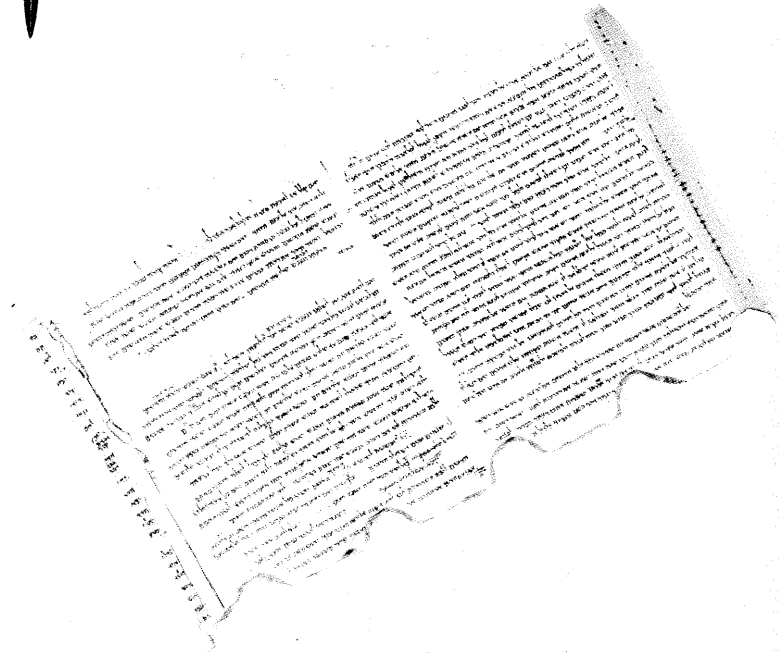


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FOREWORD

The familiar initials T.A.A. -- Theodore A. Aaberg -- have temporarily been replaced with G.E.R. -- Glenn E. Reichwald. President Aaberg has been granted a sick leave and Professor Reichwald is substituting. We all hope and pray that the initials T.A.A. will soon return.

The first article in this issue is by Acting President Reichwald, the seminary graduation sermon, based on I Timothy 6:20a. The graduates were reminded that they had received a body of doctrine as a trust from God and for which they were responsible. There were three graduates: Bruce Bestervelt, Jerrold Dalke, and Philip Vangen.

Dr. Tom Hardt is the author of the main article dealing with natural law. This is a most important article and will give a complete background. Natural law has been much discussed in our circles in recent months because of the abortion issue.

It can be announced that the essayist for the 1979 Reformation Lectures will be the Rev. Dr. Wilbert Kreiss. Dr. Kreiss is vice-president of the Evangelical Church Synod of France and Belgium. He will speak on "The Doctrine of Christian Certitude" and will deal with Reconciliation, Justification and related doctrines. While the lectures will be published later in this journal, there is an added benefit to be gained if one can hear the actual presentation. The dates are October 25 and 26 -- the place is the auditorium-gymnasium on the Bethany Lutheran College campus, Mankato, Minnesota.

G.E.R.

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ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES OF
BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MAY 11, 1979

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust."
(I Timothy 6:20a)

TEXT:

Dear Friends in Christ, but especially you, dear
seminary graduates,

Soon you will be free. There will be no more
official censors -- the theological faculty and
supervising pastors -- looking over your shoulder.
Soon you will be free. You will be operating on
your own. You will be able to set your own schedule,
operate your own programs, and set your own clock.

And yet basically you will not be free. If one
has the proper Christian perspective, then this
freedom is limited by the Word of Christ, the Holy
Scripture; by the Gospel of Christ, the good news of
salvation; and by our love for Christ, Who loved us
and called us not only to faith in Him as our Savior,
but also to His service. Hence the Apostle Paul
again and again, though he was the great champion
of Christian freedom, could also call himself the
slave of Christ, one who belonged body and soul to
Christ. This is the great responsibility, to serve
Christ and to preach His Word. Hence the inspired
Apostle Paul told Timothy in our text -- and he
tells you today -- about

YOUR TRUST AS SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

1. You do have a trust!

When I here use the word "trust," I am not think-
ing about an office or position. Certainly Paul here
is not. He says to Timothy, and to you, "Keep that
which is committed to they trust." The Berkeley
version states: "Guard what is entrusted to you."

That whole last phrase is actually one word in the original. It was a word used in banking and referred to a deposit made. One would put money in the bank and expect that it would be taken care of there. The bank would have it, could even lend it out, but the deposit still belonged to the depositor, and an accounting could be demanded. It was a trust!

Young Timothy, Paul's coworker, had been given a trust, a deposit. God's Word had been deposited with him. He had been taught by his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois and by the Apostle Paul over the years. To him had been committed the Word of God both individually for himself to believe and also objectively, for him to preach to others. It was not his to abuse and misuse. Even the Apostle Paul recognized this of himself. In the words which were used in my own ordination sermon, from I Corinthians 4:1, Paul called himself a steward -- caretaker -- of the mysteries of God, the great truths which God had revealed in Christ for salvation.

From the context here and in II Timothy 3:15-17, we know how Paul viewed this. Timothy was entrusted with the inspired Scriptures of God, which were profitable for doctrine, for reproof of error, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. The Scriptures completely furnished all that he needed. With what was Timothy entrusted? With the Holy Scriptures which made him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. For Paul the preaching of Christ was personally very meaningful, for Christ came into the world to save sinners. And Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners, I Timothy 1:15. Hence the message which he -- Paul -- preached was intensely personal, for he preached also to himself, "lest by any means, when I preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." (II Corinthians 9:27)

This message Paul had given to Timothy. And this message he has given to you, not as his personal impressions of what religion ought to be like, as he saw it. No, it was a previous trust for the salvation of himself and others. Nor was it a simplistic theology with a few religious bromides, but it was a profound theology, embracing the Word, the sacraments, eternity and all of the blessed mysteries which only God knew, but which He saw fit to reveal in Scriptures to man. What a wonderful gift this is.

2. This trust, St. Paul tells us, we are to guard as shepherds of God's people.

"Aha," someone says. "Here comes that old conservative Lutheranism that sees theology as one big fight with everyone else." Not so! But what is theology without content? And doctrine is the content of Christian theology and the Christian message. What is mission work if the whole council of God is not preached? By what right can Bethany Lutheran College be called a Christian college if God's Word and salvation are not taught there? How can that building across the road be called a Christian seminary if the study of religion is only higher criticism which makes theology into a method of tearing apart the Scriptures? No, we must stand in the truth. Hence Paul says that this trust must be guarded. We are to contend for the faith.

"Guard"! This term, as you might suspect, is a military term. And it means what it says. We must also guard against. In the last part of the verse from which our text is taken Paul states explicitly what we are to guard against. We are to keep away from empty and useless discussions and from the wrong kind of knowledge, the elevating of man's mind in any way above the Word of God.

By standing guard and being faithful to the Word of God, you will not be a caricature of a Scriptural conservative who confuses making noise with substance and crying "wolf" with reality. You are rather to stand faithful to what has been entrusted to you -- the teachings -- not merely by parents, by teachers, by seminary professors, or anyone else, but by God Himself in His very own Word, the Scriptures. Christ said: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32) Therein you will be blessed, and those who hear you will be blessed. You yourself will know and then share your Savior with many, many others. God grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

-- G. E. Reichwald

NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND NATURAL LAW
ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

By Dr. Tom G. A. Hardt

(A lecture to a group of conservative clergymen within the Church of Sweden, assembled at the Hjelmseyrd's Foundation under the presidency of the Very Rev. Cathedral Dean Dr. Gustaf Adolf Danell. English references to the Book of Concord have been inserted through the kind assistance of Mr. Timothy Ziebell, Juneau, Wisconsin, U.S.A.)

The subject which I was asked to treat was "The Teaching of the Church on Natural Law." I have chosen to word my title somewhat more precisely. What I am going to present will follow the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the classical literature of our Church, and I shall deal not only with natural law as a practical norm for action but also with the natural knowledge of God, the knowledge of the legislator behind natural law.

By way of introduction I should like to put forth two wordings which may appear to contradict each other. Closer consideration will, however, show that they are not contradictory but merely reflect the different angles from which the natural knowledge of God may be considered. In the second article of the Formula of Concord it is stated that "man's reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as also of the doctrine of the Law, Rom. 1,19 ff." (FC,SD,II,9) In contrast to the weak spark are the following words: "The natural light of reason can reach to the point that it considers God good,

gracious, merciful, mild. It is a great light." (WA 19,206,12f) The quotation is from Luther's interpretation of the prophet Jonah. The continuation of the text from which the quotation was taken shows, however, that the great light and the weak spark designate one and the same thing. Luther goes on to say that the great light is not enough to give one a right trust in God's willingness to help in the individual case and that reason, left up to itself, must always sway in doubt as to who the true God is. That is precisely why the Formula of Concord speaks of a "dim spark": natural law does not give any saving knowledge of God. Natural reason cannot believe in "the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation." (FC,SD,II,9, Triglot ed.)

Using these two different aspects I have in this introduction given the frame to which a lecture of this kind must remain confined. Where the emphasis should be placed, on the "dim spark" or the "great light" depends on situation. In a world in which both profane philosophy and Christian theology have for a long time wished to deny the great light it may mean a pleasant liberation to be able to sing the praises of the great light. It would even appear justified to say that that is what is needed nowadays in our country. Indeed this is the great social contribution which our times require of the Christians. Nevertheless in this lecture my point of departure will not be the great light but rather the dim spark, not least because this is perhaps the opposite of what my listeners may have expected me to do. However, I am anxious to emphasize that I am not addressing profane listeners about a social question, where I could allow myself to try to tell you how we should go about rekindling the fire of metaphysics in our day. I am addressing theologians and here all questions must be subjected to the testing of the Holy Ghost, and here the dangers connected with playing with the fire of metaphysics must be shown on the basis of

the knowledge which we receive from Law and Gospel.

Notable is not only that we nowadays let the great light be taken out of our hands in social connections without protests. Even more notable is the fact that we as theologians, bound to the Evangelical-Lutheran confessions, have failed to point out that in our days within the Church of Rome natural law has in the most solemn form been elevated to a saving status. It is incomprehensible how the idea that the second Vatican Council in some way or another is supposed to mean that the different denominations have been brought closer together and that the break of the Reformation would be in the process of healing has succeeded in spreading even within conservative Lutheran circles. On the contrary the second Vatican Council's treatment of natural law has gone far beyond the Council of Trent in stressing the Law as the way to salvation and thereby in denying grace. In a decisive way the Roman Catholic Church has in our time teamed up with the heathen religions, which are all referred to in the documents of the Council as roads to God. At the same time the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church is energetically trying to establish contacts with the colourful priesthoods of heathenism, letting their monks look for new impulses in heathen parallels to their orders and adapting the liturgy of the mission churches to heathen rituals. In the dogmatic constitution concerning the Church, "Lumen gentium," we read: "Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience." This religion of the conscience, the hallmark of which is a "good life," is to be found e.g. among the Mohammedans who "along with us adore the one and merciful God" but also

among atheists (16). Here natural knowledge of God is expressing itself, but this is that kind of natural knowledge of God which wishes to replace faith in Christ's redemption with "the good life." It is indeed appropriate to quote here the words of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "If this be Christian righteousness, what difference is there between philosophy and the doctrine of Christ? If we can be justified by reason and the works of reason, wherefore is there need of Christ or regeneration?" (Apol.IV, (II),12)

These and other similar wordings in our confessions are by no means obsolete and neither can they be said to lack people to address nowadays. Their immediate importance has but grown, as is the case with other controversial doctrines as well. At the second Vatican Council natural law in the service of self-salvation was given a strength and a dogmatical position which it never had before, and it is therefore all the more necessary for us to draw the borderline between us and heathenism as a true worship of God. We must proclaim the Holy Trinity as the only salvation, as our confessions stress in the article concerning the Triune God: "And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of the Church of Christ, and are idolaters, and insult God." (Apol.I,2)

Naturally this abuse of natural law is not only to be found within the Roman Church. Already at the time of the Reformation we find the teaching that the natural knowledge of God is saving in the works of a man such as Zwingli. In his last writing on the Lord's Supper Luther speaks of this. He says: "What does one need Baptism, the Sacrament, Christ, the Gospel or the prophets and scriptures for, if such godless heathen, Sokrates, Aristides, yea the abominable Numa (who was the first to found all

idolatry in Rome through the inspiration of the devil as St. Augustine writes in *De civitate*) and Scio and Epikuros are saints and saved and in heaven with the patriarchs, the prophets and apostles, although they knew nothing about God, the Scriptures, the Gospel, Christ, Baptism, the Sacrament or the Christian faith. What can such an author, preacher, and teacher (like Zwingli) believe about the Christian faith other than it is the same as all other religions, and that each and every one can be saved in his faith, also an idolator or an Epicurean like Numa and Scipio." (LW 38,290f) These words against Zwingli can of course nowadays be directed against most Protestant theologians and against the theology which believes Law and Gospel to be built into creation and in which heroic courage to live, despite social oppression and failure, is equated with the triumph of grace over the Law. One should of course be aware of the fact that our criticism of the false use of natural law can never be satisfied with the explanation that supernatural grace works in the natural law. That is the very notion of a divine work of redemption outside of the Christ proclaimed which the confessions reject. Furthermore, the "grace" that is meant is not by any means synonymous with the forgiveness of sins. It is instead an anonymous power of a sanctifying nature, i.e., it is in its essence separated from the center of faith. In all of these contexts what is at issue is the conscientious, good human being's saving himself, salvation through the Law.

The collision that occurs is the age-old collision between the religion of the Law and the religion of grace. In this struggle we are confronted with the arch-enemy of Christ, the adversary who tries in every way to silence faith and to quench the Holy Ghost. Here the views of the reality of sin are entirely different. The religion of the Law represents

a watered-down law, which makes ignorance an excuse and a reason for forgiveness and which accepts the best that is humanly possible as acceptable in the eyes of God; God is in the name of propriety and justice considered to be obliged to act in this way. Here, too, lies the great conceitedness that man is thought to have the ability to speak and think on his own as to what may be right, just and proper for God as regards the government of the world, the preservation of the Church and the perfection of the work of redemption. Man, who fails daily and is burdened by his sinful depravity, has the audacity to construct a system of thought outside of Scripture, one that is intended to solve the theodicy problem and find meaningfulness in the ocean of heathen peoples and in the fate of human beings who meet death without knowing Christ. This puffed-up-ness is self-destructive. It burns up the intelligence that scrutinizes in this way and closes the doors to salvation at the very moment they were imagined to have been opened for all mankind. The adherent of this line of thought becomes the victim of the powers which so gladly take the natural knowledge of God into their service - now as in the past.

This drawing up of the borderline to a wrong understanding of natural law is necessary and stresses an essential factor. What compels us to shoot the customary confessional fireworks is not a mere polemical pattern. The factual issue is so serious and compelling that the ability to choose the right wordings in preaching and teaching it constitutes a necessary part of the sacred office of teaching with which we are entrusted. Here each and every one who, with fear and trembling, wishes to administrate the Word of Salvation must be able to say the right thing at the right place and to divine the Word of Truth rightly. Perhaps it is a part of this task to call to mind the fact that the "felicitous inconsistency" here, too, fulfills its life-saving role. Also in

cases where theoretically natural law is affirmed as regards its supposedly saving functions, there may nevertheless be a genuine, efficacious proclamation of grace and people may de facto in the action behave as if it were held to be true that "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12 This holds true of the Roman Church as well as of other denominations. Lest Evangelical flesh praise itself, let it be mentioned here that the teaching of the second Vatican Council concerning the saving nature of heathen religions is to be found in the Biblical Catechism (from about 1800), paragraphs 98 and 99, by the great orthodox Swedish church leader Rural Dean Dr. Henric Schartau, spiritual father of the Swedish so-called "Old churchmanship."

It is symptomatic that the affirmative mention of natural law in the Confessions is sometimes expressed in such a way that it is interwoven with the negative rejection of false doctrine. An example of this will in this lecture serve as a transition to the presentation of the "great light," the good natural law. In the apology we read: "All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises.....Of these two parts the adversaries select the Law, because human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law (for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind), and by the Law they seek the remission of sins and justification." (Apol.IV,(II),5,7) The German text says here that "the natural law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments" ("das natürliche Gesetz welches mit dem Gesetz Mosi oder zehn Geboten übereinstimmt, in aller Menschen Herzen angeboren und geschrieben ist, und also die Vernunft etlichermassen die zehn Gebote fassen und verstehen kann.") (Apol.IV,(II),7) To this may be added the words of the Formula of Concord

which we quoted in our introduction. These are immediately followed by a description of the inadequacy of natural light as far as salvation is concerned. The fifth article of the Formula of Concord has similar wordings: "As Dr. Luther has urged this distinction (between Law and Gospel) with especial diligence in nearly all his writings, and has properly shown that the knowledge of God derived from the Gospel is far different from that which is taught and learned from the Law, because even the heathen to a certain extent had a knowledge of God from the natural law, although they neither knew Him aright nor glorified Him aright, Rom. 1,20 f." (FC,SD,V,22) Thus both of these passages in the Book of Concord refer to Rom. 1, and they take this to be the Biblical proof for the teaching that the heathen have a knowledge of God. This passage of Scripture is taken seriously, just as it was in earlier ecclesiastical tradition and it may rightly be considered the Scriptural sedes doctrinae of natural law. Two verses are of particular importance: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Rom. 1:19-20) Perhaps we ought to add that the authors of the Formula of Concord did not read this passage as meaning "from the creation of the world" but as it is worded in Luther's translation: "so man des warnimpt /an den Wercken/ nemlich an der schepffung der welt." (i.e. his eternal power and Godhead are seen, as one perceives them through the created things, i.e. the creation).

The latter of these quotations from the Formula of Concord is important in another respect as well, and we shall go into these somewhat more deeply. Reference was made to what Luther had stated in almost all his writings, i.e. to his interpretation of

natural law. A similar reference is to be found also in another passage of the Formula of Concord. In the seventh article we read: "the power meaning and sense of the oft-mentioned Augsburg Confession can and should be derived from no other source more properly and correctly than from the doctrinal and polemical writings of Dr. Luther." (FC,SD,VII,41) In such wordings the conviction is expressed that if one dares to twist around the wordings of the confession, which of necessity are of a summarical nature, there lies a protection in the fact that there is behind the confession itself a prolific theological production, where Luther must be considered "the most distinguished teacher of the churches which confess the Augsburg Confession." (FC,SD,VII,41) As regards natural law this has its significance, and this significance is rather a surprising one. Actually Luther's works contain a clear and informative presentation of natural law. In the fifth article of the Formula of Concord the authors had in mind an extensive interpretation of Rom. 1, etc. which the co-workers from electoral Brandenburg thought really ought to have been included in the texts of the confession itself. (That this did not happen was not a criticism but was dictated merely by the desire to avoid adding even more to a confession that was already getting too long.) This examination is to be found again in Luther's eleventh sermon (of October 20, 1537) on St. John, Chapters 1-4. (LW 22;149), where we read: "(the heathen) are not so stupid: they know very well that there is a God who punishes....sins. Furthermore they are well able to find out through reason that the regular orbits of heaven would not have their existence and essence without a ruler. Thus Paul says in Rom. 1 (Rom. 1 follows here." He goes on to speak of Rom. 2:15, where an inherent knowledge of God is taught: "the work of the law written in their hearts." As far as actual content is concerned, we find here again

the differentiation later made between the acquired and inherent natural knowledge of God.

A large number of other passages can also be adduced. In a Trinity sermon in the Church Postilla it is said of reason that it - albeit only "feebly," i.e. feebly in comparison to the insight of revelation worked by the Holy Ghost - "can by itself come this far... that there must be one single, eternal divine being which has created all things, preserves and governs them; because it (reason) beholds a beautiful excellent creation, both in heaven and earth, which is so wonderful, orderly and which certainly creates and functions in its course, it must say: 'It is not possible that this could have been created and function by chance or by itself, but there must be a creator and a lord, from whom everything comes and by whom everything is governed, as St. Paul also says in Rom. 1:(20)" (quotation of this passage follows). Luther goes on to develop the thought "how also the heathen Aristotle draws this conclusion in his best book on the basis of their wisest poet's words: No good rule can last when there is more than one lord.... This is no doubt right and true, for God has implanted such a light and such reason in human nature in order to give a hint as to and more or less an image of his divine rule, that he is one Lord and the Creator of all beings." (WA 21,510; St.L.XII,631)

The passage in Luther's interpretation of the prophet Jonah to which we referred in our introduction also begins with a reference to Rom. 1. "Here you see that what St. Paul says in Rom. 1:(19), that God is known among all the heathenand that natural reason knows that the Godhead is something great.....The light of natural reason extends this far that it considers God good, gracious, merciful, mild. It is a great light." (LW 19,53f)

Similar assertions of the reality of the natural knowledge of God in connection with Rom. 1 are also to be found in the big commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 4:8-9, LW 26;339) and in the Commentary on Genesis (Gen. 17:7-8, LW 3;117). Since there are so many passages which give us sufficient evidence, it is justifiable to quote here one of the table talks, which by itself would not have any proof value, but must be deemed a reliable reproduction of Luther's words since it concurs with passages from his works. "I cannot imagine what kind of person a man would be who does not seriously believe that there is a God, when he himself daily sees the sun rise, etc. He must sometimes meditate and ask himself, if it has been from eternity, or he must lower his eyes to the ground..., because to look at the acts of creation and not think that there is someone who operates them, governs them, and maintains them - that would be incredible." (WA TR 6,6568)

When our confessions speak about natural knowledge of God and about natural law, their words must be understood with the help of this background material. These and similar references do not bind us to all the statements of an individual theologian, but yet they give us a richness in our sketching of the Bible exegesis of our confessions. From what has now been said, it is apparent that Luther has in no way wished to deny the possibility of natural reason to attain knowledge of God. Only the influence of the philosophy of Kant on later theology has given us a concept of a Luther for whom natural law in every sense of the expression was anathematized. For our purposes it is not so important to explain texts in the history of ideas which led to the present-day theological situation, but it may in any case be mentioned that the notion that medieval "nominalism" denied the natural knowledge of God was also a contributing factor as regards the falsification of Luther's views. As is commonly known,

Luther was in matters of philosophy a nominalist, and his views on this point are supposed to have reflected those of Ockham. As far as I can see, modern scholars of the history of philosophy within the Franciscan Order have entirely destroyed the notions about nominalism which we unfortunately learned from Nominalism's Thomist competitors. What has been said and written about subjectivism, cultural dissolution and the like, all of which is alleged to have emanated from the hydra of Nominalism, is nothing but empty phrases serving the interest of church politics. Here I shall merely refer to Helmer Junghans: "Ockham in Lichte der neueren Forschung" (1968), which contains the necessary references to literature about this. As regards Luther's standpoint, I may refer to Franz Xaver Arnold: "Zur Frage des Naturrechts bei Martin Luther," Munchen, 1936.

We have already drawn the borderline and pointed out that the natural knowledge of God may not be considered a saving knowledge. Now we must draw another borderline. The knowledge which creation gives is - albeit limited - knowledge about God. It is, however, not a knowledge about what God has done, and it is not even a knowledge about creation from nothing. Luther proceeds from the fact that motion in the universe and in everything in it must have been created, and that cause and effect cannot coincide in anything transient; but this does not mean that reason could exclude the possibility that God has always created and always had creation at His side, Genesis 1, where everything is created from nothing in a period of six days, is and remains a truth which can only be received as a part of God's revelation through the Holy Ghost in the Word. Luther finds it quite natural that Aristotle, who draws the right conclusions as to the existence of God, at the same time denies the first man, i.e.,

Adam, because he is not familiar with Genesis 1 and with paradise as a fact. (LW 37,30f; WA 26,275,21ff) Aristotle is thus in the same situation as the modern scientist who must always reckon with the idea that the laws of our time were always in effect and that never at any time did anything totally different break in. About this Luther says: "Aristotle says that there cannot be any first or last human being. Reason would compel us, too, to say this if we did not have this text (Gen. 1)." (WA 42,92,35) What Hebrews 11:3 says thus remains entirely true: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

In making this limitation, Luther by no means leaves the sphere of older tradition. When he states at Petrus Hegemon's disputation on July 3rd, 1545, that the heathens' knowledge of God only comprises the Prime Mover and the Supreme Being as taught by Plato ("primum movens et summum ens, ut Plato," (WA 39,II,345,4ff; St.L.X,181) but not the creation "ex nihilo," "from nothing," he is merely repeating, as a disciple of the Scholastics, what Thomas Aquinas had already taught in Summa Theologica I, qu. 46, art. 2: "Respondes dicendum, quod mundum non semper fuisse, sola fide tenetur," "It is held by faith alone and the world has not always existed." Everyone who is even superficially familiar with the theology of the Middle Ages and that of the early classical period will recognize this expression and this distinction between natural knowledge of God and belief in creation in accordance with Gen. 1. It is all the more depressing and perturbing to be compelled to read on page 63 of Bernhard Lohse's "Ratio et Fides, Eine Untersuchung über die RATIO in der Theologie Luthers," that this very statement of Luther's is taken as a proof of what the Table of Contents calls "Ver-schafte Ablehnung einer natürlichen Gotteserkenntnis

beim alten Luther." This is one of the numerous proofs for the clumsiness and lack of sensitivity which modern Luther research shows in the face of the material. The material is interpreted in modernistic directions, and Luther's well-trained ability to make the necessary theological distinctions is ignored and drowned in the sweeping generalizations which scholars make on the basis of some basic, general thesis. They are not even able to discover common, Scholastic-classical points of teaching handed down by tradition. Instead, they imagine themselves to be confronted, in this case, with something entirely new and original, something which is the opening of a new era.

The view of Romans 1 exposed here reckons with the idea that there must necessarily be a first cause which in itself has a self-evident, unchangeable and exalted existence. This is the core of the classical proofs of the existence of God which are known by tradition, irrespective of number and formulation. (Jacques Maritain: *Approches de Dieu*, p. 32, "le principe formel de la demonstration et le même dans les cinq voies: l'exigence d'une première cause qui est l'Acte pur ou l'Etre même subsistant par soi.") That is why we have no reason to go into the question of whether all the so-called five ways, the five classical proofs of the existence of God, are to be found in Luther's works. What is clear is that the foundation here is the conviction that nothing comes out of nothing, that the transient comes from the eternal, that what is moved comes from the mover, that the beautiful comes from the most beautiful.

As far as the closer development of the content and the utility of the natural laws according to the Confessions is concerned, it must be carefully maintained that the acquired and the innate law comprises

both tables of the Law. This is not to be misconstrued to mean that man by nature in some way understands the demand that he is to love God above everything else. But it does mean that the Law is not in any case limited to the commands of the Second Table, which deal with relations between human beings, without due consideration of the fact that they have their authorization from the God of the First Table. The Confessions do not reckon with a natural law which merely means a certain action without any claim to real normativity. This is the opposite of Law, absolute lawlessness. The law is always the law which "accuses or defends" the heathen (Rom. 2:15). That is why in this essay the concept of natural law is in principle extended by the concept of natural knowledge of God: the law presupposes the Law-giver, and without the Law-giver, there is no law.

In this insight lies the great link between Christian preaching and natural law. Here the Christian proclamation of the Law has something to connect to. Luther's words about this are well known - the words in his explanation of Exodus 20,5: "If the natural law were not written or inscribed by God in the heart, one would have to preach for a long time before the conscience were struck - Because it is, however, in the heart beforehand, albeit in darkness and entirely paled, it is revived by the Word, so that the heart must confess that the commandments say that one is to honour and love God and serve Him, because He alone is good and does good, not only over against the pious, but also over against the wicked." (WA 16, 447,27ff; St.L.III, 1052) There is thus a way to approach human beings in such a way that one is on their own level. The sermon can refer to things which the listener can assent to intuitively or after some consideration. The listeners are all, prior to the sermon, actually familiar with God, as the apostles

could say at Lystra: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17)

The main author of the Formula of Concord, Martin Chemnitz, stresses the importance here of magnifying "the witness of conscience also among the unregenerate" ("testimonium conscientiae etiam in non renatis magnificamus") (Locii II, 103f) in order that the heathen, when they are in tribulation on account of the accusations of their conscience, may not be able to ignore them as if they were figments of the imagination of old women. In this way the door is open for preaching. Chemnitz says also in general that it is a good thing to seize the insights of natural law, since it is God who is speaking in it. He speaks in particular of natural law in the form which occurs in the general legacy of the teachings of humanity, in which the observations of generations have been written down on the basis of the acquired and of the inherent knowledge of God "ut discamus amare, venerare et magnificare sententias morales congruentes legi naturae, ubi cumque extent et legantur apud poetas, historicos, philosophos, legumlatores, etc."

Chemnitz reminds us that St. Paul in I Corinthians 15:33 does not worry about citing Menander as his source for the words, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Here one may think of the collections of proverbs made in the Reformation era which are founded on this desire to seize God's wisdom in the form of natural law. What Chemnitz is thinking of corresponds, by the way, well to C. S. Lewis' collection of "Examples of Tao" which closes his "Abolition of Man" and to what Lewis has had to say elsewhere in his production. Also in the dark centuries which now seem to be falling upon us, it is a worthwhile task to keep this

literary tradition alive, which Chemnitz wants us to love, respect and glorify. The Christian manses, which nowadays must take over the role played by the Irish monasteries in the Dark Ages past, must not only see to it that the classical languages are kept alive, but must also see to it that the world of proverbs, fairy tales, and fables goes on. We are going to be impotent in the face of many temptations of evil, if we do not keep on our tongues words like "Evil communications corrupt good manners" - words which are typical of the old tradition, because they reckon with white and black, with moral struggle, with fall and rising. Our opponents are well aware of where the fight is being waged, and that is why they are careful about keeping their eyes on the children's departments of public libraries in order that no reflection of the glory of God may fall into the imaginations of the children.

The application of natural law in the Confessions lies, however, essentially at the point which Chemnitz quotes as the first of the reasons for urging the natural law, i.e., the preservation of society. The Church does not need to quote Menander, because it has the Bible; but society has no other foundation than the natural law. At the same time, we should not ignore the fact that the Church rests within the state. It is indeed not impossible to say as Gustavus Adolphus did: "The majesty of Sweden and the Church of God which rests therein." Gustavus Adolphus was too good a theologian to believe that faith is dependent on any one state, but he also knew that the Church can be exterminated in a certain place, if the State does not protect the Church and other good people. Also the Confessions have this insight. It is important to be able to point out the fact that the Evangelical-Lutheran clergy in the German-Roman Empire were threatened by an administration of justice which opposed their marriages, lives, and possessions. Of this it is said: "For they ask that, contrary to

divine law, contrary to the law of nations, contrary to the canons of Councils, you sunder marriages, in order to impose merely for the sake of marriage atrocious punishments upon innocent men, to put to death priests, whom even barbarians reverently spare, to drive into exile banished women and fatherless children. Such laws they bring to you, most excellent and most chaste Emperor, to which no barbarity, however monstrous and cruel, could lend its ear." (Apol.XXIII,(XI),3) Thus an example is given here of how the office of the ministry is for its existence dependent upon the State's proper use of the natural law. Here it is also stated clearly, that the opposition to legislation concerning matrimony essentially rests upon what even the heathen know. That to which an appeal is made is brought out in another passage worded in the following way: "And because this creation or divine ordinance in man is a natural right, jurists have accordingly said wisely and correctly that the union of male and female belongs to natural right. But since natural right is immutable, the right to contract marriage must always remain." (Apol.XXIII,(XI),9) The law of nature is thus an unchangeable law ("ius naturale sit immutabile," (Apol.XXIII,(XI),9) - though this does not mean that it is not transgressed. Its unchangeability is referred to when it is transgressed.

Thus the right protector of natural law is the powers that be. "Accordingly, at this time, marriage ought to have been especially defended by the most severe laws and warning examples, and men ought to have been invited to marriage. This duty pertains to the magistrates, who ought to maintain public discipline." (Apol.XXIII,(XI),55) This government also comprises the heathen governments: "By the laws of all well-ordered commonwealths, even among the heathen, marriage is most highly honored." (CA,XXIII, 19.20) Despite all their Christian zeal, the Confessions are never driven to the thought that the

word of the Bible is the primary foundation of society. Nevertheless, certain statements made nowadays as to the necessity of returning to the Ten Commandments as the foundation of society can meet with approval on the basis of the Confessions. Then we are using the concept of the "Ten Commandments" in the wider sense which actually occurs in the passage quoted above: "das natürliche Gesetz, welches mit den Gesetz Mosi oder den Zehn Geboten übereinstimmt." (CA, Apol. IV, (II), 7) This speaks about the law, the point of which has become dull, and which is satisfied with philosophical-Pharisaic righteousness, and which does not condemn coveting. This watered down law is, however, sufficient and the only right thing in the context of society; it is very rightly called "outward civil righteousness." Mentioning this is quite important. It would be unfortunate if the differentiation in principle between spiritual and worldly contained in our Confessions were to be construed to mean that today the deeply affirmative ambitions concerning "obedience to the Ten Commandments" are to be rejected. It may well be that the reference to the Commandments is often of a moralistic-Pharisaic nature devoid of Christian insight, but this does not mean that it is of no value to society. Here it deserves to be supported and not to be rejected on the basis of a skeleton loyalty to the Confessions. It is altogether too easy for us to make fun of the moralist on the basis of our correct attachment to the Gospel. In social connections, however, it holds true that he who opposes the moralist joins the ranks of him who dissolves morals. There is no reason to examine the insufficiency of outward righteousness before we are dealing with it within the Church and in establishing the definition of Christian justification.

The duty of the State on the plane of natural law, as described above, must not be construed to

mean that the State in principle is the superior of the family. The duty of the State is to protect the family as the base of society. About this the Confessions say: "For all authority flows and is propagated from the authority of parents. -- so that all whom we call masters are in the place of parents and must derive their power and authority to govern from them. Hence also they are all called fathers in the Scriptures, as those who in their government perform the functions of a father, ...As also from antiquity the Romans and other nations called the masters and mistresses of the household patres- et matres- familiae, that is, housefathers and housemothers. So also they called their national rulers and overlords patres patriae." (CMaj.142) Thus the family, parental power, paternal power are the primary power of society. The secondary power of society is to be adjusted to assist - not to replace - the primary power. If parental power is reduced, the divine punishment for this enters according to the Confessions - a total disruption of society: "all kinds of filth and misery." (CMaj.123)

Parental power is not only primary in relation to the state, but also to the experience of the individual person. In the family, the human being is for the first time confronted with the demand that he should be subordinated with the hierarchic principle, with the reflection of the God-creation relationship. Here man is trained in the art of seeing the divine in veiled species, in the outward and corporal. The Confessions say: "He separates and distinguishes father and mother above all other persons upon earth, and places them at His side. For it is a far higher thing to honor than to love one, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility, and deference as to a majesty there hidden.... In other respects we are, indeed, all alike in the eyes of God; but among us there must necessarily be such inequality and

ordered difference, and therefore God commands it to be observed, that you obey me as your father, and I have the supremacy." (CMaj.108) This wording not only places demands on the one who is to obey, but also on the one who is to exercise authority. He is not allowed to run away from his commission to speak as the representative of God. When disobedience occurs, this is usually due to the fact that no obedience has been demanded: "one fool trains another, and as they have lived, so live their children after them." (CMaj.124,p.617) Running away from the power and authority starts with the parents, and the children merely follow suit. This way of looking at things which we have before us is in sharp contrast to modern ideologies which by no means take it for granted that the family is the nuclear cell of society, but which reckon with unlimited state authority, which recognizes at best certain limited rights of the individuals; but does not, however, acknowledge the family to be the basic unit. These ideologies are also active in deliberately breaking down the differentiation between parents and children and in removing the very concept of obedience from the schools and the field of pedagogics. It must be made clear that we have here a decisive difference between the classical law-of-nature view and the modern view, especially in its Socialist form. Of course, the same difference prevails in the view of the relationship between husband and wife. One need only be reminded of the Table of Duties in the Small Catechism, in which St. Peter 3 is quoted: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; -- even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." It is impossible to turn this into an exclusively Christian attitude, calculated on the basis of the soul's relation to Christ. Both in Scripture and in the interpretation of the Confessions the super- and sub-ordination of man and woman are derived from Creation. In the epistle

of St. Peter, subordination is commanded particularly in order that the heathen may be won: "that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." (I Pet. 3:1) In the context the psychomatic constitution of women is also pointed out: "as unto the weaker vessel." (I Pet. 3:7)

It is of some importance to urge this point, because within Swedish confessionalism, this very thing has at times become a point of doctrine at which Christian piety has become the basis of the Law: only within the frame of love is such subordination at all possible and safe, it is claimed. This is, however, equivalent to tearing down the whole principle of super- and sub-ordination: if grace is the prerequisite for obedience, the whole regiment of the Law fails. This peculiar reasoning is a part of the treason against natural law committed by much alleged Confessionalism in connection with the struggle against the ordination of women. The noise raised by these "Confessionalists" against the ordination of women - a noise quite obviously justified - has its counterpart in their almost complete silence over against the abrogation of the housewife, emancipation of women and the transition of the ideal of equality to the sphere of family life. With fearful acumen, many of our conservatives attempted to prove that they were socially adapted to all other respects. Thus the prohibition of the ordination of women to the clergy is made to seem a divine ordinance of the same kind as the necessity of the use of wine in Holy Communion, based only on the words of Jesus, but not on the law of Creation. Had the opponents to priestesses had their desire in the Law of God, revealed by the witness of both natural and supernatural revelation, this desire would have been expressed by a clear "No" to what is now going on as concerns the change of the so-called traditional distribution of the roles of the sexes.

If one is not willing to deduce the will of God from the functions of the human body, to acknowledge and affirm the maternal instinct, to respect the accumulated experience of generations, one will soon be without respect for anything at all. St. Paul made this very clear in the words following Romans 1, when he speaks of the results of the denial of natural law and describes the unnatural sin of lust. The Confessions say the same thing: "We see what vice it was which God denounced before the Flood, what He denounced before the burning of the five cities. Similar vices have preceded the destruction of many other cities, as of Sybaris and Rome. And in these there has been presented an image of the times which will be next to the end of things." (CA, Apol. XXIII, (XI), 54) Such words prove to have a prophetic significance when one considers the development from the decision to ordain women from 1958 and 1960 up to the 1974 printed analysis of the sin of Sodomitic lust and its acceptance by a Swedish bishop, who in principle declares that he is willing to ordain practicing paederasts to the clergy. Here again I wish to warn specifically against putting forth our criticism, as if it were based solely on the apostolic office of St. Paul - what we would secure would at best be the recognition of our right to hold our own opinion. With the aid of any pictorial illustration of the human body, we can readily prove that the unnatural is unnatural, and we can appeal to natural law. Here we can speak of the wrath of God and His judgment in a way which everyone understands by himself, without the aid of the inspiration of Scripture.

The prerequisite for the exercising of the rights which emanate from the family and its "patria potestas" is that the family has property rights. Just as the existence of the Church is rendered impossible if the State does not protect it by exercising the natural law, the family, too, is overthrown if it is deprived of its basis. If the parents do not have

the money to pay the children's teachers and the congregation's clergyman, parental rights and the freedom of religion become rights with no real meaning. This is already a reason to stress the right to hold property as an irrevocable part of the natural law. The Confessions advocate the right to hold property: "The Law of the Decalog" - the decalog here is synonymous with the natural law! - "when it says, Ex. 20,15: 'Thou shalt not steal,' distinguishes rights of ownership, and commands each one to hold what is his own. -- This entire topic concerning civil affairs has been so clearly set forth by our theologians that very many good men occupied in the state and in business have declared that they have been greatly benefited, who before, troubled by the opinion of the monks, were in doubt as to whether the Gospel allowed these civil offices and business." (CA, Apol. XVI, 63, 65)

Christian socialism in the form of monasticism and what it preached is thus confronted by the Confessions. They speak of how the right to buy and sell is under the seventh commandment and of how preaching this gives businessmen their good conscience back. Reference is made to the studies of this made by the Reformation theologians; and it is a well-known fact that they very emphatically stressed the right to own private property. At the same time, in order to keep the balance, we must point out that, according to the Confessions, the State has the right to exercise its authority in order to prevent a wrong use of property rights. In rejecting Socialism, the Confessions do not let themselves get pushed into an acceptance of the unlimited property rights as propagated by Liberalism. The Confessions oppose what happens "in the market and in common trade likewise, this practice is in full swing and force to the greatest extent, where one openly defrauds another with bad merchandise, false measures, weights, coins, and by nimbleness and queer finances or dexterous tricks

takes advantage of him; likewise, when one overcharges a person in a trade and wantonly drives a hard bargain, skins and distresses him." (CMaj. 227) As to these phenomena it is stated in summary: "And indeed, if there were a well-ordered government in the land, such wantonness might soon be checked and prevented, as was the custom in ancient times among the Romans, where such characters were promptly seized by the pater in a way that others took warning." (CMaj.238,239) The commission of the State to be the father of the country, "pater patriae," thus covers business and trade. Stealing is not the mere outward act in itself; it is also any unrighteous action incurring a neighbour a loss. The defense of the right to hold private property, "to make legal contracts (German: kaufen und verkaufen/ buy and sell), to hold property," (CA,XVI,2) does not mean a defense of the abuse of this right, just as parental rights do not mean the right to subject children to bad care.

We have already pointed out that natural law has its primary function in the preservation of society. In this connection we proved by quotations from the Confessions that it is not primarily the Christian but the State that has been given the task to supervise the maintenance of law. As a conclusion of the picture that has been given here of the doctrine of our Confessions on natural law and natural knowledge of God - the second part of which has become a compendium of Evangelical Lutheran social ethics - it can be appropriate to define more closely the meaning of the State according to the Confessions. What we have to say here is as much deviating from now current ideologies, especially Socialism, as our other points on matrimony and family have been. The State that judges and rules by legal power is often called by our Confessions "the powers that be." (Obrigkeit) It has its place in the hierarchical order and thus presupposes subjects. It is nowhere in principle

dependent upon any form of public approval or general elections, but exists in its own right in the place of God. This does not in turn imply any bonds to any specific form of State. The Book of Concord counts among its subscribers both princes and town republics. Lutheranism is thus no exclusively monarchical-princely religion for court preachers. Within orthodox Lutheran tradition one always quoted the words of St. John Chrysostomos about matrimony belonging to the species of monarchy, but one never transferred those words to the State. On the other hand, one teaches that the State, irrespectively of the way it gets its government, has authority, i.e., it is entrusted with divine power over its subjects. After the town republic has chosen its magistrates under democratic forms, the magistrates are entitled to command in the name of God. They do not get their authority from the people in the sense that their orders should be obeyed only as far as they express the will of the subjects. In our Confessions, State and society do thus never coincide. The State is a separate, divine institution within society, the supervisor and executive of natural law as described in Rom. 13. This is in apparent contradiction to the dominating political ideology of today, which makes State and society coincide, and where the majority of the people is granted the right of rebellion against a state, which does not express the wishes of the majority. Our Confessions are thus not adherents in principle to the present parliamentary-democratic form of government, which can be granted no more than one place among the many other possible forms of government. I here wish to point to Solzhenitsyn's letter, which has recently been published abroad, where he declines the democratic form of government for his native country, but demands that the autocratic form of government, which has domiciliary rights in Russia, shall be put under the principles of natural law and love. I wish to remind you also about what recently happened at a patriotic festivity in southern Jutland, where the reunion of that

province to Denmark after the first World War was celebrated under traditional forms. The speaker in honour of the occasion brought his audience to silence by saying that after all the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm was a community founded on natural law, which could not be said today without reservations about Denmark. It can undoubtedly be a task to formulate oneself in a similar way in our country, too. There is among us a tendency to maintain that something is right by being accepted under parliamentary forms. The very knowledge of a natural law, independent of majorities, is declining. The only possibility of stopping that decline is to point to it, to maintain that there is an objective right, having its foundation in the Creator, to unmask that sin that consoles itself by being embraced by many.

As a church, as clergymen, it is admittedly not our task to teach the first use of the Law. On the other hand, we are free to teach the second and third uses of the Law from the pulpit. But also here natural law has its place. It is a connecting link to the second use of the Law, to the penitential sermon. It is always possible, together with St. Paul, to lash those who "changed the truth of God into a lie" and "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." (Rom. 1:25,28) Here, however, the purpose of the law is to bring us unto Christ, to prepare the reception of grace. But in the third use of the Law we have to preach to people who are to practice good deeds in their daily vocations. Here we have through our auditors a definitely social task. This must first of all create the Christian family with its distinctive character, which always is within the decision of the individual Christian, provided that husband and wife are one in their faith. In the second place, however, the task comes to uphold the world outside the walls of the church and one's own home. We must in this

connection realize that today there is in our country hardly any other ideology than orthodox Christianity that can take up the Kultur-Kampf with Socialism. That orthodox Christian view must, however, in order not to confuse spiritual and temporal, become conscious of the meaning of natural law, thereby being able to enter the fight with Satan with the necessary breadth. That is our task, part of our sanctification and teaching ministry.

TWENTY THESES ON NATURAL LAW

1. Natural knowledge of God can be put to the service of self-salvation, as has happened in the decree of the Second Vatican Council, "Lumen gentium."
2. Natural knowledge of God understood in that way stands under the anathema of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessions. (Apol.I,IV)
3. The Evangelical-Lutheran Confessions reject the saving character of natural knowledge of God, but recognize it as right, as far as it extends (Apol.IV,FC V)
4. The Confessions recognize Rom. 1 as the sedes doctrinae of the natural knowledge of God.
5. The Confessions point (FC V) to Luther's expositions thereof, which clearly confirm that man by his reason is brought to a natural knowledge of God and also possesses an innate knowledge of God. (Rom. 2:15)
6. The natural knowledge of God does not know the work of creation ex nihilo according to Gen. 1, which must be accepted by faith. (Heb. 11:3)

7. Evangelical Lutheran theology accepts in principle the truth of the proofs of God's existence and affirms, like Scholasticism, the necessity of the supreme cause.
8. The natural law presupposes the natural knowledge of God; a law without a legislator is lawlessness.
9. Natural law is the connecting link for the Christian preaching of the Law; by magnifying also the insight of non-Christians, the sermon keeps the door open for the preaching of the Law. (Chemnitz)
10. The natural law is a revelation of God (Rom. 1:19), which demands also the attention of Christians, i.e., in the classical heritage of learning, which contains the summary of mankind's knowledge of the natural law in prose and poetry. (Chemnitz)
11. The natural law is above all important for the preservation of society, not forgetting that after all the church also rests in society.
12. Society is exclusively directed to natural law, not to the Bible. Yet the notion "the ten commandments" is often used as identical with natural law (Apol.IV); insofar, society rests on these commandments.
13. The family is the foundation of society, from which all other authority is derived. (Large Cat. 1:4)
14. The monarchic structure of matrimony and the authority of the father belong to natural law and are not exclusively Christian insights.

15. The rejection of natural law and of the divine institution of matrimony has always opened the gates to unnatural vice. (Rom. 1:26; Apol.XXIII)
16. The right of possession is a foundation for the preservation of family and is defended by the Confessions against all Christian or heathen Socialism; it implies the right to buy and sell and to own. (CA, Apol.XVI)
17. The State is independent of its possible democratic legitimization and does not coincide with the people (society).
18. The democratic form of the State is only one of several possible forms; the State as a legal state under natural law is the only divine demand.
19. From the pulpit, crimes against natural law can be mentioned as part of the preaching of penitence.
20. From the pulpit, the necessity of natural law can be pointed at to help the listeners to good deeds in their life in society.

CONFIRMATION SERMON, MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH

May 27, 1979

Prayer

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for our baptismal grace and we pray that Thou wouldst keep us ever mindful that in our baptism we became Thy children and heirs of eternal life. As we live in this sinful world where we must daily contend against Satan and our own sinful flesh, we pray Thee to preserve us in our baptismal grace unto the end. To that end, may our prayer be:

"Keep us, how'er the world may lure
In our baptismal covenant pure
That every yearning thought may be
Directed only Lord to Thee."

We ask it in Jesus' Name and for His sake. Amen.

Text

"For as many of you as have been baptized
into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27)

In Christ Jesus, Fellow Redeemed and especially you young people who will today renew your baptismal promise, grace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are some very special days in our lives and one of those days is confirmation day. You who are being confirmed today have looked forward to this day with eager anticipation. Those of us who have been confirmed look back to our confirmation day as a memorable one in our lives.

However, there is another day that is much more important -- a day that most of us do not

remember -- the day of our baptism. On that day through a very simple act our Heavenly Father through water and the Word gave us a new spiritual life, adopted us as his children, and made us heirs of everlasting life. Through baptism we were united with Christ and all of the blessings which He won for us on the cross were bestowed upon us. While the officiant at our baptism was the visible agent and instrument in performing that act, in reality God was "the invisible baptizer." Yes, the triune God was present at our baptism, as Luther reminds us, "We should not doubt at all that wherever one is being baptized the heavens are assuredly open and the entire Trinity is present and through its own presence sanctifies and blesses the person being baptized."

Baptism is so important and blessed because it was instituted by Christ and has His command and promise. You children committed to memory that command of our Savior, given to his disciples shortly before his ascension into heaven, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The confessions of our church also have much to say about baptism. They call it "excellent, glorious, exalted" and that in it "we obtain an inexpressible treasure." Luther says that "it is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth straw."

While we think of our baptism as something that took place in the past -- and it did -- yet we can speak of it in the present, I AM BAPTIZED, because the blessings of baptism are ours daily, throughout our entire life. Let us then center our attention around the words,

"I AM BAPTIZED"

I. Let this be a daily comfort to you. Our text says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In baptism we put on Christ as one puts on a garment; His righteousness covered our sinfulness; all that He earned for us by His redemptive work became our own. Yes, in baptism, Christian faith was born. "Baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe" as you learned in the catechism. That is what God says and that is what He is able to do.

In baptism God established a covenant of grace with us. It is a covenant, or agreement, that He will never break. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" he assures. Again, the Bible says, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isaiah 54:10)

"I AM BAPTIZED." Certainly, that is a daily comfort to us. Luther says, "there is on earth no greater comfort than baptism." One day a friend came to him deeply distressed and Luther reminded him, "Don't you know that you have been baptized?" His friend later confessed that those words were of more comfort to him than an entire sermon.

Louis the Pius, a king of France, knew the value of his baptism when he said, "Those three handfuls of water poured over my head in Holy Baptism are worth more to me than the crown I am wearing." When an elderly Christian who had experienced much joy in life was asked what the happiest day in his life was, he answered, "It was the day on which I was baptized."

"I AM BAPTIZED." May that be your daily assurance and comfort too! True, you will at times fall into sin; you may even -- God forbid! -- forsake your baptismal grace, as many have, but thank God He will not forsake you -- his covenant stands -- and we can in repentance and faith "CRAWL BACK TO OUR BAPTISM," as Luther puts it. Yes, the Bible assures us "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) When our conscience troubles us -- as it often does -- and the law of God assures us -- as it often will -- then remember I AM BAPTIZED. May that be a constant source of comfort to you!

II. Let your baptism also be a daily incentive to you to remain in your baptismal grace unto the end. Very likely these words were sung at your baptism:

"Grant us to grow in grace each day
By holy baptism that we may
Eternal life inherit."

You must remember that even though you are a baptized child of God, you still have the old Adam, your sinful nature, which is corrupt and deceitful. Your old Adam is not interested in spiritual things; it is easily misled and deceived. And there is no one who knows that better than Satan, the enemy of your soul. He will use every trick in the book to lure you away from your Savior. As a baptized child of God, you are a marked person. One of the hymns you learned expresses it very strikingly,

"I walk in danger all the way;
The thought shall never leave me,
That Satan who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If e'er I fail to watch and pray:
I walk in danger all the way."

Therefore, we need to drown the old Adam daily; if we do not, the old Adam will drown us and thus destroy the new life of faith. The tragedy is that many baptized Christians have not heeded the admonitions of the Lord; they have not lived in daily contrition and repentance; they have permitted themselves to be misled and deceived; they have not remained in their baptismal grace, but have joined the children of the world on the broad road which leads to destruction. It was no doubt that sad situation which prompted the hymnist to write,

"Come, Jesus, come and contemplate
Thy vineyard's sad estate:
Baptized are millions in Thy name,
But where is faith's pure flame?
Of what avail that we
Know of Thine agony,
So long as we do not o'erthrow
In faith the wicked foe."

May your baptism be a daily incentive to use the means whereby your faith is nourished and strengthened, namely, the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. Your church is here to help you grow in your baptismal grace. You notice on your bulletin these words, "BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE." God has promised that if we are faithful in using the means of grace he will preserve us in the faith. But do not be deluded into thinking that since God is merciful and gracious that this is something that we can put off until later in life. This past week we were reminded how quickly life can end. Little did those passengers who boarded that plane to Los Angeles realize that within a few minutes their lives would be snuffed out. It is especially chilling when you recognize the name of one of the victims, a doctor from Madison, Wisconsin, who was in the prime of his medical career. How true the words of the hymn:

"Who knows how near my life's expended?
Time flies, and death is hasting on,
How soon, my term of trial ended,
Death may be here and life be gone."

How important, then, that we remain in our baptismal grace unto the end! And if we faithfully use the means which God has given to preserve us in that grace, then we can have the assurance that "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

Finally, let your baptism be an incentive to lead a Christian life which will bring forth much fruit in your lives. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John 15:8) In baptism we were so intimately united with Christ that we both died and rose with Him. This should have a deep impact on our lives. It should be a powerful motivation to live unto him who lived and died for us. Remember what you learned, "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death; that like as he was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

"I AM BAPTIZED." May that be your comfort throughout your life and may it also be an incentive to live as his child and serve Him in His kingdom! Then you can live confidently and die peacefully. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

-- Wilhelm W. Petersen

REVIEW OF AN ORDINATION SERMON

The May, 1979, issue of the Cresset, Valparaiso University's publication, contained a sermon preached at the ordination of Jan Otte-Murphy. The sermon was preached by Joan Lundgren Hunt, a graduate of Luther-Northwestern Seminaries, St. Paul, Minnesota, in St. Paulus Lutheran Church, San Francisco, California, Mrs. Murphy having been called as assistant pastor at the University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley, California. The sermon is important as an apologetic for the ordination of women. It also reveals the thought patterns and the value judgments of those arguing for the ordination of women.

The sermon, based on the Magnificat, can be summarized without difficulty. The preacher approved of the ordinand's choice of the text because "Jan herself identifies with this song of Mary . . ." because "Jan has played a part in God's pattern of 'turning the tables' on the powerful forces which oppose the Gospel, and raising up the oppressed." Mrs. Hunt sees Mrs. Murphy's ordination as a great victory because "mighty forces . . . find themselves dethroned by God today . . . both outside us and in us." The first "mighty force" to be overthrown is the "mighty church traditions which define the roles of women -- and even our natures -- in limiting demeaning roles." Mrs. Hunt praises Mrs. Murphy for being one of the first women to enroll at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, "in the face of synodical resolutions that say it is against Scripture for women to be pastors," and for later completing her work at SemineX. Mrs. Murphy is praised further as being a champion of "qualified women" in the ministry and for having the patience to wait almost eighteen months

until her candidacy for the ministry was confirmed by a congregation and the AELC through a call. Incidentally, one must wonder whether or not this delay reflected tension within the AELC for a time over the ordination of women.

The preacher then continued by speaking of the second mighty power overthrown, "the mighty power of self-righteousness." By her ordination was overcome any feeling of "triumphalism," so that the ordinand then had the ability of "forgiving those who were killing you, 'for they know not what they do.'" She continues by saying: "The third mighty power put down by God through this ordination is the tendency of the church to become clergy-centered or 'clerical,'" which she defines as "a sort of a caste system," in which the clergy are "the upper caste." However, the preacher took joy in her Baptism, for she felt that Baptism showed there was no difference among people. Accordingly, "the work of Christ is the property of none of us exclusively," for "Jan is committed to being a co-worker with all of you in your work of ministry."

This summary adequately reflects the flow of thought in the sermon, but the reader might wish to read it for himself. This will enable any reader to decide for himself whether or not the value judgments which follow are accurate.

There is, first of all, a warning to conservatives. It is very obvious that any attempt to meet the theologically liberal feminist sexists half way will not work. One has the feeling at times that some conservatives are wondering how far they can back away from the Scriptural injunctions of the role of women in church without violating those injunctions. Such conservatives would do well to recognize the situation as it is. It is a question involving basic issues being debated, not little questions of application here and there. Those basic

principles involve God's Word, the Bible; the authority of the Bible for today; the clarity of the Bible; and a host of other questions. One must not become wrapped up in the little questions of application and forget the Scriptural principles which are involved. The ordinand herself also saw that "women's ordination was not a peripheral and secondary issue in the confessing movement."

A second reaction! Though the text is quoted throughout the sermon, it is literally a pretext. Any exegete would be surprised to find the Magnificat used as a text to justify the ordination of women. The Magnificat reflected the faith of Mary, one who can honorably wear the title "mother of God" and yet who called herself the handmaid of God and who rejoiced in the birth of her son as her Savior. The message of the Magnificat is the sinner's joy at the birth of the Savior from sin, and not from a savior from social disorientation. Mary's greatness consisted not in her self-assertiveness, but in her humility and willingness to serve God in the role He had chosen for her.

The sermon, while it is gilded with quotations from the text and with other Bible passages, basically reflects a sociological approach to the question of the ordination of women. This shows itself in a variety of ways. Loaded words are used to describe those who dare to differ with her. There is also a developmental approach, such as one would expect in a sociological interpretation. Change is seen as good in itself, it would seem. Of course, the preacher identifies this change with God, "who continues to reform his church as surely as he did in Luther's time."

The phrase "qualified women" is used in the sermon when speaking of women clergy. It would seem

that the preacher recognizes that God is a God of order, Who then can set limitations and qualifications. But this thought is not carried over into her general argument. She rather states that, since all Christians are baptized, "there is now no greater status of responsibility to be conferred on me by any human distinction. Baptism is the precious call to ministry that has come to all of us." Ministry, of course, here seems to mean mutual Christian service. Hence, all are to serve, and the ordinand is serving in her way. These thoughts are in the third portion of the sermon, the anti-clerical portion. "The mighty forces of sex prejudice and clericalism have, through God's judgment, been put down from their thrones."

The familiar Scripture passages are ignored: I Corinthians 14:34-35; and I Timothy 2:12-15. I Corinthians 14 asserts that women are not to teach publicly in the church, and I Timothy states two reasons for this: God's order in creation and the fall into sin. Neither of these latter two reasons lend themselves to any interpretation which sees them as applying only in Paul's time. The preacher did use the phrase "qualified women," but she evidently has chosen to ignore Paul's words here as speaking of qualifications. Rather she sees "the ordination of qualified women" as "a powerful witness of God's people in the Gospel." It would seem that she has Galatians 3:26-29 in mind, though she does not cite the passage. Certainly Paul does not place any restrictions on the distribution of spiritual blessings which come through faith in Christ as the Savior. If the preacher did have Galatians 3:26-29 in mind, one would have to ask why Paul could be quoted -- or inferred -- as a source in one area, but not in another area of truth.

To reinterpret the Word of God in terms of development, in terms of social attitudes in Paul's days, in terms of a lack of a Gospel sense, or in any other way is wrong. God's Word speaks for itself to us. To keep on looking at an area of Scripture as a problem because we do not happen to like what the Scriptures state so clearly will only lead to trouble. One keeps looking and looking -- listening and listening -- to try to see and hear something different. And soon one starts to see and hear what one wants to see and hear. This is bad. But one must accept such results when one follows the first hermeneutical principle of satan: "Yea, hath the Lord said . . .?" But Paul's words of I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 are clear, and perhaps too clear for some to want to hear.

-- G. E. Reichwald

BOOK REVIEW

The Hammer of God, Bo Giertz. Translated by Clifford Ansgar Nelson. Minneapolis. Augsburg. pprbk 1973
335 pp. \$3.95

The book consists of three stories. Each one of these stories presents the case of a young pastor. At the beginning of each of these stories the young pastor has a wrong slant on something doctrinal; he adheres to some wrong teaching. And consequently he is unable to fulfill the duties of the pastoral office aright. In the course of the story, however, each one learns what is right and is moved to adhere to it. And Christian laymen and women have much to do with setting each one of these pastors right.

1. THE HAMMER OF GOD.

Dr. Savonius has been called to be a curate under an older pastor.

The first thing he was asked to do was to minister to a dying man of the parish who was in a state of despair, seeing the greatness of his sins, but not willing to believe the forgiveness of sins. So the question was: How shall one get a deeply distressed soul to believe in the grace of God?

The young pastor went to the bed-side of the man. He was unable to cope with the situation. But a Christian woman came to the house and Savonius was witness to the manner in which she got the sick man to believe he was pardoned. Here is a brief presentation of how she did it.

Sick man: "I am a great sinner."

Katrina: "You don't lack repentance, but faith."
"Do you want your heart to be clean?"

Sick man: "Yes."

Katrina: "Then your repentance is as true as it can be in a corrupt child of Adam."

Sick man: "But what shall I believe?"

Katrina: "The Word of God: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly his faith is counted to him for righteousness. Do you have sin in your heart?"

Sick man: "Yes, much."

Katrina: "Then it is clear that God has not forsaken you. Only he can see his sin who has the Holy Spirit."

Sick man: "Could it be a work of God that my heart is so unclean?"

Katrina: "Not that your heart is unclean, but that you see that it is."

Sick man: "Then why have I not received a clean heart?"

Katrina: "That you might learn to love Jesus. If you had received a clean heart and trusted in that to earn salvation, to what end would you need a Savior?"

Katrina: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Sick man: "Do you mean that He takes away sin that dwells in my unclean heart?"

Katrina: "Yes, He atoned for all sin."

Sick man: "But I have it with me still."

Katrina: "Yes, just as surely as Paul had it with him. He said: I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not."

Sick man: "Give me one more word, Katrina, and I will believe it."

Katrina: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Sick man: "Amen. I believe."

Katrina: "Now ask the pastor to give you Communion."

Dr. Savonius did this.

The story closes with word being brought to Savonius from the Cathedral Chapter that he was to refrain from exercising any pastoral activity. There were those who had complained about his work although he now had learned what real Christianity was and was working in a blessed manner. The reasons for his suspension: He had given counsel to such who were not members of his parish. He had counseled married people on occasion to go to the Lord's Supper separately. He had failed to show moderation in his sermons. He had pictured honorable citizens as being sinners.

2. JESUS ONLY.

This is the story of Pastor Fridfeldt. The question was whether he knew what it means to be born again. To an older pastor he had said that he was a believer.

Older pastor: "Believer in what?"

Answer: "In Jesus. I have given my heart to Him."

Older pastor: "If you think you are saved because you have given Him your heart you will not be saved. It is a different thing to believe on Him as the Redeemer of sinners of whom one is chief. The heart is a rusty old can on a junk heap. But a wonderful Lord passes by and has

mercy on the old tin can, sticks his walking cane through it and rescues it and carries it from the junk pile and takes it home with him."

Fridfeldt admitted that he had looked for penitence and for amendment of life. He had taken stock of his deeds, but had lost sight of Jesus.

He learned: The law constrains a man to look chiefly at himself and drives him to compare his corrupted nature with the holiness of God and his guilt with the righteousness of God. But afterwards the Holy Spirit lifts the eyes of our understanding to Jesus only. It is a blessed thing when a believing soul looks in the Word for Jesus only.

The question was discussed whether little children can believe. The wrong opinion was held that one had to be a believer before one should be baptized. And the passage was quoted: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And so it was contended that faith was necessary for baptism.

Answer: "No, not for baptism, but for salvation. Jesus does not in that passage say what is necessary in order to be baptized, but what is necessary in order to be saved. Faith and baptism are two things that belong together. And if little children could not believe they could not be saved either.

The point was made: "Can you mention a single passage of Scripture that states that a little child can actually be born again?"

Answer: "Not just one, but two. One is: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' and the other is: 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' The first passage says that God's kingdom is received

through regeneration in Baptism. The other states that children can receive the kingdom of God and that it is just they that receive it in the right way, and if that way is to be born again it also becomes clear that children really can be born again. And it becomes equally clear that we all received the kingdom of God when we were baptized as children."

3. ON THIS ROCK.

This is the story of Pastor Torvik.

At Upsala he had been drawn into the new theological thinking and had accepted the historical view of the Bible and an independent attitude to the Confessions. But he was interested in liturgical matters.

He became vicar at Ødesjø. The first three Sundays he preached, there were large crowds. Then the crowd dwindled to 30 or 40. Living religion was centered at the mission house at Svedjefallet and also at Sørbygden.

At a funeral Pastor Torvik had presented "the legend" of the Virgin Birth. And consequently he was not regarded with confidence at that place.

He considered going back to school to become a teacher. He realized that his Christianity was not right. He applied to himself the passage: "Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting."

A Christian woman from Sørbygden called at the house one day. She showed him that he hammered on the law and did not present the Gospel. His message had been: "Be pure, truthful, loving." She pointed

out to him that we should indeed live that way, not to be saved thereby, but because we are already saved. We shall look at Jesus instead of at self. And no one is ever saved by his conversion, but only by the death and resurrection of Christ.

An older pastor said to Pastor Torvik: "When will they learn at Upsala not to send out people as shepherds until they have learned the ABC's of Christianity?"

"Do you read the Catechism? We are not to go by feeling or conscience, but by God's Word. You should underline in your Bible everything that tells what Christ has done for us. The Word is Christianity's self-evident foundation.

"As regards the historical view of the Bible we ask: What is that? It can be pure rationalism. Then everything in the Bible becomes relative and uncertain. The authority of the Bible is then rejected. But we must have faith in the Bible as the voice of God. I say to you, young pastor: Do not come as the remarkable Gøsta Torvik, but come rather as the humble servant of God's Word at Ødesjø."

Christianity clings to the Word to the end of the ages. Otherwise it ceases to be Christianity.

The rocky hill of Golgotha is the most holy place in the world. We shall stand upon the Rock of the Atonement. There the curse is lifted and we can stand as children of God. Conscience is a weathercock, but the Word is the solid rock. The modern faith is headed for catastrophe. The foundation must be the old and unshakable one.

-- Adolph M. Harstad

Striving for Ministry, Warren A. Quanbeck, Eugene L. Fevold, Gerhard E. Frost, and Paul G. Sonnack, eds. Minneapolis: Augsburg. 1977, 200 pp. \$4.95

Since the Evangelical Lutheran Synod correctly sees itself as the continuation of the old pre-1917 Norwegian Synod, its members should be interested in any materials that are related to the 1917 merger of Norwegian-Americans. But not too much has been said in our literature about the 1917 merger and the results of it. This book offers one an opportunity to look back.

Luther Seminary of the American Lutheran Church recently celebrated its centennial. This volume of 200 pages contains a series of essays on how Luther Seminary views its history and itself today. Readers of this journal are aware that Luther Seminary was the seminary of the old Norwegian Synod. That seminary has been merged with other seminaries and passed through several church bodies since 1917.

In a sense, there is a certain nostalgia about the old Norwegian Synod. Gerhard O. Forde describes it thus: "The concern for objectivity and theological truth gave a decisive cast to the life of the Old Synod parish. . . . The truth was something to be taught and learned, not a vague experience . . . But there was also joy, the joy of living in the light of the truth of what God had done through the Gospel. But that joy was a kind of calm confidence, not a quixotic emotionalism. . . . The only emotions which were genuinely sanctioned were the serious sorrow of repentance for sin (noticeable especially at Holy Communion!) and the joy of praise to God for his gracious acts." (pp. 77-78)

But the various writers also point out that this Gospel objectivity was blended with many other trends at Luther. There was the subjectivism of the Hauge's Synod. There was the latitude of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, which included, incidentally, F. A. Schmidt, the great foe of C.F.W. Walther on conversion and election. There was the Lutheran Free Church later, with its extreme pietism. One has the feeling in reading this book that the writers feel that all of these trends and emphases blended together into a kind of Hegelian synthesis for the better. Actually the old Norwegian Synod lost in the merger. This can be pointed out in several ways in this book. When the Hauge's Synod went into the merger, its looser position on church fellowship and its very low church views on liturgics were specifically recognized. (p. 52) But nothing is said about the reservations of the Austin Agreement; nothing could be, for the agreement had no official standing. Herman A. Preus, who taught at Luther Seminary and who reflected the theology of the old Norwegian Synod in his teaching, seems to be seen as a kind of an anachronism. (pp. 136-139) Finally, the old synod's strong stand on Scripture also has given way to the historical-critical method. (pp. 137,153) This approach is also reflected in the names of a number of men who have in recent years taught at Luther Seminary or are now teaching there.

The book contains much interesting material, judgments of men and issues, and history. One must remember that much has also been left out. But it certainly reflects the problem of a seminary trying to serve a merger which has brought together diverse theologies.

-- Glenn E. Reichwald

SCRIPTURE IS STILL SCRIPTURE

Some years ago, in the throes of the Lutheran controversy over biblical authority, I wrote: "Whenever we reach the point of affirming on the one hand that the Bible is infallible or inerrant and admitting on the other hand to internal contradictions or factual inaccuracies within it, we not only make a farce of language, promoting ambiguity, confusion, and perhaps even deception in the church; more reprehensible than even these things, we in fact deny the plenary inspiration and authority of Scripture, regardless of the theological formulae we may insist on retaining."

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy derives from the attitude of Scripture toward itself, and in particular the attitude of Christ toward Scripture. What we must recognize is that Scripture and its Christ do not give us an open concept of inspiration that we can fill in as the extrabiblical methodologies of our time appear to dictate. To the contrary, the total trust that Jesus and the apostles displayed toward Scripture entails a precise and controlled hermeneutic. They subordinated the opinions and traditions of their day to Scripture; so must we. They did not regard Scripture as erroneous or self-contradictory; neither can we. They took its miracles and prophecies as literal fact; so must we. They regarded Scripture not as the product of editors and redactors but as stemming from Moses, David, and other immediately inspired writers; we must follow their lead. They believed that the events recorded in the Bible happened as real history; we can do no less.

-- John Warwick Montgomery, in CHRISTIANITY TODAY, July 29, 1977, p. 40f.