opening prayer. That is, in fact, quite unthinkable. If it were done to conciliate the ex-Pharisees, it would smack of toadying and of coddling errorists, entirely out of harmony with the known firmness of character of the Apostles, who repudiated those with whom they did not agree. (v. 24).

Applying this to an intersynodical conference, what do we get? As Missourians we look upon Missouri as occupying the position of the Apostles and elders -- holding the truth of Scriptures -- and upon a dissenting Lutheran body as being in the position of the ex-Pharisees, holding an error. The prayer would then be spoken by a Missouri leader. The privilege of leading in prayer would not be accorded the opponents. But a situation in which one party denies to the other the right to lead in prayer does not presuppose prayer-fellowship, which means equal rights in leading the prayer. Unless they who appeal to this passage as precedent for joint prayer can show that it is reasonable to assume that one of the ex-Pharisees led the prayer, the passage gives no aid and comfort to those who would use it to justify joint prayer at intersynodical gatherings.



The facts elicited by No. 4 indicate that Apostolic practice changed after these matters had been discussed. When confronted by the attack on Christian liberty for the first time at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas stood up for the truth, refusing to budge an inch. Again at the Council those who were in error were shown the truth in kindness but all firmness, and without any mincing of words (v. 10). However, when Paul encountered the same error after the Jerusalem Council in Galatia, and it became evident that the error was being persisted in against the clear words of the Apostles, then his language became radically different, violently different-- "Let him be accursed!" (Gal. 1, 8). At the very least, therefore, the action of the Apostles was different when dealing with an error that could be attributed to a lack of understanding and when dealing with an error that had been corrected and was being retained and propagated in the face of instruction. Even if they prayed together with the errorists at Jerusalem, Paul's language-- "Let him be accursed!" -- suggests that the Apostles would have refused to have a joint prayer with the errorists when it became evident that they were persisting in their error.

Now, the discussion of the doctrinal differences that separate Missouri and other Lutheran bodies in America has been going on ever since the 1850's. Hence an example for our conduct cannot be drawn from what the Apostles did at the first discussion, especially when it is evident that the Apostles displayed a different attitude when encountering error which was being adhered to.

To sum up. Even if the right to make an inference from the silence of the Scriptures is granted in this instance, Acts 15 furnishes no valid argument for joint prayer at meetings of representatives of church bodies that differ in certain doctrines.

Finally, some vital and important issues are not touched at all.

1. Does the common element in a joint prayer lie in the common words, or in the common meaning attached to the words?

If it lies in the mere words without the meaning, how does such prayer escape the condemnation of vain repetitions?

If it lies in the sense, how can they who hold divergent doctrines honestly pray together, "Thy kingdom come" in the sense in which Luther explained it in the Small Catechism?

2. How does God view a prayer which originates in diverging systems of dogmatics and yet employs the same words?
3. Can a person at any time pray from only a part of his religious belief? Or is the totality of belief the source of every prayer?
4. Can leadership in joint prayer be turned over to a man known to hold and to support false teaching?
5. Does a joint prayer express the fact that they who pray together are in agreement or at variance?

If the arguments for joint prayer examined in the foregoing pages are typical of the arguments that can be made, one is forced to the conclusion that joint prayer can be defended only by recourse to bad exegesis, bad theology, and bad reasoning. We shall do wisely also in this matter if we seek out the old paths, where is that good way, and walk therein. The promise will not fail of fulfillment, "Ye shall have rest for your souls."

(From a copy mimeographed October, 1947 by Rev. A. C. Dahms, with the author's permission, for private study.)

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## BOOK REVIEW

Buege, William A., The Cross of Christ, St. Louis: CPH, 1963, 122 pp. Price: \$1.50.

This paperback consists of a Lenten series of six sermons on the general theme, "The Cross of Christ," plus a series of shorter meditation on the seven last words of Christ, and an Easter sermon: "Christ's Resurrection, the Breach in the Wall of Time." Dr. Buege, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, is an influential clergyman in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who is very much in demand as a speaker and lecturer. He is a member of the Synod's powerful Board of Directors, and he would no doubt be considered in the Missouri Synod as one of the outstanding pastors presently active in these church circles. Because of the eminence of the author and the excellent advertising techniques of CPH, this book of sermons will be read and re-preached many times within the Missouri Synod during the coming Lenten and Easter season.

"The Cross of Christ" series takes as its texts excerpts from the passion story interpreted by some significant passage in the epistles. For example, the first sermon has as a text Luke 22, 41-46, "interpreted by Philippians 2, 8." This two-fold choice of texts is very happy and certainly aids in making the passion story more meaningful.

The doctrine of Christ's substitutionary atonement for the sins of the world is explicitly and repeatedly set forth. Pastor Buege declares that Christ's "drinking the cup" meant "fully taking our place, being before God and men what we really are, and so taking everything that we had deserved." (p. 14) In his exposition of the sixth word from the cross Pastor Buege says, "He is the Life because He took all our sinful life into Himself, and died its deserved death of curse on the cross so that we might get it back from Him as eternal life, life of the restored relation with God, life that is His own great gift to us." (p. 106). Such statements (and there are many of them scattered throughout the sermons) are heartwarming and certainly give these sermons real gospel value.

It must be stated, however, that the sermons are unusually prolix. There is a vast amount of repetition, much of which Freshman College English Instructors would label "dead wood", and as a result of this verbosity, more often than once or twice, the syntax of the sentences gets pretty fuzzy. It appears to this reviewer that Pastor Buege's secretary took these sermons off the church's tape recorder. She of course had no authority to hack away some of the underbrush cluttering up the thought patterns, but her employer did. At any rate, it would appear that the CPH editors would have been of real help to Pastor Buege if they would have mildly exercised their prerogatives as editors. Pastor Buege leans rather heavily on some of the modern existential terminology and he uses an informal language sometimes designed to shock the congregation ("smash" is evidently one of his favorite words). These sermons will catch the ear of the listener rather than the reader.

The last sermon, however, left this reviewer with an extremely disquieting feeling. This Easter sermon on Mark 16, 1-8, carries the theme, "Christ's Resurrection--the Breach in the Wall of Time." It is as verbose as some of the other sermons, and possibly this is what causes the difficulty for the reviewer, and it may be merely the imitative use of the neo-orthodox vocabulary that seems to make portions of this sermon unclear. Whatever it is, the reviewer cannot escape the uneasy feeling that at least part of the neo-orthodoxists' view regarding the resurrection of Christ has crept into this sermon. Is it accidental and unconscious, or is it a part of Pastor Buege's theology? The sermon is altogether too vague

regarding the actual, real resurrection of Christ from the dead and the reasons for accepting it.

There are varying shades of clearness in expressing the neo-orthodoxist point of view that denies the resurrection of Christ as an actual, real, datable event. Günther Bornkamm sums up Bultmann's view by saying: "The idea of the saving event set within the framework of this mythical view of the world and history is also mythical (my emphasis), i. e., the idea of a divine being which descends in human form, performs miracles, conquers demons, vicariously dies the atoning death for men; which arises, ascends to heaven and will soon return upon the clouds of heaven for the resurrection of the dead and of the judgment. This mythical world of ideas is irrevocably shattered for the modern man" (See Braaten and Harrisville, Kerygma and History, 1962, pp. 173-74).

Karl Barth hesitates being that open and frank, but he still wants to make a distinction between Historie and Geschichte, between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, and he wants to make this distinction in the resurrection. Barth does not regard the resurrection as historical in the sense that there was an actual resurrection from a grave in Palestine one Easter morning about 1,930 years ago. At times Barth seems to be saying that Christ did rise from the dead, but it is always an event of Geschichte and not of Historie. He regards the crucifixion as Historie, but the resurrection he regards as Geschichte. The reason for this denial, of course, is Barth's rejection of the authenticity and complete trustworthiness of Scripture as the very revelation of God.

But to get back to Pastor Buege's Easter sermon, if we read pages 118-122, we find some puzzling statements, not to mention omissions which should not be found in an orthodox Lutheran Easter sermon. To be sure, Pastor Buege says, "Jesus had risen from the dead, the crucified one was alive again", but Barthian neo-orthodoxists say this also.

But then Pastor Buege's sermon contains sentences such as these: "If we look at the entire Easter event, we notice that we are told nothing about the event itself. We are not taken into the tomb, and given a description of just exactly what took place there. All that we have is a 'before' and an 'after' and the reality of what took place is brought home to us primarily in the tremendous difference between the 'before' and 'after'." . . . "How can we be sure? There are those who will tell you that you cannot be sure unless you can put your finger into the nail prints and thrust your hand into the side that was opened on the cross with the slash of the spear. In a sense, that is correct. If, by being sure we mean to be as certain as we are of the five fingers on your hand. But then there is something else that you must be equally sure of: In that same sense you cannot be sure either that Jesus did not rise from the dead." . . . "Here is the only way I know that my Redeemer lives. He has spoken His forgiveness upon me, and now I know what it means to be with God as forgiven indeed, He has invited me to come to Him for rest. I come in faith, and I find rest in His resurrection life."

We are painfully aware that by just quoting in part from these pages, we may be doing Pastor Buege an injustice, and we may not fully understand all the implications of what he said. And we certainly do not charge him with a denial of the historicity of the resurrection of Christ. But we do find these pages very unclear. What makes the resurrection of Jesus Christ an actual datable, historical fact, is the infallible Scripture statements, e.g.: "To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs." (Acts 1:3) Scripture says many places that He rose from the dead. This settles it and makes it an actual and real event.

Now we do not find this coming through very clear in Pastor Buege's sermon. But, now as never before, it ought to come through in clear and ringing tones, since so many theologians are raising doubts in people's minds regarding this key fact

of the Christian faith. The CPH editors call Pastor Buege a "keen theologian," and as such he must be well aware of the fact that the resurrection of Christ is being quite generally denied even among Lutherans in what was once thought to be rather conservative circles. Pastor Buege can hardly be unaware of the essay of one of his fellow pastors (Robert Scharlemann) in the spring 1962 Dialog: "Shadow on the Tomb -- Motifs in the German Theology of the Resurrection." Pastor Scharlemann appears to be very sympathetic to the German theologians' concept that the "corpse of Jesus decayed in the grave and that the bones are still there, but that Jesus is at the same time resurrected." (Page 27) This is certainly not Christ's rising from the dead of which Scripture speaks.

There is, we should add, the event of the resurrection and the meaning of the event, and it is true that the redemptive significance of the event will be accepted only when the Holy Spirit has created faith in the heart. But this does not change the fact that according to Scripture the resurrection is a genuine event that took place in history apart from our faith, or anyone else's faith. We wish that Pastor Buege had made this more clear when he preached his Easter sermon last spring.

--B. W. Teigen

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THE MEANING AND USE OF THE GREEK  
NEW TESTAMENT CRITICAL APPARATUS (Cont.)

By Prof. Julian Anderson

Part II

Having collated, corrected, and evaluated the various manuscripts, it might seem that the textual critic would now be ready to compare the many variant readings which still remain and thus to make a judgment as to which of these variants seem to preserve the original text on the basis of which one of them is preserved in the majority of these thirty-four (or 20) of the oldest and best manuscripts, giving due weight to the greater authority of the eight great uncials. Such, in fact, was pretty much the system employed by textual critics until the beginning of the twentieth century. Westcott and Hort, for example, in the preparation of their critical text in 1881, followed what amounts to a modification of this principle-- that where the two oldest and best manuscripts -- Aleph and B -- agreed in any instance, that reading must certainly be selected as the true original text; and that it was only where Aleph and B disagreed that the other manuscripts should be consulted, in which case the reading attested by B would generally prevail if attested also by any of the other principal manuscripts. Tischendorf, in his editions, followed exactly the same principle, except that he gave preference to the readings of Aleph in those cases where Aleph and B disagreed. This method, good as it is inasmuch as it gives due precedence to the two oldest extant manuscripts, nevertheless falls somewhat short of the mark of scientific accuracy, as some of the later text critics have demonstrated.

This method currently being followed in the science of textual criticism is perhaps best illustrated by the views of B. H. Streeter, the eminent Oxford scholar. In his great treatise on textual criticism entitled "The Four Gospels," which has been mentioned previously, Streeter contends that "manuscripts must be weighed, not counted, and the weight of a manuscript depends on the extent to which it preserves, more or less, one of the ancient local texts."<sup>3</sup> This view, which has obtained wide circulation today, is somewhat of a reaction against the older views

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<sup>3</sup> Streeter, B. H., The Four Gospels, A Study of Origins, p. 107.

which tended to place undue importance on individual manuscripts, and has rather revolutionized the science of textual criticism in the past forty years. The new method, as used by almost all of the later critics, following Streeter, suggests that all of the manuscripts, uncial and minuscule, should rather first be grouped into manuscript families, each of which preserves the text current in a distinct, but more or less geographically isolated area of early Christianity; and then to decide between the three or four variant readings which thus present themselves, on the basis of which area, or areas, are the most likely to have preserved the original text. While this method may sound rather nebulous at first glance, it really presents both a much simplified procedure, and a much more effective and accurate method -- that is to say, one which presents several very distinct advantages.

Of prime importance is the fact that it reduces the number of variant readings which must be considered by the critic in any case generally to three (and at the most four) in any single instance, since all of the 4,000 extant manuscripts can be classified into but three basic families, one of them divided into two sub-families. Secondly, it avoids the obvious difficulty which arises by "placing all of our eggs in one basket," as one might say -- that is, of basing the original text on the readings of only two of the oldest manuscripts, Aleph and B, which, as we now know, both belong to the same family. Such a procedure, which was really that of Westcott and Hort, runs into difficulty on two counts. In the first place, it places undue emphasis on the text of one locality -- in this case Alexandria, -- while it disregards completely the well-attested and early texts which were current in other areas of the ancient church. Secondly, it disregards the fact that both of these manuscripts, old as they are, were separated from the autographs of the New Testament by a period of at least 250 or 300 years, and that, in the normal course of events, they, like all the others, must have been subject to considerable corruption in that long period of transmission, although, perhaps, to a lesser degree. In other words, this new method of grouping all the manuscripts into families and then comparing the resultant readings of these families, which represented the text current in various local areas, seeks to get back beyond the fourth century (the age of our earliest manuscripts), and thus to obtain some idea of the various texts that were current in the various centers of Christian activity in the very earliest times. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be added that the realization that all of the manuscripts fall naturally into family groups is not original with Streeter, but was recognized as far back as 1796, by J. J. Griesbach. Griesbach, in fact, correctly identified the three main family groups.

Streeter's principal modification of this family principle is the recognition that each of these family groups represents the text current in a definite local area of the early Church. Such a theory is founded, of course, on the assumption that there actually were such definite and distinct local texts in use in the great metropolitan centers of Christianity in the early Christian period; and on the assumption that these texts can actually be reconstructed with some degree of accuracy by the application of scientific principles.

As is well known from our study of church history, following the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D., the Christian Church had no one distinct center of operations, but rather a number of such centers, each separated from the others by a considerable distance, and each functioning as a more-or-less independent base of operations in its adjacent area -- Caesarea, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, Carthage, and Alexandria. Of these the three which wielded the greatest influence in the first three centuries were Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Furthermore, since each center was more or less isolated from the others, geographically speaking, it is reasonable to conclude, argues Streeter, that a separate and distinct textual tradition, or type of text, would develop in each of these main centers -- a text which would be contaminated, it is true, by errors of transmission peculiar to that area,

but which would be free, on the other hand, from those transmissional errors current in the other areas. If this be true, then, all of our extant manuscripts should naturally divide themselves into a small number of families in which each manuscript shows definite affinities with the other members of its own family in its various readings, and just as definite divergences from the manuscripts belonging to the other families which were current in other areas of the Empire. The interesting thing is that the factual evidence seems to very definitely support this view.

A careful collation of all the manuscripts reveals the fact that they do group themselves naturally into three main families, designated as  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\delta$ , which can be identified with reasonable exactness with Byzantium (Constantinople), Alexandria, and Rome respectively. Much depends, of course, upon the proper identification of each type of text with its corresponding local area. Suffice it to say that this is done on the basis supplied by the earliest church fathers regarding the general history of our New Testament text, and the evidence of the various early versions which are of crucial importance in this respect, since all of these can be definitely localized and dated.

At this point, then, we must digress a bit to take a brief look at some of these so-called early "versions" of our New Testament. In the field of textual criticism the term "versions" designates the various early translations of the New Testament into the various vernacular languages of the Mediterranean world, particularly the early translations into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic, or Egyptian. The importance of these three translations as aids in the recovery of the original Greek text of the New Testament becomes apparent when we are reminded that all of them can be dated as far back as the second century A. D. -- 200 years earlier than our oldest Greek uncial manuscripts. If the textual critic can arrive at a reasonably pure text of these early versions, therefore, he will have gone back another 200 years closer to the actual autographs, and will have at least an indirect witness to a Greek text current in the particular locality of each version as early as the second century -- only a hundred or so years removed from the autographs themselves. In passing, it may be noted that the other versions, such as Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, etc., all of which were made subsequent to the fourth century, are of little or no value in the recovery of the original Greek text, since at the very best they are only indirect witnesses to a Greek text which is later than our earliest Greek manuscripts.

Using this new method, then, the so-called "Old Latin" versions have assumed a position of considerable importance in the modern practice of textual criticism. The term "Old Latin" is used to designate all Latin translations made prior to the Vulgate, which was a revision of these earlier versions, made in 382-384 A. D. From the early Latin church fathers, for example, we know that as early as the year 150 A. D. numerous Latin translations of the Greek New Testament were circulating in North Africa, in the general sphere of influence of the great city of Carthage. The same sources indicate that about the same time, or not many years later, at any rate, the same situation prevailed in Italy and Gaul, located in the sphere of influence of the great capital city of Rome. Fortunately, about a dozen good manuscripts of these Old Latin versions have been preserved to us, of which the earliest date back to the fourth century -- as early, in other words, as our earliest Greek manuscripts, and dating back to within three hundred years of the original translation. These Old Latin manuscripts are designated in our critical apparatus by small Roman letters -- a, b, c, etc. (cf. page 16, in Nestle's sixteenth edition). In general it is now agreed that k and e preserve the African text, and that b, a, f, and g have preserved the Old Latin text current in Italy and Gaul.

One very striking characteristic of these Old Latin versions is their noticeable divergence, as a whole group, from the text of almost all of the Greek manuscripts,

especially in the matter of interpolations, or additions to the text. That is to say, all of these Old Latin versions exhibit a marked tendency to expand the text by the addition of paraphrases and explanatory notes, which give every evidence of having been originally scholia, or marginal notes, which have subsequently been included in the text itself. The other striking and significant fact is that this tendency to interpolate, and the distinctive readings produced thereby, are shared by a very small, but definitely related family of Greek manuscripts--notably by D, W, and Θ, among the uncials, and by Family 1, Family 13, and the individual manuscripts 565 and 700 among the minuscules, and the very important papyrus fragment p<sup>45</sup> in the Gospels and Acts, as well as by the two oldest Syriac versions. Since there can be no doubt as to the place of origin and circulation of these Old Latin versions, therefore, this whole rather homogeneous group has been commonly designated as the "Western" family δ, which is a rather unfortunate appellation.

Streeter, who has done a considerable amount of research on this family, prefers to call it rather the Syro-Latin family, due to the fact that a more careful examination of the various manuscripts and versions involved reveals the fact that this particular grouping consists actually of two distinct, but related, sub-families--1) a true Western text, originating in North Africa and Italy, represented by D, and the Old Latin versions; and 2) a Syrian text, originating, apparently in Antioch and Caesarea, represented by Θ, W, p<sup>45</sup>, the minuscules, and the Syriac versions. The curious thing--and a fact which has not been explained as yet--is that in this case there are two widely separated and distinct geographical areas which exhibit local texts which are strikingly similar and which point, therefore, to a common antecedent text. This Syro-Latin family, which had been ignored almost completely by earlier editors, especially by Westcott and Hort, has lately, since the researches of Streeter, assumed a position of considerable importance in the field of textual criticism, inasmuch as it plainly represents a concurrence of local texts in two of the most important centers of early Christianity--Rome and Antioch; and furthermore, a text which seems to have been spread over a very wide area of the early Christian world at a very early date. The so-called "Western" readings, therefore, can no longer be safely ignored.

Mention has already been made of the so-called "Syriac" versions. Here, as with the Old Latin, we are dealing with translations made at a very early date--certainly as old as the second century. Tatian's Diatessaron, e.g. (a harmony of the four gospels) can certainly be dated around 150 A.D., although it is preserved to us in no Syriac manuscripts, but only in Armenian and Arabian translations. The two Syriac manuscripts which set forth the so-called "Old Syriac" versions (to distinguish them from the Peshitta, or Vulgate, revision of 425 A.D. and its later recensions), have been dated tentatively as originating about 200 A.D., with the place of origin almost certainly Antioch. These two manuscripts are designated as sy<sup>S</sup> (Sinaitic) and sy<sup>C</sup> (Curetonian). (cf. page 17 in Nestle's sixteenth edition). As noted above, these Syriac versions show a text which has very striking affinities with that of the Old Latin versions, and with the Greek text of D, W, and Θ. Within this "Eastern" family, as it is sometimes called, it is now generally agreed that the Old Syriac versions represent the local text of Antioch; and that W and Θ and their allied minuscules (Family 1, Family 13, 565, and 700) preserve the local text of Caesarea, which Origen found there when he came in 231 A.D.

Next among the ancient versions mention must be made of the so-called "Coptic" versions--that is, translations made into the vernacular language of Egypt, using Greek characters. Here again we note that the earliest of these--the one translated into the Sahidic dialect of Upper Egypt--dates back to at least the third century, if not before. The second of these versions--called the "Bohairic," because it was rendered into the Bohairic dialect of Lower Egypt--has been dated



variously as having originated in the third, fourth, or fifth centuries. Of the translations made into the dialects of Middle Egypt -- Fayyumic, Memphitic, and Akhmimic -- the manuscript remains are so fragmentary and so little is known, even today, that nothing can really be said about them. These various Coptic versions are designated in our critical apparatus as sa, bo, and aeq. (cf. page 17 of Nestle's sixteenth edition).

The one significant thing to be noted about all these Coptic versions, however, is the fact that they, too, all exhibit a common text; and even more significantly, a text which differs greatly from the previously mentioned Syro-Latin family. And here also we note that the text of these Coptic versions shows marked affinities with another small group of ancient Greek manuscripts -- especially with B, Aleph, C, and L, of the uncials, and with the important minuscule 33. Here, then, is additional evidence to the existence of another distinct and separate local text -- or a family of texts, closely related to one another in character and extending over a well-defined geographical area -- that of Egypt, with its great center of Alexandria. Here also the evidence points to the existence of this definite "Alexandrian" text -- designated as  $\beta$  -- at a very early date -- at least as far back as 200 A. D.

In this respect it should be remarked that Westcott and Hort, in their researches in the late nineteenth century, recognized the existence of both the above-mentioned families of texts -- the "Western" and the Alexandrian. It should also be noted, however, that Westcott and Hort mis-read the evidence then at their disposal, and came to the erroneous conclusion that the so-called "Alexandrian" text, represented by the two best and oldest manuscripts, B and Aleph, was a "pure neutral text," as they described it -- that is to say, a text which transmitted the text of the original documents in an almost pure form. This being the case, they rather contemptuously dismissed the "Western" family of texts as an example of a much corrupted text, whose readings should be considered as merely curious eccentricities. This being the case, the critical text of Westcott and Hort, which forms the basis of the E. R. V., the A. S. V., and the R. S. V., is a text which is based almost entirely and exclusively on one local text -- that of Alexandria, as represented almost exclusively in two manuscripts -- B and Aleph. As noted above, Westcott and Hort's principle was that where B and Aleph agreed, that reading must certainly be accepted as the true reading. Where B and Aleph disagreed, they invariably followed the text of B, so that in effect their critical text is but a reproduction of that of one manuscript -- B. Tischendorf, who accepted their evaluation of the Alexandrian family as "pure, neutral" in character, differed from his contemporaries only in that in cases of disagreement between the two principal authorities, he generally followed the text of Aleph, which he himself discovered.

(To be concluded)

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