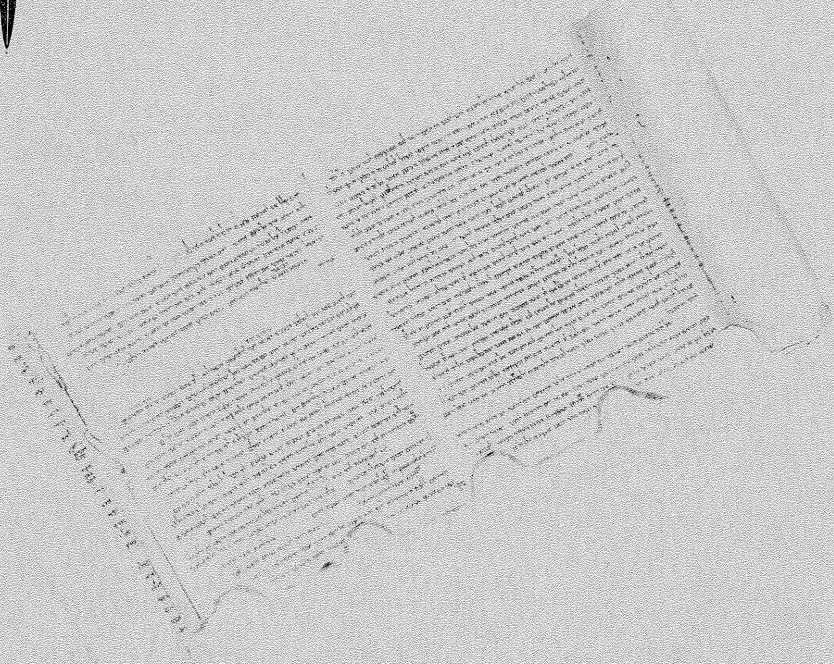




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Lutheran  
Synod  
Quarterly

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### LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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## MISSIONS SEMINAR

Last March the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Board of Admissions gathered five pastors with special interests in missions at Bethany Seminary in Mankato, to meet with the seminary students for a special three-day seminar on missions. The students and special seminar staff had both made special preparation for the sessions through readings and research. The sessions were recorded; some of the highlights of the discussions are transcribed here, with only minor editorial changes in the oral style of the speakers.

The first day's discussion centered on mission work in rural areas. Surprising evidence was presented regarding the potential for mission outreach in such areas.

STUDENT DAVID NELSON: I'd like to read a few facts and figures. In the United States based on the 1960 figures only 63.8% of the population are church members. There are quite a few that aren't. There are 73 million unchurched people in the United States. 20 million of these are children who receive no religious instruction. Of this 73 million figure, half, or 37 million, are people who live in rural communities of less than 2,500, so that actually half of the unchurched people live in an area of small towns or rural areas. So I would say that there is definitely a field for missions in rural areas....

In addition, the dissatisfaction in many parts of Lutheranism was noted as presenting a kind of mission opportunity. Now

should all these prospects be gathered?  
Both a suggestion and a warning were  
offered.

PASTOR WALTER WERLING: ...I do think the time has come when we should again be circuit riders. Here again, I think, is a wide-open field for us, that we should extend ourselves to neighboring towns, etc. And now it's easy to be a circuit rider. Pastor Dickey in our day went by bobsled and by horse and he was a circuit rider to other places, and people had readers in our own congregations there that read the Sunday sermon and "Tuleforken"-- gave the -- you know -- the pitch ...But I would like to lay this upon your heart that the time has come, I think, for circuit riders and I would not neglect little congregations here and there. We could have services during the week, too, couldn't we? I think this is important that we gather the scattered brethren and that we don't look to just the big congregations.... When we think of that circuit rider, we have to be careful that people don't ask for their own church as soon as they start one down the line. I think that is important, and I should think we should watch this. This is a dangerous situation where someone has found two or three people and then all at once they say: "Give us a \$100,000 church." I guess this is the thing that comes before the Mission board. Here, I believe, is where the pastor or whoever works there, should really have his feet on the ground.... I could add to that. In cases where they can combine, like our little churches, this matter should surely be taken care of. Why chase a pastor to 3 places 4 miles apart? This is something we ought to urge upon them, so that we might be of better service....

And what of methods for mission work in rural and small-town areas? A personal experience provided perhaps the best method.

STUDENT DALE CHRISTOPHERSON: ...What I'm working at is this. It might not be any activity of any organized church group or any acting Mission Board, or results of anybody's training program that caused the Holy Spirit to work in my heart. As a matter of fact, it was a layman--a car salesman, a fine one. I realized later that the pin he had on his lapel had a diamond, ruby, and a sapphire in it, from the Ford Motor Company. He was a top-notch salesman. But he primarily was a salesman for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this man wasn't bashful about the Gospel. He came into the jewelry store that I owned and operated at that time, and one thing led to another, and he was primarily there, because the Lord must have led him. "Yes, aren't you a Christian?" Everybody is a Christian. I live in the United States: aren't I a Christian? Well--"Is the Lord Jesus Christ your personal Savior?" I never heard this before. I said I tried to read the Bible, but with all those "begats" and all that stuff, that don't make much sense to me. He told me where to read. To make a long story short, it was a witnessing layman not trying to win me to any particular church organization, but trying to get the Gospel presented to me as an unsaved person--that started the ball rolling. And it was a matter of three months time through the means of grace and the Word that I was baptized and gave my heart to Christ. As a result my wife did, and two months later we were privileged to lead my mother and father to the Lord Jesus Christ--he was 57 years old and had never been baptized in the church. Now this is typical of the area I come from. 70% of the people are probably in the same category....Many Lutherans are a little bit gun-shy about this witnessing. We have the truth. We have the pure Gospel and, well, I don't know how it can be any purer. We have nothing to be ashamed of. And it seems to me if our pastors can create this feeling in their congregations about what a wonderful Savior we have--it's pretty contagious, and enthusiasm is contagious and we'll end with more fellows like this W \_\_\_ H \_\_\_ who

is the Ford car salesman that talked to me. And boy, if you've got a congregation working like this, you can't beat it, the gates of Hell cannot prevail against you.

Such ideas were re-echoed the second day, when urban mission work was the focus of discussion. The personal approach was found valuable in neighborhood canvassing programs, especially at the second call on a prospect.

STUDENT ROGER FALK: When you are making these follow-up calls, especially when you are dealing with prospects for church membership, take an illustration from the life of a businessman: the best salesman for a product is a satisfied customer. And I think here is where a layman becomes very important--with calling on prospects. If he is really satisfied with his church, really enthused about it, he can sell it to these prospects a lot better than the pastor can. After all, that is the pastor's business--he's supposed to preach religion. But if you have an enthused and convinced layman, people will buy that. And I think that this is a very good point for a lay follow-up.

The city, of course, presents special problems of its own for mission workers, and some of these were discussed.

PASTOR T.A. KUSTER: I think we could look at a great deal of these city-urban problems in terms of communication. One of the obvious things to a city-dweller--even more so to a country dweller going into the city--is the tremendous amount of communication that everyone there is exposed to. Now, this if your entire life, you get it on radio, you get it on TV, you get it in newspapers, you get it on street

corners, you walk down the street and you get it, you get it at your job--it's just communication all the time. This, I think, is what turns city people cold to strangers. Because of all this communication they're exposed to, they are going to have to be very selective--they are going to have to start putting up a guard. And that's why city dwellers seem cold. That's why they slam the door on you when you go calling on them because this is one type of communication that they have decided to turn off. There's just too much for them to handle. So, they will turn off you. We pastors and church members are one source of communication among many. There is tremendous competition for peoples' attention in the city. And since people have to be by necessity very selective in what they attend to, we're going to have to be really sharp to break through this attention barrier. We're going to have to be more interesting than TV, if we're going to expect them to turn off their TV and listen to us. We're going to have to be more vital and up-to-date than a newspaper if we are going to expect them to put down their newspaper and read our church bulletins. There's a tremendous competition here for the peoples' attention. This is a communication problem--a serious one, among others.

On the third day, the seminar concentrated on foreign missions. The discussion opened with a consideration of the resources, both spiritual and material, that a synod must possess in order to carry on an effective foreign mission program.

STUDENT FRED THEISTE: ...in the synod before it can do successful mission work, I think that the love of God and obedience to Christ would be primary--motivation to carry out the command and plan of Christ which is to make disciples of all nations and to go

into all the world and to preach to every creature. The end of the world is fast approaching, and our work is to go out and make disciples of all nations, and I think these are the main spiritual characteristics that a synod must have if it is going to carry out a successful mission program. ...

PASTOR PAUL ANDERSON: ...The synod must have a love for God, but it must also have a love of people. The Second Table comes in here just as strongly: that we have such a love for people, and the salvation of people. This is absolutely essential to that love, too. This must also characterize a synod if it is to be a mission synod.

STUDENT PAUL JECKLIN: I think we recognize that there are certainly material needs of a mission, but I think sometimes these can be over-stressed to the point that they are nothing more than excuses for not going. And so we could say in a very real way that the material characteristics needed are actually very, very few, and they will take care of themselves if the spiritual motivation is correct. That might be too great a generalization, but it is acknowledging that there are material needs, money for one, but a lack of money is often an excuse for not going, where if the spiritual motivation was there, the money would be there also.

PASTOR PAUL ANDERSON: Let's pursue that part with a bit of illustration. The people of Nigeria, by our standards, were very, very poor. Their average wage was about 14¢ a day. And yet they did not find that to be a reason for neglecting mission work. They were a very active mission group. The foreign missionary did not have to go out and search through the bush to find people to bring into church. This was done by the newly converted Africans. And neither was it only this action, this person-to per-



son action, where they would go out and without any cost to themselves, speak to others. But they also had a more organized mission program going too. The Ibibos had their mission among the Ibos. Their word for the mission offering was "anoyamycik." You don't hear the word "mission" in there at all, but what you do hear is "a gift of the love of the heart." And that is the thing that pushed them on. I suppose you could call that love of the heart a kind of a material thing, because from it came cold cash, and lots of it.

MISSIONARY TED KUSTER: I would like to read a quote here from a fellow: "When we rely on organization," he says, "we get what organization can do. When we rely on planning, we get what planning can do. When we rely on eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. And so on. But when we rely on prayer, we get what God can do." And I take this one step farther and I say, not to belittle any of these other things: But when we rely on God's Word, we get what God's Word can do. In that connection the passage which I think we could almost use as the banner of our whole foreign mission program says, "I know what you do, I know that you have a little power, you have followed my teaching, and you have been faithful to me. I have opened a door before you which no one can close." This to me takes up the material and spiritual characteristics all in one shot. It's describing our synod too, isn't it? We know that we have a little power, and God knows this too, and we have been faithful to His Word, and we know this and we can look back in our synod reports and see how this has cost us, and how we struggle for these things. And so we have this Gospel, and what does the Lord say? "I have opened a door before you which no one can close." And if we rely on things like this, and really believe these things, then we have what God's Word can do. The danger is, though, that we have to apply these

things in the rest of our lives too. If we are going to tell our people these things, relying on God's Word, we are going to have to be relying on it ourselves or our words are empty sounds and this is the secret too, I think, to the problems we have been getting at the last two days. The clergy is the key, really, and it is not too hard for the clergyman to fulfill this position--to really rely on God's Word himself.

PASTOR PAUL ANDERSON: I think that we can pretty well generalize and say that mission work is indoctrination. It begins with indoctrination, and it reaches out by indoctrination. It prepares missionaries by indoctrination. Teach! Teach! Teach! That is the secret of the thing. If we so teach our people that they know where they came from, what has happened to them by the grace of God, and the condition of other people that it is the same as theirs, there is motivation. Then method. We make disciples. How? By baptizing and by teaching. Teaching! Teaching! Teaching, again! And the more we can teach and deepen the spiritual understanding of our people, the better missionaries they are going to be. They are not going to become dead orthodox people--not if we teach right. And this love of the Word of God, the love of the doctrines of that Word, that is going to--well, it is a vital necessity if we are going to either exist as a church, or to do mission work as a church.

And how large ought a synod to be before it can expect to support a foreign mission?

MISSIONARY TED KUSTER: Well, the figure that I come with is for a synodical type mission, that we would be familiar with, 4,000 to 1 would be the ratio of workers at home to workers in another

area--4,000 to 1. Now there are other groups that do better. The World Mission Prayer group, to cite one example of another group, has, I think, 3,000 members and they support 100 workers overseas.

STUDENT PAUL JECKLIN: I believe there is a principle involved when we consider these churches that support missionaries: they grow themselves. The spirit or emphasis which has caused growth in their own midst creates the desire to go to the foreign fields. That same emphasis, I would think, would be found in those who even stay at home, so they carry on their missionary activity in their back yards and at the factories, etc., and it is just a contagious spirit, like we have said before. I can see no reason why they wouldn't grow at home, if that type of spirit exists there, that has caused so many to respond to the foreign field. There is a basic principle involved there, I believe.

Mission work, of course, requires financial support, and this too was discussed.

PASTOR PAUL ANDERSON: In the Nigeria mission, the money given by our white folds back here went to support the white folds over there. That meant, then, that those who went to teach in the seminary from here were paid with funds from here. But when the Africans put a teacher in there, they paid the African teacher. Similarly with the normal school, and all of them. The village schools, the village churches were paid for entirely by the village money....

PASTOR T.A. KUSTER: ...You see, these aren't abstract problems that we are talking about here. In two or three years you men will all be out in congregations and faced with exactly this problem,

and maybe it would help to clarify it if we state it this way. We were looking at some figures last night and it seems according to the budget of last year, the average contribution for every communicant member for all missions, foreign and home is four dollars--four dollars a year for all missions. What does it mean to start a foreign mission? Well, next year it seems that the average mission contribution will hopefully be five dollars per member. And so what does it mean to start a foreign mission in terms of material characteristics? We can say that every local pastor has to get every one of his members to contribute a dollar that year. What is that--8¢ a month. That's what it needs. And this is the problem--how are you going to face it, how are you going to handle this in your congregation?

STUDENT DALE CHRISTOPHERSON: I agree with that and I want to cite a couple of points from the secular side of it. If a man really believes something, he will put his money in it. For example, if his hobby is photography, he will think nothing of spending \$300 or \$400 or more for a fine camera, because he believes in this, he is interested in this. Also I think we can learn much from selling, sales organizations in the secular society. If you don't sell anything, even though you may have the finest product in the world, maybe you don't go with it and present it before people, you are not selling. Likewise here, from the spiritual aspect, I think the pastors, and we as future pastors here, and the existing pastors in particular, have a tremendous selling job, and I am using that in its positive sense, for foreign missions. If this zeal, if this truth is presented, by the preaching of the Word, the truth is brought out, the Holy Spirit will touch hearts, and if a man believes in something, there is no problem in asking his money for it....

STUDENT TOSTEN SKAALAND: I found from the book I

reviewed on the indigenous church, that we should teach the converts to tithe; this may be idealistic, but if you could have ten families and each one of them tithes, they can support a pastor on the same level of standard of living on which they are living.

Choosing a field in which to start a foreign mission always presents a problem. The seminar's moderator brought the problem before the group.

MODERATOR A.V. KUSTER: ...So here we go on the question, "In what foreign field can we best serve?" Various possible fields to be weighed. Did anybody do any serious work on that? We'd like to hear something that has been based on a little study in this matter and possibly to arouse some good results. On the panel?

STUDENT TOSTEN SKAALAND: There are some places where God's Word is being rejected. Like China. That is closed. We can't get in there. And there are certain places like Ceylon which allows only three missionaries. There are certain restrictions that are automatically placed upon us. Communism is another thing--this isn't meaning to say that where there is communism we shouldn't go, but where there is communism it is harder for us to work. In South America, Communism hasn't taken over a firm hold yet, and if we could get in there first, I think it would be more of an opportunity that way and there aren't too many other competing religions. In South America it is pretty much wide open.

MODERATOR A.V. KUSTER: I know that our missionary-elect has done some thinking along this line; would you like to briefly list some of your thoughts on

this line of why we're in South America, not in Tibet, or--

MISSIONARY TED KUSTER: With the idea that there are other fields, this is just one way of finding one place to begin--to start. There are two million people in South America, and they say the population is growing.

MODERATOR A.V. KUSTER: 200 million, you mean.

MISSIONARY TED KUSTER: 200 million, yes. 10% are Catholic, I would say--an estimate on my part. 10% are Catholic--that leaves quite a few. And then the Spanish language, this is a choice I guess you would have to make. I think some of the reasons briefly why we chose Spanish are: it is a language that can be easily mastered by someone on his own, in high school or college here in our country. It's also a language that can be used in other places, in other countries abroad, and also it can be used here in the United States in many of our cities. There is a certain stability in South America in the country of Peru toward religion, towards religious freedom, towards the whole thing about Communism--there is a certain stability, it's holding its own right now; we don't know what the future holds, but it looks good. There is an easy access to this area--it is easy to get there. It takes a day, and it costs an amount of money, but still is an easy place to get to. You don't have to go off through the jungles and then over the mountains and then by canoe another ten miles, you know, and then by foot the rest of the way. It is very easy to get there, and so for many reasons, this would be the place to start. This is the thinking that went on in our mind. Now there are other places which have these same qualifications, I am sure....There are mission groups, however, who would act the exact opposite. Where are

the smallest groups being neglected? Where is the competition the keenest? Where is the language the hardest? Let's say they find say 300 people in this tribe; they will go in and learn that language. Where is the political climate the worst, and one of the hardest places to get to?

Held two and a half months before his departure to South America, the seminar offered our synod's missionary--elect opportunities both to refine and express his own ideas about foreign mission work. He shared with the seminar participants his own mission zeal, and revealed some of his ideas about what his mission methods will include.

MISSIONARY TED KUSTER: ...I just sort of hated to come home from the (exploratory) trip in that sense, because the fields are white... The open door, see, the door is open. That means that the way is made clear for the conversion of the heathen, for the unbelievers....It is just a field that is ready. Our job will be more or less like those people that ran around to invite people to the wedding feast, you know, "Come on in, come on in." Another thing: the urgency always has to override everything.... There isn't any time left. "Hurry out to the streets and alleys"--that is one passage. "Make good use of every opportunity you get"--that is another one. "I am coming soon," Jesus says. He says that twice. "I am coming soon," He says, "The good news will be preached, then the end will come." The Lord is not slow, but He is patient. He wants all to be saved. So there is urgency over the whole thing. So when you feel this urgency and you get this from the Bible, this urgency that it has over this whole picture of missions all over the world, then I think you have a little different concept too about when a person is ready to be a

missionary. I think we should stress purity of doctrine to the hilt. I think we should stress quality education at all levels. I think we should have trained clergy. I think we should have people with degrees. But there is also this urgency that we have to get those peoples before they get into the place where there is no release. And then you have a fellow in your church or your congregation or a little group, and he knows John 3:16, and it is very simple. And I am not going to tell this fellow that he has to learn other passages first. He will want, I think, to go out and tell the next person John 3:16. He might not understand anything else in the whole Bible, but he has got that straight and he is going to want to go. Here is another thing I think we miss. We don't see this too much in our people here, and we don't see it too much in ourselves, this original enthusiasm for the Gospel that the newly converted have. If you have ever seen a person as we say come to faith, or seen this happen in a person's life, you will notice this sort of tapers off. It begins real anxious and enthusiastic, then it sort of tapers off. And how much don't we contribute to that tapering off by telling them....

All of the participants, at the close of the conference, admitted to have gained both knowledge and inspiration from the first Special Mission Seminar at Bethany, and expressed the hope that it could be made an annual event.



We here re-produce a few of the studies and book reviews prepared by the students for this Seminar.

## "PROBLEMS IN APPLYING THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN CULTURES"

"Don't take our culture away!" This statement was made by an Indian in Wisconsin. He was told by a minister that chewing the root of a particular plant was wrong, since it caused the same effects as drug addiction. The reply to the minister, "Don't take our culture away!" illustrates the problems one can have in applying the Gospel in different cultures. For that matter, one has a difficult enough time applying the Gospel in his own culture, much less in a foreign one. The purpose of this essay will be to investigate several of these actually innumerable problems.

Before we progress any further let us define what "culture" really is and whether the Gospel really applies to all cultures. Webster's cites culture as "the characteristic features or the typical behavior of a particular people." Eugene A. Nida, in Customs and Cultures says that culture is "all learned behavior which is socially acquired, that is, the material and non-material traits which are passed on from one generation to another." Culture thus practically embraces all actions and behaviors of a people.

Can the Gospel then be applied to all cultures? The ultimate source of all knowledge and authority gives us our answer. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19; also Matt. 24:14, Mark 13:10, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, and Rev. 14:6).

And when the word nations is used in the Greek original (ethnos), it does not refer to formally organized countries, but to peoples, and by context, all peoples.

Thus the Gospel is for all cultures and all peoples. But this is easier said than done. The first problem arises with language. The missionary must learn it, and the Bible, the Good News of Salvation in Christ, must be translated into it. The innumerable dialects in many languages add to the problem. Once the language is learned, there is still the problem of getting the Gospel through to the people. Often the missionary "scratches the people where they do not itch." He is not concerned with or does not understand the specific immediate needs of the people. He must present the Word of God in their terms. He must meet them on their level. Use Chang Kai Shek as an example of a Christian. In South America the story of the Good Shepherd would probably fit well into their culture.

Another problem would come in trying to impose Western culture on to a foreign culture. The native people should not be forced to talk, walk, eat, sleep, and dress like Americans. This is not part of Christianity, as St. Paul says in Col. 2:16, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." Foreign educational patterns and foreign government should also not be forced upon the natives. They will just resent this and it will become an obstacle to their conversion.

Think "indigenous". The spread of the Gospel is often hindered when there is too much control and support by the mission and missionary. Self-government, self-propagation, and self-support should be left to the natives themselves. A missionary once refused that his home be used as a chapel, refused the chairs he had to be used for services, but gave the native people a kerosene lamp for light. The people themselves built a church, bought chairs, but would never buy a lamp or pay for the oil to be used in it. They felt no responsibility for something given to them, not even the maintenance of it. If there is too much control by the missionary, this also leads to a

lack of faith-life and evangelistic zeal. "If it was done for us before, why should we do it now."

Thus native pastors and workers should also be trained from the start. They know their people better and the people are more willing to accept the Good News from a brother than from a foreigner. The object of mission work is to save souls and more can be reached this way.

Is the answer in settling the polygamy problem in foreign cultures an easy one? Eugene A. Nida says, "No doubt the biggest problem which Christian missionaries have faced in dealing with social problems of different cultures is polygamy." "If I must have only one wife," says the native, "which one should I keep?" What about the children? Often when natives change to monogamy, considerable concubinage and prostitution occurs. Still the Lord says, "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife" and the deacons "husbands of one wife" and the widow "being the wife of one man" (also Matt. 19:5--one flesh). The problem of polygamy must be dealt with and the sin must be condemned as wrong.

In South America the root of a certain plant has the same effect as drug addiction. After centuries of use, how does one go about telling the people to stop using it and that this is a sin? Is it easy to make them understand that their bodies are to be "Temples of the Holy Ghost" (Phil. 1:20, 1 Cor. 6:19)?

Other areas in which methods of procedure are difficult are pre-marital sex (Matt. 19:5), infant-killing, cannibalism (Ex. 20:13, Matt. 19:18, Rom. 13:9), and idolatry (Acts 19:26).

However, no matter what the problems are at home or abroad, the simple plain piercing Law (Gen. 32:10, Lev. 19:2) and the simple plain redeeming Gospel (John 3:16) must be taught. One must never neglect either.

Tosten D. Skaaland

## "PROMOTING THE FOREIGN MISSION AT HOME"

There are many avenues that can be pursued in promoting the foreign mission program here at home.

One avenue is through the use of slides. Our Synod missionaries should constantly be taking pictures of the foreign mission and its work. These slides should then be sent to the Mission Board whose duty it would be to see to it that these slides are made available to all the churches in our Synod. In this way the people can view the progress and development of the mission. These slides could show the first convert or a typical church service or any other human interest activity in the mission. The cost of film today being so inexpensive this would be an excellent means of promoting the foreign mission.

Inviting a missionary on furlough to speak to different organizations and groups in the congregation is another avenue to be pursued. This would provide the people with an opportunity to ask questions about the mission work and would also keep them in closer contact with the work that is being done.

This type of promotional meeting would also give the missionary an opportunity to make personal requests of the congregations for materials and finances needed in the mission.

The missionaries could also take advantage of the taperecorder and send tapes to the Mission Board of a service or a group of children singing. The Board could make these available to the individual congregations and in this way the people could hear the natives sing and speak in their native language. This is always an interesting aspect for many people.

Souvenirs and displays could also be made available to the people so that they can see how the natives in this mission live and work.

The importance of carrying the Good News of God's salvation for lost mankind into all the world

(Mark 16:15) should constantly be set before the people in both church and Synod publications. Through these publications the people should be made aware of the fact that only 7 percent of the world population holds Protestant membership, in the church.

The non-Christians in foreign countries number approximately 1,360,000,000. The harvest is indeed great.

Our pastors in their sermons and other pastoral activities must constantly remind the people of the words of the Apostle Paul, who through inspiration wrote, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How than shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

"And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!...so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10:13-17).

Each and every one of us was given the Great Commission of our Lord to make disciples of all nations. (Matt. 28:19). We carry out our responsibility through support of the foreign mission program. This support can be given through money, material items, workers in the mission, or prayers.

Prayer--this is an important avenue that is too often bypassed. Prayer provides an excellent opportunity for all of us to promote the foreign mission work. Through prayer both young and old can take an active part in the foreign mission program.

The Mission Board could make considerable use of this avenue to promote foreign mission. The Board could distribute Prayer Cards which would emphasize different aspects of mission work and would serve as guidelines in the prayers of the people.

The spiritual life and strength of any church body is reflected by its foreign mission program. Pastors and laymen alike must always keep in mind that the foreign missionary task of the Church is one of desperate importance. If the redemption of man awaits his faith in Christ and His kingdom, then to summon men to that faith is no small matter; it is the pivotal activity of history. Indeed, it is possible to say that it is the only hope of mankind.

Fred Theiste

### "MOBILIZING CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR MISSION WORK"

Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;"

Mark 16:15-16

Momentuous and unparalleled opportunities await the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in mission endeavor. These opportunities for effective mission work are everywhere, in rural as well as the urban and suburban areas.

An often overlooked missionary force is available to each congregation; a potential force whose vitality is too valuable to be dissipated. This tremendous potential is to be found among the children and young people of the local congregation.

Much has been written and stated concerning Christian instruction for the youth of the congregation, and rightly so, for this is one of the most important parts of the church's program. But what is the purpose of this training? To what use shall it be put? Shall we have only tools? What are they for? How may this vast source of vitality and energy be harnessed for the joyous work of the spreading of Christ's kingdom? There are many

aspects and considerations involved in such questions. It would seem to be beneficial and profitable to examine some of them in an endeavor to see more clearly what might be possible to do in this particular area.

One may ask, "Why should children and youth be mobilized for mission work?" There are several distinct advantages that the children and youth have over the older members of the congregation so far as mission endeavor is concerned. First of all, as stated above, they have so much more to give in the way of vitality, enthusiasm, zeal, and often, time, than do the majority of the adults. Another very important consideration is the fact that the young people are in the home every day, in direct contact with many relatives and parents that are indifferent to the Gospel. As a result, young people often have an opportunity to reach those with the Gospel message who might not otherwise come in contact with it. This may not always be a successful method, but it certainly was envisioned by our Saviour when He said: "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be they of his own household." Matt. 10:35-36. In other words, Jesus is pointing out the frequent division that results among members of the same family due to the message of the Gospel and its effect within the family.

One of the most effective means of spreading the Gospel of Christ to unchurched parents and adult members of the family is through those young members of the family with which the church is privileged to work and teach in the Sunday school and VBS program of the congregation. The church can often succeed in getting the children and young people into the hearing of the Word of God when they may be unable to do likewise with the older ones. Why not make good use of this fact?

The children and young people of the congregation are extremely important to the work of the kingdom from another aspect. They are the future

pastors, teachers, evangelists and missionaries of the church of tomorrow. How foolish it would be to overlook this factor in the growth of the kingdom until a much less opportune time than now.

These are but a few of the basic reasons why the children and youth should be mobilized for mission work. There are, without a doubt, many other sound reasons, but it seems quite obvious, after a minimum of consideration on our part, that these young people can be a very effective mission force, not only to those of their own age, but also to their older parents and relatives. This brings us to the next logical consideration, and that is-

How can children and youth be mobilized for mission work? As with many other aspects of the work of the church it is not always possible to give "cut and dried" answers to this and other questions. One must often confine himself to broad areas of concern. It does seem, however, that there are many realistic approaches that a concerned congregation can utilize in the mobilization of its young people for mission work.

Of primary importance is the educational program of the church for its young people. It is the responsibility of the pastor, as the shepherd of his flock, to insure that the Work of God is actually reaching each child and youth in the educational program. He should insure by every means possible that each teacher is presenting the Gospel message in the most attractive manner to their students. If the young people themselves have been so instructed in the faith that they have a personal, living, vital relationship to their Saviour, the problem of utilizing this testimony becomes much less difficult. This, of course, necessitates well qualified and prepared teachers of the youth, not simply those who fill the required positions. If the teachers themselves have an obvious personal knowledge and relationship to Christ they will delight in the opportunity to instruct the young members of the congregation in the Word of God. This instruction must, of course, be only through the means of grace. "So



then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," Romans 10:17.

Not only the pastor and the Sunday school teachers have a responsibility for proper Christian instruction, but the believing parents of the children and youth of the congregation have really the most important responsibility of all. By setting the proper example of true Christian living in the home, and by daily devotions and instruction as a family, the Christian parent contributes to his children that which few others can, namely, that of instilling faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ.

Much can be accomplished through the work of the congregational youth program, such as our Synod's LYA. Frequently we hear it said, as coming from the young people themselves, or from someone speaking for them, "If a congregation will not provide amusement and passtime for its young people, then these will seek and get these things elsewhere, very often at an undesirable place and in an undesirable way." The fact is, however, that the church is not called upon to provide amusement; that is not its business. The church dare not neglect its young people, nor let them feel that it has forgotten them or takes no interest in them, nor that it has forgotten the young people, because they are young, have certain wants that must be satisfied. A young people's group, however, may accomplish very little that is of benefit to the church unless it receives proper guidance. A church youth organization, organized by permission of the church and doing its work under the authority and supervision of the church, ought to serve the church by helping to do the church's work. If it does not serve the church at all, it has no right to exist as a church organization. By helping our youth groups to better realize what the prime and essential purpose of their organization ought to be, and in fact is, we will in turn be mobilizing our youth for potential mission work, as well as helping them to live and thrive better. Certain concessions have to be made, of course, to social and entertainment features for

young people, but the church feature (and why not the mission aspect?) should be made prominent in the work of the church's youth organization.

Many different methods and types of mission work can be utilized quite successfully by serious minded and dedicated youth in their teens. Missionary canvassing of the local area; visitation of the sick and shut-ins; follow-up visiting of both Sunday school and teenage prospects; tract distribution (house to house); tract racks in public places; bringing children and other young people to worship services; personal witnessing for Christ; putting in window displays in business areas that tell the message of the Gospel; putting up highway markers. These and many other things are natural fields of mission endeavor for Christain youth.

The Sunday school children are many times the only means whereby their parents come in contact with the church. That Sunday school lesson paper that is carried by the child into the home; that Gospel song that the child learns and sings so sincerely; that Bible verse that is memorized and later recited to their parents, may be the divinely appointed means, in many cases, of planting the seed of the Gospel.

Some type of plan in a congregation that provides for an annual interview by the pastor with the youth on an individual basis is of tremendous benefit in mission work. What better time than this, in addition to the many other advantages of such an interview, to do some "recruiting" for future pastors, teachers, missionaries, and other necessary laborers for God's vineyard. We can never hear too often the words of Jesus, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." Luke 10:2.

It is realized that much more could be said concerning this subject of mobilizing our children and young people for mission work. It is hoped that these few thoughts may be of value, and helpful in utilizing this great mission force that is already

available to us.

Let us not forget the words of Isaiah as he envisioned the glorious kingdom of God and saw one of the aspects of that kingdom, which was-

"and a little child shall lead them."

Dale Christopherson

## "WHAT CHURCH MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW AND DO ABOUT THEIR CHURCH'S PUBLIC IMAGE"

A Christian congregation is not meeting its responsibilities unless it is ready to meet the community--to confront the community with the Gospel of forgiveness and life through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. This is its message and mission. But can a Christian congregation meet its responsibilities if it presents a poor image to the community to which it is to minister?

In the secular world men are judged by their appearance. If a man looks successful and acts successful, people will think he is so. But to appear successful takes work. A man must put forth effort to achieve success. Wilson Mizner once said, "The gent who wakes up and finds himself a success hasn't been asleep." What he means is that to be a success an individual must put forth a constant effort in that direction.

A Christian congregation must also present a picture of success if it is to have acceptance and prestige in the community to which it ministers. It must have a good public image.

Many is the congregation which is not as effective as it could be, simply because it has never taken the time to analyze the image it presents to the public. Thus self-analysis is necessary. It is necessary to achieve healthy relationships with other people.

Any self-analysis should answer two basic questions: 1. What do we think of ourselves?, and 2. What do others think about us? In answering these two questions one finds two solutions: there are some things that can be changed and there are some things which can not be changed.

When one attempts to answer the question as to what we think of ourselves, he finds things about which something can be done. For example: does the congregation think enough of itself and its mission that it wants to have a church building which is in good repair, whose exterior (and interior) is "well-groomed"? Are the church lawns trimmed and kept free of litter? Do flower beds, if there are any, need to be weeded and cleaned? If answers to questions such as these are negative, then others are likely to draw the conclusion that the congregation is not concerned about its image. Such an image does not give the picture of success and the general public is not likely to be impressed with that church.

Fortunately, something can be done about these things. Even though the congregation may not be very wealthy, through volunteer groups much of this external image may be improved.

But the building, grounds, etc., are not the only things which people look at when they judge a church. They also take into consideration the attitudes of individual members of the church, especially before, during, and after the services. Do the members really participate sincerely in their worship, or do they merely go through the motions of worship? Are the members friendly to strangers and greet them, or do they ignore strangers or treat them coldly? Here too, it only takes a little effort on the part of every individual to correct whatever is lacking in these areas.

Once a congregation has begun self-analysis, they will find many areas in which they can improve their image in the eyes of the public. We cannot go into all of these items, but we might mention a few things to which thought should be given. Such

things as neatness and quality of printed materials used, not only in the worship service, but also in general educational materials and publicity, is important. Competent ushers, organist(s), singers, etc., also make for lasting impressions. Adequate time should be made available to the pastor so that his message receives sufficient preparation. A preacher may not be an outstanding orator, but if he is well-prepared, has a logical, direct, sincere, Scriptural message to present, people will find him interesting and will want to hear him again.

When a congregation turns to the question "what do others think of us?" it often is confronted with things about which it cannot change its position. Here such things as participation in Scouts, the Ecumenical Movement, social action in the community, and other programs, present a problem to the Christian congregation. But just because a congregation cannot change its position on certain subjects, or movements, does not mean that something cannot be done about it. The congregation can substitute some other program for those which are objectionable. For example, even though Scouts are unacceptable, Lutheran Pioneers are not. Even though a congregation cannot participate in the Ecumenical Movement, it can be ecumenical by providing a public forum at which competent speakers present the Scriptural view on the subject. This could be done with any subject from social security, church tax exemption, and public vs. parochial education to open housing, fair labor laws, and others. The people of a community appreciate the opportunity to hear competent speakers on current topics. They may not always adopt the speaker's point of view, but they appreciate food for thought.

Good relations with a community can be built around a policy of accepting every opportunity that presents itself to show the community that the congregation and its members have a well-defined program of service to the community. This, of course, must be done within the limits of Scrip-

ture polity. There is nothing wrong with making your facilities available as a polling place, or for Red Cross classes, Civil Defense programs, and organizations of a similar nature. Members may object that such activities mess up the building and cause unnecessary work. But surely the extra work is well worth the extra amount of good will and esteem one gains through such activity.

A congregation's public image is not something that "just happens." It is something that is acquired by the congregation. The congregation itself determines whether this image is good or bad. If the congregation is on its toes it has nothing to fear from public scrutiny. Indeed, it will welcome searching examination by the unchurched, by member of other churches, and by members of the congregation itself.

A Christian congregation must confront its community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is therefore, the business of each congregation continually to identify itself with its Lord, Jesus Christ. To do this it ought never to neglect any avenue of communication within its means in order to identify itself thus in the community.

Roger W. Falk

"SHOULD NOT MANY OF OUR RURAL  
CONGREGATIONS CONSOLIDATE?"

This is a question that is being asked in our synod by many people today. Some say yes we should; others say no. However you answer it, the thought of consolidation should bring a few other questions to mind.

Why consolidate in the first place? What is the advantage in it? First of all, there is a general mission advantage to it. If we can consolidate two, three, four, or even five of our small

congregations into one parish, there will be more pastors available to start new mission churches. To do mission work is the only command that Jesus gave His followers after His resurrection. He said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations," (Matt. 28:19). No one can be saved without knowing Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," (Acts 4:12). With the many false and watered-down religions that we have in this country today, there is a real need for pure Gospel preaching. If by consolidation, we can loosen a few pastors, they they will be able to start new missions and bring Christ to those who need Him so badly. But if people do not know Christ, they can only die eternally without Him. There is certainly always a great need in the mission field.

There are also many practical advantages for the congregations who do consolidate. Supporting a Christian day school today is difficult for any church, especially for a small congregation. When congregations consolidate, the facilities for a Christian day school will more easily be provided for. A larger group will have more children attending, they can better afford to pay a teacher or two, and they can provide the adequate building and facilities needed.

Also, with a larger group, better worship facilities should be available. Many of our small congregations have a very old church building, which constantly needs repair, and is expensive to heat. A good method of obtaining new facilities is to consolidate and build. Only one set of utilities need be paid instead of three or four. Only one parsonage would be needed. Money saved by a consolidation can be used to start and support city churches which would serve many young families that have left rural areas and moved to the city.

Another advantage of consolidation to the churches involved would be better service from

the pastor. If a pastor can conduct only one service on a Sunday morning, instead of three, he will have more time for Bible study classes and Sunday school. If the pastor attends only one men's club or women's society in a week, he will have more time for house calls, sermon study, or mission work in the area. Not only are pastors freed to start other churches, but the pastor who remains has more time to serve the members of the consolidated group.

When should a congregation consolidate? What criteria for consolidation should be used? Many of our mission churches are small, but they have no one to consolidate with. So size is not the only criterion. Another important factor is the condition of the area in which the church is located. A rapidly growing area gives tremendous potential to even a small church. But, if the area is losing population, some change in the congregation should then be considered. Another criterion to consider is closeness to other E.L.S. churches. In many areas, a number of E.L.S. church groups are very close together. Now, how close is close enough for a consolidation? With our rapid means of auto transportation today, churches which are five, ten, fifteen, or even twenty miles apart could consolidate. And the closer they are, the more they should consolidate. So then, to summarize the criteria for a consolidation: If two or more congregations are 1. small, 2. located in a population-losing or small-gain area, and 3. are situated only five to twenty miles away from each other, they should probably consolidate.

Why has this not been done? Consolidation, which would give us the advantages of more mission money and workers, better facilities for education and worship, and better service from the pastor, has received much resistance. Why would people strongly refuse to consolidate and ignore the obvious advantages? There are several reasons that are given. Let us look at one of the main reasons, and see how good it really is. The number one rea-



son given is loyalty to the old church building. People do not want to leave the church building in which they have grown up, been baptized, and perhaps even married. But what is a church? It is a physical, structural building, or is it the souls who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ? We must admit that a congregation of believers is still a church, even if they meet in someone's garage. And we are all members of the greater invisible church, the Body of Christ. Now how can we best serve Christ, our Savior? By clinging to a wooden or brick structure, or by adding to the invisible church in any way we can; even if it means giving up our old physical church structure. We must be honest with ourselves, and with God, and weigh the values. Will we stubbornly and selfishly hold on to a building which is decaying, or will we help in even difficult and sacrificing ways to bring Christ's saving Word to as many as we can; to those who are less fortunate than we because they know not Christ. Jesus tells us, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," (Mark 8:34).

Can we do but what Christ has asked and even commanded us to do? He said if we would follow Him, we must deny ourselves. He commanded us to go and teach all nations. How can we vehemently refuse to consolidate, when it means poor service to us from our overworked pastor? How can we cling to a structure, which uses the money which could be starting new missions? How can we let our stubborn, selfish attitude tie up pastoral manpower, which should be bringing the saving Gospel news to the damned of the world?

Let us give some serious, soul-searching thought to consolidation!

David J. Nelson

## "ABSOLUTION" - IN THE SCRIPTURES AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

In his large Catechism Dr. Martin Luther says, "We further believe that in the Christian Church we have forgiveness of sin, which is wrought through the holy Sacraments and Absolution, moreover through all manner of consolatory promises of the entire Gospel." (III, p. 693) This is what the orthodox church has always held. But because men have failed to appreciate that absolution is Gospel in the purest form, because they have also perverted this doctrine, no little misunderstanding as well as controversy has risen over the matter. It is only the evangelical church which dares believe in and practise a free and unconditional absolution; she does so because she, by the grace of God, has learned to know and appreciate what the Gospel is, which Gospel she is most anxious to preserve pure and unadulterated.

A definition of Absolution might read as follows, "the act of loosening or setting free, the remission of sins and of the penalty of sin." (Con. Cycl. p.1) Of course, it is understood that this pardon is for the sake of the merits of Christ. Before demonstrating that this is what the Evangelical Lutheran church teaches, we shall briefly examine the Scriptures themselves, upon which the Confessions of said church are based, to establish that our definition is correct.

### A. In the Scriptures

When the sinful woman anointed Jesus' feet, He in very direct language told her, "Thy sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:48) The paralytic was told the same thing, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." (Matt. 9:2) In this latter instance Jesus with a word also healed the one to whom that

happy announcement had been made, as evidence that His word of absolution was an efficacious word. If we regard the account of the adulterous woman in John 8 as being canonical, we get another picture of absolution -- namely, as not condemning. The Savior's word brings this aspect out very clearly, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." (John 8:11)

Lest one should conclude that only Jesus could do such forgiving or absolving, we must bear in mind how He instructed His first disciples on this matter, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:22f) Also a Christian congregation has the authority to absolve, to pronounce one not guilty, for Jesus of such an action in His name has this to say to His followers, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:18)

That the early church understood absolution to be a declaration of forgiveness, or acquittal, and that it had its origin in Christ, is brought out in the Apostle Paul's word to the Corinthians, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled unto us himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:18-20)

From these passages it is clear "that absolution is not merely a declaration of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, but an actual imparting

of the remission of sins to all those who repent of their sins and believe the Gospel. It is not only the promise of the forgiveness of sins, but it is the voice of the reconciled God actually giving assurance of the state of justification through the merits of Jesus Christ." (Con. Cycl. p. 1f) In brief, absolution is the Gospel in its briefest, most compact form.

However, the picture would not be complete if we were to ignore the many expressions of the Old Testament which very strikingly bring out the declaratory and completely forgiving nature of absolution. The penitent David is by the prophet Nathan told, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (II Sam. 12:13b) And as proof of the truth of Nathan's words, David did not die, as he should have, in view of the judgment he had spoken over the offender in Nathan's parable. Again, in the 32nd Psalm we hear the same David confess, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (vs. 5)

The Old Testament expressions of absolution or forgiveness are so picturesque and self-explanatory that no one can fail to see that absolution is not just a pious wish, but an announcement that sin is put away, a declaration that one is free from all guilt, a pronouncement that the one to whom the words of absolution are addressed is regarded as free, as not guilty. For example the Lord through His holy writer tells His hearers of old, that their "warfare is accomplished", their "iniquity pardoned", for they had received "double for all" their sins "of the Lord's hand." (Isa. 40:2) At other times the Lord says that He blots out men's transgressions, (Isa. 43:25), that He will abundantly pardon their unrighteousness (Isa. 55:7), that He will remember their sins no more (Jer. 31:34b), rather, will make them "white as snow"

(Isa. 1:18), that He removes transgressions as far away as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), and casts them behind His back. (Isa. 38:17) He can do that because He laid on our (the God-man) Substitute and Savior, "the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6)

In view of such and other similar declarations it is easy to see why the Reformers should speak of Absolution as they do in the Lutheran Symbols, which we shall examine next.

### B. In The Lutheran Confessions.

The Augustana, very much like Luther in his Catechism, says, "Now repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that, for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors." (XII, p. 49) And the Apology makes so much of Absolution that it is ready to classify it as a Sacrament. Nor can we find any fault with what it has to say on this point, "If we call Sacraments rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added, it is easy to decide what are properly Sacraments...Therefore Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution, which is the Sacrament of repentance, are truly Sacraments. For these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament." (III.IV, p. 309) A little later we read, "But with respect to time, certainly most men in our churches use the Sacraments, absolution and the Lord's Supper, frequently in a year." (XI, 60, p. 249)

Who has the authority to dispense this kind of treasure? Melancthon wrote, "Therefore the bishop has the power of the older, i.e., the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; he has also the power of jurisdiction, i.e., the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes, and again to absolve them if they are converted and seek absolution." (Apol. XXVIII (XIV) 13, p. 447) Luther expressed it perhaps even more forcefully in his Smalcald Articles, "The Gospel assigns to those who preside over churches the command to teach the Gospel, to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments, and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those who crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent." (S.A. 60, p. 521) "In case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes minister and pastor of another." (Tractatus, 67, p. 523)

When stating that the ministers of the Church have the right and obligation to absolve the penitent, the Confessions carefully stipulate that such ministers should not forget how to proceed when conferring absolution on someone, "Therefore ministers in the Church have the command to remit sin; they have not the command to investigate secret sins. And indeed, they absolve from those that we do not remember; for which reason absolution, which is the voice of the Gospel remitting sin and consoling consciences, does not require judicial examination." (Apol. VI, 8, p, 283)

These words also bring out why the Confessions have so much to say about the importance of faith in connection with absolution. The Apology says, "... We do not see what benefit confession is without absolution... absolution is not received except by faith. That absolution is not received except by faith can be proved from Paul, who teaches, Rom. 4:16, that the promise cannot be received except by faith. But absolution is the promise of the remission of sins. Therefore it

necessarily requires faith." (Apol. XII (V), 61f, p. 269) Again we are told why we must not fail to use it in faith, "Absolution ought to be received by faith, in order that it may cheer the terrified conscience." (Apol. III, 150, p. 199) How fervent this faith should be we also see in the Apology, which says, "Wherefore the voice of the one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven." (XII (V), 39f, p. 261) Lastly, after quoting the words of the Lord's Supper Melancthon says, "Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death." (Apol. XII (V), 42, p. 263) The words of E.H. Little on this point are most appropriate. "It (absolution) is exceedingly useful in that it applies in a direct personal way to the penitent the very heart of the Gospel, assuring him of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins." (Lutheran Confessional Theology, p. 67)

Furthermore, this absolution is so certain a thing that the Formula of Concord says, "On this account, as the Augsburg Confession in Art. 11 says, we also retain private absolution, and teach that it is God's command that we believe such absolution, and should regard it as sure that, when we believe the word of absolution, we are as truly reconciled to God as though we had heard a voice from heaven, as the Apology explains this article." (F.C. S.D., XI, 38, p. 1075) How similar to what Luther says in his catechism under Confession. He also says, "For this reason I have a high regard for private confession, for here God's Word and absolution are spoken privately and individually to each believer for the forgiveness of his sins, and as often as he desires it he may have recourse to it for this forgiveness, and also for comfort, counsel, and guidance." (L.W. Vol. 37, p. 368)

And again "... So do not despise any absolution that God sets up, whether public or private; the more you have of God's Word the better it is." (L.W. Vol. 36, p. 258) And in the Augsburg Confession we read, "And the gloss admits that Confession is of human right only. Nevertheless on account of the great benefit of absolution, and because it is otherwise useful to the conscience, Confession is retained among us." (A.C. XXV, 12f, p. 71) Who can begin to estimate how often lay people, as well as pastors, have made use of this most comforting medium for imparting the Gospel.

Now we can see why our Confessions should say, "For we also retain confession, especially on account of the absolution, as being the Word of God which, by divine authority, the power of the keys pronounces upon individuals. Therefore it would be wicked to remove private absolution from the church. Neither do they understand what the remission of sins or the power of the keys is, if there are any who despise private absolution." (Apol. VI, 2-4, p. 281) Luther later made much the same observation, "Since Absolution or the Power of the Keys is also an aid and consolation against sin and a bad conscience, ordained by Christ in the Gospel, Confession or Absolution ought by no means to be abolished in the Church, especially on account of timid consciences and on account of the young people, in order that they may be examined, and instructed in the Christian doctrine." (S.A. III, Art. VII, p. 493f) Rightly has Allbeck said, "Lutheran interest was not so much in the acknowledging of sins as in the declaring of God's grace. The Roman usage had directed attention in a legalistic way to sin and offenses against regulations; gospel doctrine focused attention upon the mercy of God to be accepted by faith. Therefore the article declares that it is absolution which is to be retained." (Studies in the Lutheran Confessions, p. 91)



Just how Absolution comforts is likewise made quite clear in the Confessions when they bid us not to forget the setting of Absolution. Luther writes, "For since private absolution originates in the Office of the Keys, it should not be despised." (S.A. III, Art. VII, p. 495) The Reformers as a group at greater length say, "It is well known that we have elucidated and extolled the benefit of absolution and the power of the keys that many distressed consciences have derived consolation from our doctrine; after they heard that it is the command of God, nay, rather, the very voice of the Gospel, that we should believe the absolution, and regard it as certain that the remission of sins is fully granted us for Christ's sake; and that we should believe that by this faith we are truly reconciled to God. This belief has encouraged many godly minds, and, in the beginning, brought Luther the highest commendation from all good men, since it shows consciences sure and firm consolation; because previously the entire power of absolution had been suppressed by doctrines concerning works, since the sophists and monks taught nothing of faith and free remission." (Apol. X.XI, 58f, p. 249)

When one thinks about it, it is really passing strange that there ever should have been a controversy over the matter of absolution in the Lutheran Church. The fact that one did arise in the earlier days of the Norwegian Synod can only mean that some people did not understand the nature of absolution. For, as the citations from the Confessions have shown, absolution is simply an announcement of the Gospel, and time and time again it is stated that faith is necessary for a proper reception or appropriation of it. That being the case, no one could benefit from absolution unless he were penitent, unless he in faith accepted the proffered forgiveness for Christ's sake. If one had not repented and did

not in faith accept the pardon pronounced over him, he was not forgiven, even if an angel from heaven had spoken the word of absolution. So there was no danger that the unworthy and impenitent would be forgiven in spite of their impenitence. Of course, it is not amiss to say that those who had their misgivings about the absolution had an entirely wrong concept of the Gospel. They had lost sight of the declaratory nature of the same and were attempting to condition it on an act or a condition of man. But when that happens, the Gospel is being destroyed, for it is its very nature to be free and unconditioned, to be an announcement of acquittal from God, to make no demands on anyone. The word of absolution is always true and valid, but will be of no benefit to one if he does not in faith accept it -- since, as the Confessions say "...absolution is not received except by faith." (Apol. XII, (V), 61, p. 269)

It should not be necessary for us to urge people to make use of absolution. If we preach the unconditioned Gospel, if we make every sermon hold forth the declaration, in capital letters, that for Christ's sake God has forgiven all our sins, if we preach absolution into their hearts, people will listen, and believe, and persevere, and finally be saved.

Prof. M.H. Otto

## BOOK REVIEW

### AN "EXPENSIVE" BOOK

Quanbeck, Philip A. When God Speaks. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968, 126 pp., \$1.50

Every once in a while in reading a book for review, this reviewer is tempted to wander rather widely in his reactions to it. This is such a book. Though many books have appeared which have said the same things which this book has said, one cannot ignore this book. Its implications for Lutheranism, at least in the sense of forcing Lutherans to crystalize their thinking and to react either pro or con to it, are considerable.

Certainly its implications are considerable for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod theologically.

In the modern merger movements of the Lutheran Church in the USA the ELS may seem out of step. When other synods have rushed to merge or are rushing into new mergers, the ELS has stood aside and called for thorough doctrinal discussions. When others have spoken of a theological consensus existing among Lutherans, the ELS has asked that this consensus, if it exists, should be revealed by thorough doctrinal discussions. Of course, since the ELS belongs to that 5% of American Lutheranism which is not involved in the recent merger discussions, its theological approach to Lutheran unity has been ignored.

Because of its position several uncomplimentary names have been applied to the ELS: behind the time, an illustration of the arrogance of orthodoxy, a sociological remnant of a theologically by-gone age, a remnant of stone age theology, a carry-over from the days when every synod represented a nationality grouping, etc. Of course,

the response to such names could be the children's little verse: "Sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words will never hurt me." That verse may be true and comforting for those being assaulted verbally, but it could also be a retreat into an obscurantism of one kind or another which will not help the present theological situation.

Rather it would be much better to justify the existence of the ELS as a distinct theological grouping, in which Christian congregations have banded themselves together on a definite and positive theological platform, drawn from the Bible, the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Certainly Dr. Quanbeck's book will help here as a negative example of what the ELS does not stand for. Perhaps because Dr. Quanbeck represents much of what is "new" in Lutheran theology today, the ELS should again begin using a name that was applied to the confessional Lutherans of one hundred years ago, the "Old Lutherans", and wear that reapplied title with joy and fortitude.

It certainly was not Norwegian nationalism which caused the ELS, then the Norwegian Synod, to continue a separate existence in 1918. A much better case could be made to prove that the merger of the various Lutheran groups of Norwegian background into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, later the Evangelical Lutheran Church, was a product of Norwegian cultural nationalism. The remnant of the old Norwegian Synod which continued its existence as the reorganized Norwegian Synod, the ELS of today, did so for theological reasons.

The fathers of the ELS were interested in preserving the sola gratia of Lutheranism. The compromise of Opgjør could not satisfy them, for it placed the true Lutheran doctrine on a par with a doctrinal position which opened the way to synergism. They were not satisfied with the

arguments that certain of the old Lutheran dogmatists used an intuitu fidei approach to election. The fathers knew their theology, and they knew that this was true. But they also knew that these older dogmatists generally were very careful to place this intuitu fidei approach within the framework of sola gratia. But the fathers were also aware of current theological situation of their day, so that a significant number of those with whom they were to merge into the new church body were not about to interpret intuitu fidei in the light of sola gratia: the Methodistic-revivalistic group and the synergistic group. These latter two groups, in some way or another, wanted to involve man as a force and power in conversion and election. There was the very simple and direct view offered by one of them: "If I am going to be elected, I must make myself a candidate." This view is completely unacceptable to those who stand in the Biblical doctrine of sola gratia and with Luther's plain words of the Explanation of the Third Article. Thus the reorganization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod took place over fifty years ago.

But a fiftieth anniversary also means that fifty years have passed; the question that must be faced by the ELS today is whether or not it is justified in its existence today, or has it served its purpose. It must also be recognized that the church bodies around the ELS are changing, or have changed, theologically. Anyone who knows anything about the history of the Lutheran Church in the United States is well aware of this fact. Hence relevance for the ELS cannot be seen merely in an event which occurred fifty years ago. Relevance must also be measured in the light of today.

Is there a need for the ELS today? One must answer yes to this question. Certainly many of the old Norwegian Synod people went into the merger

of the Norwegian Synods very hopefully, for their viewpoint had been guaranteed the right to equal existence, but where are the echoes of those voices today in today's generation of Luther Seminary graduates or in the teachings of the faculty of Luther Seminary or Luther College? The voices are very few. In fact, the possibility of serious theological discussion with these groups as a whole -- not with all individuals thankfully -- is becoming more difficult, for the very basis of theological discussion, the Scriptures themselves, have now come under attack. In Theological Perspectives, a book published by the theological faculty of Luther College, verbal inspiration is criticized as a human theory. Dr. Frederik Schiotz of The American Lutheran Church has said that inerrancy does not apply to the text of the Scriptures, but to the truths revealed for the Christian's faith, doctrine, and life. This is not what the doctrinal paragraph of the Constitution of The American Lutheran states: "The American Lutheran Church accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life." (Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, pp. 219-220)

This leads us back to Dr. Quanbeck's book, When God Speaks. Dr. Quanbeck is, according to a brief biography in the book, head of the religion department at Augsburg College. The book itself, a paperback, is offered for the laymen of the American Lutheran Church to introduce them to the various possible approaches to the Bible. One must assume, since it is published by Augsburg Publishing House, that the book is at least a semi-official publication of The American Lutheran Church. Yet the contents of the book would seem to clash very directly with the Constitution of The American Lutheran Church. What it means is that the doctrinal

paragraph has been emptied -- in fact -- of any possible conservative interpretation.

But what does the book itself, When God Speaks, actually say? By this time the reader is probably asking this question, for the writer has been talking about everything but the book. When God Speaks has six chapters with such headings as "The Bible and the Church", "The Bible and History", "How Did We Get the Bible", "The Problem of the Bible", "The Authority of the Bible", and "An Attempt at Interpretation." From these chapter headings one can readily see that this book has a rather broad scope, covering all areas concerned with the Scriptures, their origin, meaning, and purpose.

Dr. Quanbeck certainly does not represent a conservative approach to the Scriptures, nor is he concerned about the witness of the Scriptures to themselves. He is not interested in discussing inspiration even as a possible source of the Scriptures. He states (p. 54): "It may well be that even an occasional reader of this little book once learned that 'holy men of God' wrote these books 'as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.' Now, what this language may have meant to you, if indeed you learned it this way, may vary a great deal from person to person. It is not unlikely that to many Christians this meant that ... God, through the Holy Spirit, informed him (Matthew) of what he should write. ... It is not our intention to discuss the meaning of inspiration but to address ourselves to the composition of the Gospels."

What Dr. Quanbeck is saying, and what he does through his entire book, is that the witness of the Scripture regarding itself and its origins can be ignored. He furthermore, because of this attitude, treats the Bible as any other piece of literature, he has permitted himself to be guided

by certain presuppositions which make the Bible rather unreliable to him. Thus the Bible becomes a rather shoddy piece of literature with obvious -- to him -- contradictions and errors. One wonders out loud how long a vacuum cleaner salesman would survive in his door-to-door selling who was as critical of his line of merchandise as Dr. Quanbeck is of his. Dr. Quanbeck's values tend toward evolution and naturalism in his principles of interpretation. This will be explained below.

Dr. Quanbeck argues that the idea of a perfect Bible is generally something new in American Protestantism, asserting: "Some Protestant Christians, especially in the last hundred years or so, have answered the question by answering that the Bible is a perfect book. God, they say, is perfect; he (sic!) would not make anything imperfect; therefore, the Bible is perfect.... We might ask...how it happens that man, also created by God, was not preserved perfect, while the Bible, it is sometimes said, was preserved perfect." (pp. 96-97) This perhaps is the oft heard notion that the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is really comparatively new since it was so closely identified with the older theologians of Princeton Seminary and so was not an issue until they made it so. But the high view of the Scriptures is not a novel view. Dr. Reu, of the old ALC, in Luther and the Scriptures (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1944), showed that Luther took a very conservative position in the Scriptures. Robert Preus, in The Inspiration of Scripture (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), pointed out in his excellent work that the maligned Lutheran dogmatists of the 17th Century, in holding to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, were not obscurantists, but were well acquainted with the criticisms of their position. Nor was this a novel innovation, for Ralph Bohlman, in Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions, con-



cluded: "Although there is no specific article on the nature of Holy Scripture in the Lutheran Confessions, there are numerous statements and concepts that indicate clearly that the confessors regard the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God." (p. 30)

The perfection of the Scriptures and their inspiration are nothing new. After all, did not Christ Himself say, "The Scriptures cannot be broken," John 10: 35, and He appealed to the Scriptures in the temptations, saying three times, "It is written." Matthew 4: 4; 7; 10: In addition, the claims of II Peter 1: 21 and II Timothy 3: 16 cannot be ignored. Certainly they may be denied or explained away, but to do so is to raise a more basic question. How can the witness of the Bible be believed at all?

The author of When God Speaks, from the beginning to the end of his book, never really lets the Bible speak for itself. Nowhere are its claims really considered. In Chapter One, "The Bible and the Church", he states that the Bible is really the record of the experiences of the Church. One may be tempted to put the best construction on this until he points out that perfection cannot be claimed for the Bible, since man, who was also created by God, is not perfect. (p. 97)

The record that one finds in Scripture is, according to Quanbeck, rather limited, and seemingly lacking in any Messianic and teleological purpose. For Israel God is merely a God Who "acted on their behalf." (p. 24) The Bible is "a historic document" and "history, and more specifically Israel's history, is the major vehicle in the Bible for the disclosure, the revelation of the relation God has to the world and thus to man." (p. 27) The author evidently is very neo-orthodox in his approach. This

judgment is further reinforced by his view that the records of Scripture are subjective reports only. The words of II Peter 1: 21 are clearly rejected in his statement: "Scripture ... was written without a prior awareness on the part of the writer that what he was writing was Scripture." (p. 29)

Dr. Quanbeck continues his negative approach by making the Bible a book without any prophetic revelation in it. Here he follows a purely naturalistic approach for he argues that the Scripture can be no better than its writers. He must, of course, argue this way, because he has rejected the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Scriptures, and substituted his own views. As a result he rejects specific prophecy, using Isaiah 44: 28 and 45: 1 as his examples. There the name of King Cyrus is mentioned, but since Isaiah was supposedly written in the 8th Century B. C., Isaiah could not have known about Cyrus. (pp. 32-33) For this reason, among others, he places Isaiah 40 and the following chapters in the 6th Century B. C. His view on prophecy in general is summarized in the statement: "We are not saying that the prophets did not on occasion make predictions. But we are saying that this sort of prediction is not either a historical or a religious probability." (p. 33)

In Chapter Three Dr. Quanbeck answers for himself the question "How Did We Get the Bible?" He has no problem for himself in accepting the multiple source theory of the Pentateuch. According to Dr. Quanbeck, the Mosaic authorship is simply an historical judgment of Israel, developing from Israel's placing such a high value on Moses. (p.42) While he grants that the New Testament speaks of a Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (pp. 42-43), he chooses to follow the views of higher critics: "Instead of a Mosaic authorship, a significant number of scholars have

come to the conclusion that the Pentateuch, as we now have it, rests on other documents." (p. 43) This may be theology by majority vote, but it is not Scriptural! Christ Himself identifies Moses with the act of writing the Pentateuch, John 5: 46. As might be expected, Form Criticism is attractive to him for the New Testament. (p. 63)

Because of his low view of the Scriptures, his view of the canon is basically that of the Roman Catholic Church rather than that of the Lutheran Church, for the canon ultimately rests upon the decisions of the Church at various times, (pp. 66-67), though he grants that "we may certainly believe that the Spirit of God was active also in this historical process, his activity is not such that denies the action of human beings or makes their decisions of less importance." (p. 67)

Chapter Four speaks of "The Problem of the Bible." And Dr. Quanbeck does have problems. To him the Bible is ambiguous, for he cites the use of Scripture itself by Satan at the temptation of Christ. (p. 70) Conservatives have never had any problem with this account of Matthew 4, for they saw Satan miquoting Scripture by using an incomplete passage and being silenced by a Scripture quotation. Dr. Quanbeck has problems, further, with the Scriptures because they are a collection of books written over a long period of time with many different perspectives (pp. 71-81). He is also troubled by the fact that the Jews and the Christians both claimed the Old Testament, but only the Christians found Christ there. For him the idea that the Christians had of finding Christ in the Old Testament in many prophecies is "not precisely true" (p. 83), for while he grants there are a limited number of references to the Messiah in the Old Testament, the early Christians were seemingly rather enthusiastic about finding Christ in the Old Testament. (p. 83) According to him, the Jews took an entirely different view

of the Old Testament.

This is one of the number of sweeping generalizations in the book which does not agree with the facts. One here must refer Dr. Quanbeck to "Appendix IX: List of Old Testament Passages Messianically Applied in Ancient Rabbinic Writings" found on pages 710-741 of Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1947).

In Chapter Five he discusses "The Authority of the Bible." Here is where Dr. Quanbeck has a problem. He has rejected plenary and verbal inspiration in fact. He does not appeal even to the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. He states: "Ultimately, we cannot get away from making an act of faith." (p. 99) This is all that the neo-orthodox can do, after having rejected the plain message of the Scriptures. When discussing the unity of the Scriptures, he rejects, e. g., the idea that the "'red thread of salvation' ... runs through the Bible". (pp. 100-101) To hold such a view would be a "foreshortening of perspective, and a denial of the diversity which we actually find in the Bible." (p. 101) Rather his views are: "Simply put, it is this, the one God of Israel is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Bible what we actually encounter is the story of how this God is related to Israel and the rest of mankind." (p. 101)

In Chapter Six Dr. Quanbeck then attempts to summarize his views on the Scriptures under the title "An Attempt at Interpretation." He sees the Fall of mankind in terms of a disruption of community with God (p. 108), with man being guilty of "self-assertion over against God." (p. 110) He sees the problem of community then running through all of the Scriptures.

When treating the Gospels it would seem that Dr. Quanbeck rejects the summary statement of the

Evangelist John: "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20: 31. This reviewer may be rather negative in his interpretation of Dr. Quanbeck's statements in the last chapter of his book, but they seem to be a rather complete rejection of the historic Christian faith. Dr. Quanbeck points out, e. g., that "some Christians believe that the essential character of Christianity is being able to say that one has 'accepted Christ as his personal Savior.'" He then continues by warning against such views being rigidly held: "Yet when we try to understand the Gospels it is necessary for us to be aware of influences which shape our thinking..."(p. 119) Dr. Quanbeck is also afraid of the enthusiasm of the early Christians for Christ: "When Jesus was called the Christ it did not, in the time of his ministry, bear all the meanings which later Christian reflection has brought to the term." (p. 120) Aside from being Form Criticism, it leads to a low view of Jesus. "Jesus was born to the Jews. Christians speak about the incarnation, about God acting in Jesus Christ, about God becoming man. But Jesus was not a man in general but a man." (p. 120) As such the author sees Him shaped by the influences about Him (pp. 120-121). As for the Gospels, he sees them as subjective witnesses. "The Gospels are documents of faith; they are responses of believing men to something absolutely decisive which happened in their midst and to which they are compelled to bear witness. Their authority rests...in the fact that they are adequate responses to what happened among them..." (pp. 121-122)

The reviewer looked in vain for any comments in the book which really presented the Biblical doctrines of sin and grace. The one place where the cross of Christ was mentioned was in connection with Quanbeck's comments on the Gospels. He states: "The Gospels are witnesses to Jesus Christ. . . .

They are affirmations of faith that on Jesus the Spirit of God descended, as the baptism of Jesus by John tells us. They are affirmations that in his healing activity, in his exorcisms, and in his teaching he was bringing the rule of God into the world in a dynamic and new way. And they are affirmations that in the irruption of the kingdom or rule of God in the world his crucifixion, death, and resurrection are of decisive importance." (p. 121)

Just what this "importance" is, he never states. But it would seem that the meaning of Christ is to be explained in neo-orthodox categories, though which neo-orthodox theologian he is following is not clear. The clearest indication of his trend of thought is found in his discussion of the motifs of the Gospels. After asserting that the first theme of the Gospels was that the followers of Christ felt that ordinary categories were inadequate for Christ, he then continues: "In the second place, the words of Jesus relative to 'following' him are echoed in all of the Gospels and throughout the New Testament." (p. 122) It would seem to the reviewer that he is following the theological footsteps of Tillich, who spoke of an invasion of history by God through Christ, and who said that Jesus was the Christ not because of His own power and goodness, but because God was present in Him.

We can also then understand why Quanbeck, after very thoroughly criticizing the Bible as an imperfect and a subjective human report of what has happened across the history of the Old and New Testaments, can say that accepting the Bible as a religious source is "an act of faith." (p. 99) He states: "Finally, reliance upon the Bible as witness to and expression of God's love is given. . . because finally we are willing to trust that between this word and God's relation to the world there is a genuine, actual correspondence. . . . It is a decision one must finally make for himself." (p. 99)

The meaning placed upon Christ and His work is very vague. But one can see that, with the emphasis on decision and a right relationship with God being established, a kind of conversion or decision is virtually equated with justification. This latter sentiment is reinforced by Quanbeck's emphasis upon the children of Israel as the people of God apart from any real Messianic relationship.

The title over this review is "An Expensive Book." Judged by dollars and cents, it is rather inexpensive, \$1.50. Theologically, it demands a very high price. Theologically, it is too expensive for the reviewer.

If one may comment further, the views expressed in this book are very popular in many circles and are becoming more so. But they do not reflect the views of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. When one hears many today speak of a consensus among Lutherans, the reviewer is puzzled. He knows many Lutherans in a variety of synods who reject the views of this book and would have no feeling of consensus with the author. When some today speak of a theological consensus among Lutherans on the basis of the Gospel, or the Book of Concord, or any number of bases, it would be good therefore to ask for a clarification of what that consensus is.

It would rather seem that perhaps the Lutheran Church is somewhat in the position it found itself over one hundred years ago when the General Council was formed. The claim was made that the General Council was conservative. The "Old Lutherans", in approaching that body, asked for a definition of that conservatism specifically in the Four Points and found the General Council wanting theologically. Perhaps this is why the name "Old Lutheran" should be resurrected today to show that there are those who hold to the old

truths of Scripture, and to the truth of Scripture itself. Did not Christ Himself say: "The Scripture cannot be broken"?

In conclusion, the reviewer felt that, after reading Dr. Quanbeck's book, it might better have been entitled "When Man Speaks," for that was all that the Scriptures were to him. The pastors of our synod ought to read this book and to familiarize themselves with its presentation. This is the theology of many Lutherans today. Conservatives of all Lutheran bodies ought to read this book and ask themselves if this book presents a theology with which they could live -- and die.

Glenn E. Reichwald

Redekop, John Harold. The American Far Right.  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963,  
232 pp., \$4.50.

This is a most interesting book, to say the least, and one that can be read with profit by conservative clergymen. It is customary to connect the phrase "social gospel" with liberal theologians who have substituted politics, economic programs, social action (or even violence), etc., for the Gospel of the Scriptures. And this is very proper to do. But on the other hand, there is also a "social gospel" among certain conservatives, who have identified conservative Christianity with certain political forms and theories, which is the same thing that the liberals have done with their so-called Christianity. The author of this book writes from a liberal theological orientation, but the reader cannot ignore what he has to say. The book contains a complete overview of the position of Billy James Hargis, who is an excellent example and illustration of this mixing of theology and a political position.

Glenn E. Reichwald



NOTE

"The Evangelical Lutheran Synod has not, in recent years, fully subscribed to the position on Church and Ministry that was advanced in the article under that title which appeared in the fall issue of this periodical. As indicated, it was printed at the request of the Iowa-Southern Minnesota conference as a sort of legacy from the sainted Pastor Hilton, and, of course, for the purpose that it may serve as a basis for the further study of this subject. We are sorry if any other impression was given from its appearance."

-- Editor