

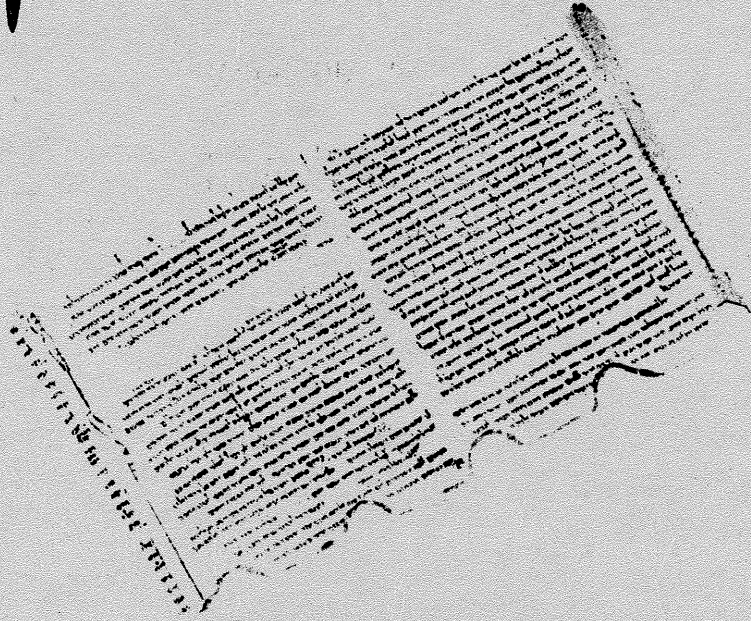


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FOREWORD

In this issue of the Quarterly we conclude a series of articles entitled OUT OF HER PAST; authored by Pastor Adolph Harstad of Madison, Wisconsin. This article will be of special interest to those who are familiar with the history of the merger negotiations among the three Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies which were consummated in the merger of these three churches in 1917 on the basis of a union document known as Opgjor. This new church body was known as the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. This concluding article tells how even a strong minority which had been testifying so valiantly for the truth capitulated and went along with the merger. However, a remnant refused to enter the merger and reorganized the following year. This new church body is our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We are indeed grateful to Pastor Harstad for supplying us with these articles.

Also included is a continuation of the dissertation of A Lutheran Understanding of the Will and Providence of God which began in the last December issue and is authored by Dr. Ernest Bartels. The chapters deal with God's Will in the life of His people. With mud slides, flooding, and other catastrophies so prominent in the news these days our readers will be especially interested in the chapter on The Will and Providence of God in Calamities, Massive Events, Nature, Length of Life, Etc.

In the September issue we hope to include a section on Homiletics, which we trust will be of interest and help to our pastors.

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O U T O F H E R P A S T

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Story of the Austin Settlement and What Came of It 1916 - 1917

At the special convention of the Norwegian Synod, May 18 - 24, 1916, the so-called Minority declared that they could not enter into the proposed union of the three church bodies, namely the Norwegian Synod, the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, and the Hauge Synod, unless three changes were made in the Opgjor, the document on the basis of which the union was to be consummated. These changes were the following:

1. Paragraph 1 must be eliminated. The objectionable part of this paragraph was the fact that it committed the Synod to an unreserved acceptance of the Second Form of the doctrine of Election which is that of Election in View of Faith. This is the teaching which the United Church insisted upon, making faith a cause of man's election. It was also accepted by the United Church in a synergistic sense, namely that man can cooperate in his conversion, and this, in turn, results in a denial of salvation by grace alone.
2. The reference in Paragraph 3 to the Formula of Concord, Article XI, must be extended so as to read Paragraphs 1 - 20 instead of just 10 - 20 according to the Norwegian edition of the Book of Concord.

3. In Paragraph 4, the words "acceptance of" must be eliminated. The matter that was at stake here was the fact that the Opgjor placed the acceptance and rejection of God's grace on the same plane, whereas, according to Scripture, the acceptance of grace comes from God, while the rejection of grace comes from man.

It was the understanding of the Minority at the 1916 convention that they were willing to suffer on account of their conviction whatever might come, if they did not get these changes made.

The chief spokesmen for the Minority were Dr. C. K. Preus, the president of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and Rev. I. B. Torrison, the pastor of First Lutheran Church in Decorah. These two men published an article in the Minority paper, Retledning og Forsvar (Guidance and Defense), No. 7, pp. 97-103, November 1, 1916. In this article they say that they had recently had a meeting with Dr. J. N. Kildahl and Prof. L. Boe, both of them from the United Church. These men had been so kind as to come to Decorah to meet with them. The meeting had been quite informal and private and was arranged in order to see if something could be done so that the Minority could go into the union and a split be avoided. The plan or proposal of Dr. Kildahl and Prof. Boe was that the Minority could set forth its exception or reservation for a settlement and the church bodies could consent to them as exceptions. To this Dr. Preus and Rev. Torrison had replied that they could not do this. On the contrary, they stated that Opgjor had to be changed. The men from the United Church replied that this could not be done; it was impossible.

However, before the meeting ended the four of them agreed that the Minority could have its own

settlement with the others and in this settlement the mentioned changes could be set forth. So Dr. Preus and Rev. Torrison went to work on this. They stated that the change that they were making in Paragraph 4 was a little different from that which had been proposed at first. The word "responsibility" would be stricken, and "duty" and "blame" would be substituted, so that the sentence would read: "Sense of duty in relation to the acceptance of grace and blame for the rejection of grace." They had conferred about this with the three theological professors - Ylvisaker, Brandt, and Hove - and these had endorsed same. (How these seasoned theologians could come to this agreement is strange in the eyes of the writer of this article, for this statement is really saying that the natural man has a "sense of duty in relation to the acceptance of grace," which means that after all he is not dead in trespasses and sins, but has a sense of duty in this matter - in the Norwegian it reads "feeling of duty." But Ephesians 4:19 says of the natural man that he is "past feeling.") So Dr. Preus and Rev. Torrison sent the following communication to the three presidents of the conferring bodies:

"To the Union Committee:

"Prompted by various persons and different sources, the undersigned take the liberty of presenting the following request to the Union Committee:

"There are three points in the 'Agreement' (Madison Agreement), adopted by the annual meetings of the United Church, Hauge's Synod and the Norwegian Synod which the minority of the (Norwegian) Synod find that they cannot conscientiously accept.

"Hoping that deep distress, concern, and great confusion may be avoided and that we

may join in the union, as we sincerely would like to do, and hoping that we still by the grace of God may succeed in joining you in the promotion of the cause of the church, we propose to you the question, if it will not be possible for the three bodies to adopt as a settlement with us one in which these three points which cause us distress of conscience may be either omitted or altered, namely, that Section 1 of the 'Agreement' be omitted; that in Section 3, the 'O' in the reference be deleted, so that the reference will read:

"'Article XI, 1-20" instead of 'Article XI, 10-20' and that the concluding part of Section 4 be altered, so as to read: 'or on the other hand weaken man's sense of duty in relation to the acceptance of grace and blame for the rejection of grace,' instead of 'or on the other hand weaken man's sense of responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of grace.'

"If the Union Committee could recommend this to the respective bodies, we are in hopes that they will vote for it.

"If this request is granted or this proposal approved, it is our intention to join in the union, contribute toward its consummation, and do what lies in our power to induce as many as possible to join in the union and labor that it may become a blessing for our Lutheran Church. The agreement by and between us would then read as follows:

"'1. Since both the conferring bodies acknowledge that Article XI of the Formula of Concord presents the pure and correct doctrine of the election of the children of God unto salvation as taught in the Word of God and the confessions of the Lutheran Church, it is deemed unnecessary for church unity to set up new and more elaborate theses on this article of faith.

"2. However, since it is well known that in presenting the doctrine of election, two doctrinal forms have been used, both of which have acquired general acceptance and recognition within the orthodox Lutheran Church, some on the one hand, in accordance with the Formula of Concord, embracing under the doctrine of election the salvation of elect from the call to the glorification (Formula Concord, Article XI, 1-20) and teach an election "unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." while others on the other hand, with Pontoppidan, in agreement with Johan Gerhardt, Scriver and other recognized teachers of the church define election rather as the decree concerning the final glorification, with the faith and preservation wrought by the Holy Spirit as its necessary presupposition and teach that "God has appointed all those to eternal salvation who He from eternity has foreseen would accept the offered grace, believe in Christ and remain constant in this faith unto the end." Since neither one of these two forms of doctrine, thus presented, contradicts any doctrine revealed in the Word of God but allows the order of salvation as presented in the Word of God and the Confessions of the church full recognition, we find that the holding of either doctrine should not be considered schismatic nor disturb that unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace which God wills should prevail among us.

"3. Since, however, in the controversy over this question among us, there have appeared words and expressions, justly or unjustly attributed to the respective parties, which have seemed to the opposite party to be a denial or to lead to a denial of the Confessions, we have agreed to reject all errors

which seek to explain away the mystery of election (Formula of Concord, Part II, Art. XI, 39-44), either in a synergizing or Calvinizing manner. In other words we reject any doctrine which on the one hand would deprive God of His glory as only Savior or on the other hand weaken man's sense of duty in relation to the acceptance of grace and blame for the rejection of grace.

"4. On the one hand we reject:

"a) The doctrine that the cause of our election is not solely the mercy of God and the holy merit of Christ, but that there also in us is a cause on account of which God has elected us to eternal life.

"b) The doctrine that in election God has been determined by, has taken cognizance of, or has been prompted by the favorable attitude or action on the part of man or anything which man is or does or omits to do as "of himself or by his own natural powers."

"c) The doctrine that the faith in Christ which is inseparably connected with election is in whole or in part a product of or depends upon man's own choice, power or ability (see Formula of Concord, Part II, Art. II: 45-47 and 64-85).

"d) Or that faith is the result of an ability and power imparted by the call of grace, which therefore now dwell within and belong to the regenerate heart, enabling it to make a decision for grace.

"5. On the other hand we reject:

"a) The doctrine that God in election acts arbitrarily and unmotivated so that He points out and counts a certain arbitrary number of any individuals whomsoever and appoints them to conversion and salvation to the exclusion of all others.

"b) The doctrine that there are two kinds

of saving will in God, one revealed in Scripture in the general order of salvation and one that is different from the former and unknown to us, which concerns only the elect and brings to them a more cordial love, a more powerful call from God and greater grace than to those who remain in their unbelief and unsaved condition.

"'c) The doctrine that when the resistance, which God in conversion removes from those who are saved, is not removed from those who are finally lost, the cause for this different result lies in God and the different will to save embodied in His election.

"'d) The doctrine that the believer can and shall have an absolute assurance of his election and salvation instead of an assurance of faith, drawn from the promises of God, connected with fear and trembling and with the possibility for falling, which, however, by the grace of God he believes shall be not realized in his case.

"'e) In brief, all opinions and doctrines about election which directly or indirectly would conflict with the order of salvation and would not give to all a full and equally great opportunity to be saved, or which in any way would do violence to the Word of God, which says: God "would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," in which gracious and merciful will of God all election to eternal life has its source.'

"Decorah, Iowa,
October 4, 1916."

"C. K. Preus
"I. B. Torrison

From No. 1 above to the end, the document is simply the Opgjor with the three changes made. Since Paragraph 1 of the original Opgjor is omitted, Paragraph 2 of the original becomes No. 1 here,

and the numbering of the remaining paragraphs lags the original by one respectively.

The two Minority men were quite sure that their settlement or confession was right and that it was sufficient as a foundation between them and the others. They received a telegram from Dr. Stub containing a summons that they should be present at the meeting of the Union Committee in Minneapolis on the 10th of October. They went to the meeting and were kindly received. But they were told that the Committee could not go along with the plan. They had consulted an attorney in these matters and he had declared that it would not do. However, the Union Committee took time to deliberate with Preus and Torrison the whole afternoon session.

The Committee had also nominated a sub-committee - Prof. Wee, Pastor Tangjerd, and Pastor I. D. Ylvisaker - to deal with them. The meeting with this sub-committee took place that same evening. It was stated that the Minority could make certain reservations and thus enter into the union without a settlement. This was not acceptable to Preus and Torrison. So they went home without having accomplished their mission. They were very much disappointed that the Committee had not accepted the offer made to them.

After returning home the two men received the following communication:

The Joint Committee reports to its respective annual conventions as follows:

To the annual meeting!

1. From Prof. C. K. Preus and Pastor I. B. Torrison the Union Committee has received the following communication

(Here follows the communication of Preus and Torrison as reported above.)

2. The Union Committee expresses its joy and thanks to God and to the above mentioned men for the brotherly spirit manifested in the above cited communication and for the desire therein expressed to participate in the union of the three conferring bodies and cooperate in the realization of the objectives of the proposed merger.

3. The Union Committee, however, considers itself, for certain reasons, unable to accede to the procedure proposed in the aforementioned document, viz., a separate agreement by and between the three conferring bodies and a group of men and congregations belonging to one of these bodies, chiefly because it would involve misunderstandings, difficulties, and tensions, for it is not possible to base the merger on two dissimilar agreements, of which the later one would necessarily displace the earlier one and become effective in its stead.

4. But as far as the essential points raised are concerned, the Union Committee will nevertheless yield to the aforementioned request by recommending to the annual meetings of the respective bodies the adoption of the following resolution:

"While the annual meeting reaffirms its position on the unaltered 'Agreement' as basis for the merger of the three conferring bodies, it expressly takes cognizance of the three reservations concerning Sections 1, 3, and 4 in the 'Agreement' as stated in the request of Prof. C. K. Preus and the Rev. I. B. Torrison; nevertheless the annual meeting hereby invites that group of men and congregations whose views

are expressed in the above cited request to participate in the formation of the new body with full equality and mutual brotherly recognition.

Minneapolis, Minnesota
October 12, 1916

"M. O. Wee
"I. D. Ylvisaker
"Peder Tangjerd
Secretaries

The reaction of Preus and Torrison was that they were thankful that the committee had taken their communication under consideration. But this resolution that the Committee adopted was not acceptable to them in this form because it did not appear clearly enough that the Committee acceded to them "in substance." But they still had hope. The Union Committee now elected a new sub-committee to deal with Preus and Torrison. This time it was Dr. Kildahl, Prof. Wee, and Pastor Jordahl.

The things reported thus far have been gleaned from the article of Dr. Preus and Rev. Torrison in the Minority paper, Retledning og Forsvar, referred to above. At this point in their presentation of the matter the two men write:

What the good Lord may bring out of this we do not know. We think that we should be able to find one form or another which both parties could acknowledge as a basis for unity, common faith, and common work.

Among our friends there may be those who think that we should not have engaged in this, that we subject ourselves to temptation and endanger our cause, that we have begged sufficiently so as to avoid division, that we should have sought the approval of the Minority and obtained signatures to our communication. (In this last matter,

Dr. Kildahl and Prof. Wee had advised them against getting signatures because it then could be interpreted as agitation on their part and would hinder the consideration of their cause in the Union Committee.--A.M.H.)

When we see what now follows, we must say that the judgment of friends was indeed right - that they were subjecting themselves to temptation and endangering their cause. In the story that follows it is evident that Preus and Torrison did go along with a settlement of the matter in almost the identical manner in which they had had courage to reject the offer the first time it was made. It is wrong to attempt to come to terms with error, as these men were trying to do. They had been told that Opgjor would not, and could not be changed. That should have settled it. But Preus and Torrison met with the new sub-committee that had been elected by the Joint Union Committee. The meeting was held at Austin, Minnesota. At this meeting the reply of the Union Committee was altered somewhat. This was later adopted by the Union Committee and a "Note" was added to it. So the answer Preus and Torrison received from the Union Committee reads as follows:

The Union Committee assembled in Minneapolis from the 5th to 7th of December, 1916, on the basis of negotiations which have already taken place, adopted the following revised reply to the previously received request:

I. Unaltered.

II. Unaltered.

III. The Union Committee, however, considers itself, for certain reasons, unable to accede to the procedure proposed in the aforementioned document, viz., a separate agreement by and between the three conferring bodies and a group of men and congregations belonging to one of

these bodies, chiefly because it would involve misunderstandings and difficulties.

IV. But as far as the essential points raised are concerned, the Union Committee will nevertheless yield to the aforementioned request by recommending to the annual meetings of the respective bodies for adoption the following resolution:

"The annual meeting expressly takes cognizance of the three reservations concerning Section 1, 3, and 4 in the 'Agreement' as stated in the request of Prof. C. K. Preus and the Rev. I. B. Torrison and declares that there is nothing in the aforementioned request which is contrary to Scripture and the Confessions, and that we regard the position taken in that document as a sufficient expression of unity in faith. Therefore that group of men and congregations whose position is stated in the above cited request are invited to become members of the new body with full equality and mutual brotherly recognition.

"Note. It is obvious that the above cited resolution must not be construed to mean that 'Agreement' as a basis for the union of the three contracting bodies thereby has been abridged or altered."

The altered form of the Opgjor is called the Austin Agreement or the Austin Settlement and the reply of the union Committee, together with the Note, is called The Invitation. In discussing the history of the Austin Settlement on the floor of the 1917 Synod convention, Dr. C. K. Preus said:

At this meeting in Austin we agreed on that which has since been accepted by the Union Committee and sent to us in the form of an invitation to be along, we and they who share

our position. A note was added by the committee which nevertheless does not alter the contents of the invitation.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the Note added to the Invitation effectively nullifies the concessions seemingly granted in the Austin Settlement. It all turned out in the end to be basically the same as the previous invitation which Preus and Torrison had rejected

After Christmas, 1916, Preus and Torrison went to St. Louis in order to confer with Professors F. Pieper, W.H.T. Dau, and Theodore Graebner at Concordia Seminary concerning the Austin Settlement. After that meeting the advice given them was put into writing under date of January 9, 1917. The author of the letter was Dr. Pieper, but it was signed also by the other two professors. It was written in German, but we here give a portion of the letter in translation as follows:

... In the matter which was the subject of our discussion, the point at issue was not whether the minority ought to make first entrance into a situation as now pending in the Norwegian Synod - this we should advise no one to do - but the point at issue was whether the minority should be under constraint to leave the Norwegian Synod now for reasons of conscience, or whether matters were still in such a state that it is your duty to continue to bear witness to the truth....

Therefore, we hold that the time has not yet arrived for an immediate severance of connections with the Norwegian Synod, but that your duty lies in the direction of securing, with God's help, free recognition

for the truth in the Norwegian Synod, by bearing witness to the same.

(Quoted from A City Set on a Hill, pp. 65-66)

A meeting of the Minority was held at West Hotel in Minneapolis on January 17 and 18, 1917. The number of those present has been given by some as just over 100. Prof. Theo. Aaberg, in A City Set on a Hill, gives the number as 150 - 200 pastors and members. The purpose was to decide what the Minority now should do in view of the Austin Settlement and the Invitation to the Minority to enter into the merger. There was much discussion. But the result was that a majority of those present adopted a carefully worded resolution accepting the invitation extended by the Joint Committee on Union. The resolution reads as follows:

The joint committee of the three negotiating churches has in accordance with an agreement between the subcommittee of the joint committee and Prof. C. K. Preus and Rev. I. B. Torrison resolved to recommend to the respective annual meetings a resolution to extend an invitation to those men and congregations who share the views of said persons to join the union.

The invitation acknowledges the attitude of the minority, since it does not find therein anything to contradict Scripture or the Confessions, but regards it as an adequate expression for unity of faith, and gives the expression, "responsibility over against the acceptance or rejection of grace" a satisfactory explanation.

It is self-evident that the note attached to the invitation does not alter or contradict its contents.

The minority hereby accepts said invitation, beseeching God to guide this move that it may be a blessing to His church.

(This is found in the Norwegian language in Synodical Report, 1917, p. 150, and in English translation in A City Set on a Hill, p. 66.)

Rev. J. E. Thoen in his article on The Austin Agreement, Luth. Sentinel 1925, pp. 282, 283 discusses this matter as follows:

It was evidently the sense of the meeting that this resolution was to be one of the documents constituting the agreement upon which the minority agreed to enter the union. A committee consisting of Prof. Preus, Rev. Torrison and Hon. L. S. Swenson was elected to present this resolution to the joint committee. It seems that Prof. Preus and Rev. Torrison were hindered from being present at the delivery of the resolution, and it was presented by Mr. Swenson. In the report of the joint committee to the annual meetings of the churches we find the following concerning this matter: "A writing from Prof. C. K. Preus and Rev. I. B. Torrison was brought to the union committee by Mr. Ex-Minister L. S. Swenson on the 23rd of January, 1917. Mr. Ex-Minister L. S. Swenson, as the third member of the committee, elected by the so-called minority, read the writing and declared that this writing was not an addition to the invitation of the union committee, that it was not to be submitted to the annual meetings of the three churches; that it was not to be published and that its object was merely to report that the minority, under the supposition that the annual meetings approve the invitation of the union committee, accepts it, as it was tendered, beseeching God to guide this move that it may be a blessing

to His church." (Report of the United Church meeting, pp. 465-466.)

If Mr. Swenson is quoted correctly in this report, it is our conviction that he did not state the intention of the minority in his report. He had no right to present this resolution as a mere news item to be thrown into the waste basket of the committee after it had been heard. Great pains were taken in deciding upon the wording of this resolution, and the wording of it is evidence that it was not intended as merely a news item. If the other members of the committee authorized him to report as he did, their insistence on the careful wording of the resolution was mere play.

The fact remains, however, that according to the official records, which now are historical documents, the intention of the minority was totally frustrated. The editor of the report of the annual meeting of the United Church had added a foot-note to Mr. Swenson's report, explaining why the "acceptance" of resolution of the minority accepting the invitation to join the union, should not be submitted to the annual meetings, made a part of the documents of agreement, or even published. The foot-note reads thus: "The said writing contained namely an expression - 'the invitation acknowledges the attitude of the minority' - which did not appear in the invitation of the union committee." (Report of Annual Meeting of the United Church, 1917, p. 466.)

This is the reason. It was not the intention of the union committee to recommend to the annual meetings to acknowledge the view of the minority at all. The resolution inviting the minority to join must not be taken in that sense. The union committee very zealously guarded against such an understanding. The

minority was allowed to hold their peculiar view of the "invitation," but it must not appear that the union committee or the annual meetings acknowledge this view. The "invitation" or resolution recommended to the meetings for adoption was the only thing voted on and adopted by the meetings. The "Austin Agreement" is not on record as something the three churches have accepted as a statement of their doctrine or as a part of the confessions of the merger, or the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.

At the convention of the Synod previous to the merging of the three church bodies in 1917, there were members of the Minority who spoke against the resolution which the Joint Union Committee proposed for adoption by the respective annual meetings, namely the invitation to the Minority to join the merger. They were the following: Pastors O. T. Lee, Holden Olsen, B. Harstad, and J. A. Moldstad. The last named made a motion, seconded by Rev. Lee, to strike the Note appended to the invitation:

It is self-evident that the above stated resolution must not be interpreted to mean that "Opgjor" as the basis for union between the three contracting churches is thereby abbreviated or changed.

This motion was voted down. The resolution of the union committee was adopted, but there were eighteen who voted against it.

Dr. C. K. Preus then spoke, mentioning that there indeed still were expressions that were wrong and needed to be corrected; nevertheless, he said that the Minority accepted the invitation.

Thereafter the assembly arose and sang the hymn: "Praise to Thee and adoration," and the chairman voiced a prayer of thanksgiving. (Report of 1917 Convention, pages 148-150.)

The Committee of the Synodical Conference that was to meet with the Synod previous to the Merger came to St. Paul to fulfill its mission. They were not given the opportunity to do so. However, they did meet with a little group of Minority men in the Aberdeen Hotel in St. Paul. These were the ones who still stood by the declaration of the Minority in 1916. The Synodical Conference Committee, however, departed from St. Paul previous to the last session of the Synod.

The little group in the Aberdeen Hotel was left alone to deliberate on the question of what to do in the future. The following declaration was unanimously agreed upon:

1. We cannot for conscience's sake join the new church body on the present basis.
2. We continue to stand on the old confession and organization which we as Christians have the liberty to defend and under which we may work from now on as heretofore.

In the month of June in the year 1918 the Norwegian Synod of the American Ev. Lutheran Synod was organized at Lime Creek Church, Lake Mills, Iowa. This is now our Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

--- Adolph M. Harstad
Madison, Wisconsin

A LUTHERAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WILL AND
PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN HUMAN LIFE*

Chapter 4

GOD'S WILL REGARDING SALVATION OF PEOPLE

God created Adam and Eve to live to His glory. It was His holy will that they be perfect in all they thought, desired, said, and did. Thus they, the parents of the whole human race, would bring honor and praise to His Name. In their perfect state God gave them a commission, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). God's intention was that Adam and Eve and their descendants would live for Him, and in communion with Him.

Today the vast majority of mankind no longer lives to God's glory, but most of humanity is estranged from Him. It is, however, still His will that people be in harmony and communion with Him, and glorify His Name.

Our first parents were created perfect. Before the Fall they were all that God intended them to be. God had made them in His own image. The Genesis account says, "God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Because they bore God's image, they were not only righteous and holy, but the image of God

*Continued from Volume XXII, No. 4, December 1982

in them also consisted in the right disposition of their intellect and will, in their knowledge of God and the will to do only God's will.¹ Pieper states "God created man in the divine image. . . .that one of His creatures would know Him, live in conformity with His will, and in communion with Him enjoy bliss."² Adam and Eve lived in harmony with God before they fell into sin (Gen. 3: 8. 9).

The fall into sin shattered the relationship between them and God. They lost the image of God.³ Instead of being pure, righteous, and holy, they were now sinners. They had become lost and condemned creatures.

In Genesis 5:3 we are told that Adam "became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image." Koehler remarks that "Adam's children no longer had the perfect image of God, but the sinful image of their father."⁴ Sinful depravity became a universal human condition.

But it was the will of God that Adam and Eve and those who would follow them, would once again be able to live to His glory. Although all descendants of Adam would be born in sin, He wanted people to be acceptable to Him in His holiness. Therefore He, Himself, took the initiative and provided the solution to the human problem of sin. It was on the evening of the day that the first sin was committed that God announced His eternal plan whereby sin could be forgiven and people would once again be enabled to live for the holy purposes for which they had been made. It is contained in the words he spoke to the serpent "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Paul E. Kretzmann says concerning this verse:

What was a curse for the serpent and the devil . . . was a glorious, comforting promise for fallen mankind, the first great Gospel proclamation. . . . Christ the promised Seed of the woman, born of the descendants of Eve, and yet the almighty God, is the strong Champion of mankind, who has delivered all men from the power of Satan and his mighty allies.⁵

This promise was repeatedly given to the people of the Old Testament era. The prophesies were expanded. Details of His life and work were given by God through His spokesmen. Then "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gen. 4: 4.5).

To effect the redemption of humanity, Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life as the substitute for all. The Catechism says that He "fulfilled the law in my stead perfectly."⁶ Speaking of His righteousness as humanity's substitute, the Apostle Paul wrote:

as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:18.19).

Anders Nygren comments "We who 'in Adam,' and because of his disobedience, came to stand as sinners, have now 'in Christ,' and because of His obedience, come to stand before God as righteous."⁷

Jesus Christ not only lived perfectly in mankind's stead, but He gave Himself as a sacrifice

on the cross of Calvary to pay in full the price and the penalty for all human sin. The Bible is replete with passages which carry this truth. Among the many Scripture verses conveying this saving message are: "Christ died for our sins" (I Cor. 15: 3), and "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1: 7b). Luther has summarized the Biblical teaching beautifully in his explanation of the second article of the Apostle's Creed:

I believe that Jesus Christ. . . .has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.⁸

On the third day after His death, He victoriously rose from the tomb. Paul says He was "raised for our justification" (Rom. 4: 25). As He rose all who believe on Him "shall rise to eternal life."⁹ Jesus, Himself, said "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11: 25.26).

According to the gracious will of God His Son lived, died and rose again to overcome sin, death and the devil for all people. He secured the forgiveness of sins for all. Through Him people are enabled to live to the glory of God, already here and now. He has made possible eternal salvation for all people. The grace bestowed through Him is universal grace.¹⁰ John wrote, "If any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"

(I John 2: 1.2). The best known of all the words of Jesus make clear that the grace of God offered in Him is universal in nature. He said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16). Pieper states that "The grace and favor of God in Christ toward all men is described in Scripture. . . .as the will of God."¹¹ Koehler says "This good and gracious will of God is made known to use in the Gospel."¹²

Not only has God made provision for the salvation of all people, but it is His will that all be saved, and that none be lost.¹³ He wishes all people to be beneficiaries of His universal grace in Jesus Christ.

A clear Scripture passage on this point is I Timothy 2: 4. In this verse we read that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The word translated "desires" is a form of the Greek verb thelo.¹⁴ Commenting on this verse, Koehler writes "There is no person living on earth whom God does not want to draw to Christ by the Gospel."¹⁵ Also regarding this Scripture, Gottfried Thomasius said "God's saving will is universal, it embraces all men."¹⁶ R. D. H. Lenski states that "The truth that God wants all men to be saved is to be corroborated by the fact that Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all'. . . .and that God provides the efficacious means of grace and salvation for all."¹⁷

Another Bible verse frequently cited by Lutherans regarding the desire of God to save all people is II Peter 3: 9b where God is described "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."¹⁸ In this verse the

Greek verb for "wishing" is boulomai.¹⁹ In his New Testament commentary Lenski translated as follows, "not intending that some perish, but that all have room for repentance."²⁰ Kretzmann writes of God, "He wants all men to turn to Him in true repentance and faith; He wants them all to accept His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ the Savior."²¹

An Old Testament text which carries the same thought is Ezekiel 33: 11, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Even though God clearly wishes to save all people, all people will not be saved. Many will be lost. Jesus said, "the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7: 13,14). Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior will be saved. Those who do not believe in Him will be damned, will be lost. The words of Jesus leave no doubt. He stated, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16: 16).

If it is God's will that all be saved, and if not all will be saved, then will God's will ultimately be frustrated in this matter? Hutter would answer with a "yes," for in discussing these matters he said, "The will of God is not always done or fulfilled."²² Pieper would agree, for he writes:

Scripture definitely teaches 'that God intends what is never accomplished.' Scripture teaches that God intends to save the world through

Christ (John 3: 17) and that nevertheless God's purpose is not accomplished in a part of mankind" (John 3: 18).²³

He refers to John 3: 17. 18. These verses read as follows:

God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

If on the basis of these verses we ask, "What is God's will as to saving and damning people?" we must answer in two ways. The answer from verse 17 is that God desires to condemn no one, but to save all people, without exception, by faith in Christ. After that we may, on the basis of verse 18, think of God as willing to condemn those who refuse to believe in Him.²⁴

In this matter Lutheran dogmaticians distinguish between what they call "the first and second will of God."²⁵ The first will they term the antecedent will of God, and the second they refer to as the consequent will of God.²⁶ Hollaz called the first will God's "general" will, and he spoke of the second will as God's "special" will.²⁷ Gerhard called the antecedent will "the will of mercy," and the consequent "the will of justice."²⁸ These designations were not something which originated with Lutherans. The church father Crysostom spoke of a "first will, according to which God wills that the sinners should not be lost, and of a . . . second will, according to which God wills the ultimate damnation of those who persist in their sins."²⁹

While Lutherans speak of the first (antecedent, general, mercy) will of God, and of the second (consequent, special, justice) will of God, they are extremely careful to stress that God has only one will. Gerhard writes that "this division. . . .distinguishes not the will by itself, which in God is one and undivided just as the essence also is one, but its twofold relation."³⁰ He says the antecedent will has to do with the means of salvation being offered to all by God, and the consequent will has to do with them being accepted or rejected by men.³¹ He quotes Scripture to substantiate his point, including Matthew 23: 37; Mark 16: 15; Luke 24: 37; and II Corinthians 5: 19. Quenstedt stated, "The antecedent respects the giving, and the consequent, the receiving of salvation on the part of man. The former is universal, the latter particular."³²

Pieper said that

when we distinguish between the first and second will of God, we do not mean to say that there is in God a temporal succession of thoughts and two separate wills. But God in His unchangeable eternity and in His absolute simplicity is God in His majesty, far beyond human understanding.³³

Our conceptions are bound by time and space. God wishes to be known to us. Hollaz wrote that the will of God is said to be antecedent and consequent "not in regard to time. . . .neither with regard to divine will itself". . . .but "from the order of our reason."³⁴ Pieper stated that God "steps out of His unapproachable majesty, and in His Word has become man, speaking to us in a human manner, so that we can understand it."³⁵ Luther wrote that God "does not deal with us in His majesty, but. . . .speaks with us without majesty. . . .lays aside the form of God."³⁶

The will of God to save all men must not be called an absolute will, but an ordinate will. Mueller says that this is because "it is based upon Christ's vicarious obedience and on God's part embraces the conferring means (the Word and the Sacraments) and, on the part of man, the receiving means, faith."³⁷ This divine will of grace can only be called an absolute will in the sense that it is independent of all human merit or worthiness.³⁸

A question which has plagued and divided Christian theologians is "If God willed to save all people, and if Christ gave Himself for all--why are some saved and not others?" Lutherans give a limited answer. They say that those who are saved are saved by grace alone, and that those who are lost are lost entirely by their own fault.³⁹ A brief summary of the Lutheran position is given by Koehler

Whatever may be the cause and reasons why a man does not come to Christ or believe in Him, they all lie within him and not in GodIfhe is converted and saved, he may not claim the least credit for himself, for it was God and God alone, who redeemed him, turned him to Christ, and kept him in the faith.⁴⁰

When the writer of this paper was a student in a teenage confirmation class, the pastor who was teaching the class had the young people write on the margin of a page in the catechism, "If I am saved it is entirely God's fault. If I am lost it is entirely my own fault." On what approach to Scripture do Lutherans base this answer?

The only way in which a person becomes, and remains, a believer in Jesus Christ is by the operation of God, the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ The Spirit

works through means of grace, the Word of God and the sacraments.⁴² Luther wrote

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.⁴³

Andrew C. Voight said of conversion that

Viewed from the divine side, it is the act of Holy Spirit by which He brings the sinner to faith in Christ; viewed from the human side, it is the act of the sinner under the operation of the grace of the Holy Spirit, turning to Christ in faith.⁴⁴

Following are some of the Scripture passages adduced to support this position along with selected Lutheran comments. The words of Paul in I Corinthians 12: 3b are "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." Lenski writes "In this preliminary fundamental statement Paul is speaking about all believers. . . .we Christians have the Holy Spirit. Whoever confesses Jesus is 'Lord' has the Holy Spirit in his heart."⁴⁵ To the Romans, Paul said "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15: 13). Lenski comments that God is the "source" of hope, joy, peace and believing. He further states "the power of the Holy Spirit is the means, the Spirit is the Mediator through whose efficacious power of grace all is wrought in us."⁴⁶ To Nicodemus, Jesus said "unless one is born of. . . .the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, and that which is born

of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3: 5.6). Of this verse, Lenski says "Only God's Spirit produces a spiritual birth, a new nature and life."⁴⁷ In Jeremiah 31: 18b K.J.V. repentant Ephriam prays "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord, my God." Theodore Laetsch remarks regarding this verse "All efforts of the sinner to convert himself are in vain, and all efforts of the converted child of God to remain a Christian by his own efforts are useless. It is God who must turn the sinner from sin and Satan to God."⁴⁸

On the other hand, there are Bible verses which plainly lay the blame for not accepting Jesus Christ on the individual who does not believe. Following are some examples with comments by Lutheran exegetes. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not" (Matt. 23: 27). Koehler says "It is a sad fact that not all men are saved. Why? They would not come when Christ called them."⁴⁹ Stephen, who was stoned for his confession, said "You stiff necked people, uncircumcised in hearts and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7: 51). Kretzmann writes that Stephen brought the charge "that they were always, continually resisting the Holy Ghost, literally throwing themselves in His way against Him, thus shutting off the working of His grace in their hearts."⁵⁰ He further says "The Holy Ghost wanted to convert the enemies of Christ, He was giving them every evidence of His gracious will toward them by having the Gospel preached before them for such a long time; but they deliberately, wilfully refused to listen to His call."⁵¹ Speaking for God, Hosea declared to Israel "thou hast destroyed thyself" (Hos. 13: 9 K.J.V.). Laetsch comments "Opposition to God, faithless

rejection of His Word, is running headlong into destruction. O Israel! Salvation is completely Mine, destruction is thine."⁵² Two parables of Jesus are also adduced to support the position that the lost are lost entirely by their own fault. They are the parables of the guest refusing to accept the invitation (Luke 14: 16-24) and the invited guests refusing to come (Matt. 22: 1-10).

On the basis of these Scriptures the Missouri Synod catechism asks "Why, then, are not all men saved?" The answer given is "Because many in unbelief stubbornly refuse the Word and the Spirit of God and are thus lost by their own fault."⁵³ J. C. Dietrich says briefly "This. . . .is due to their own fault, to their impenitance and unbelief."⁵⁴ Voight wrote "Since God's grace does not work irresistably, man can by his natural power resist the grace of God and thus prevent his conversion."⁵⁵ Walter H. Wentz wrote "God's grace in conversion is resistable."⁵⁶ Some Lutherans of the old Ohio and Iowa Synods made a distinction between natural resistance and willful resistance. They held that God could not overcome the latter and spoke of a psychological mystery in man.⁵⁷

At this point a difficulty presents itself in our way of thinking. Koehler reasons

Whereas all men are equally incompetent to convert themselves and equally unworthy to be converted; and whereas God alone converts man and earnestly would have all men to be saved: it would seem to follow that either all who hear the Gospel, or none of them would actually be converted, that God either succeed with all or none.⁵⁸

Where is the reason for different results to be found? Christians, whom some Lutherans refer

to as Synergists, explain the different results by a difference in men. Other Christians who follow the thought of John Calvin explain the difference in results by a difference in the will and intention of God.⁵⁹ Koehler writes "The Bible denies that there is a difference in the spiritual attitude of men toward God, or in the good and gracious will of God toward men. Human reason cannot solve the difficulty."⁶⁰ Pieper says that

Scripture does not answer this question and forbids us to seek the answer. Scripture tells us that the saved are saved sola gratia, that the lost are lost sola culpa, and that beyond this point the 'unsearchable judgments' of God rule (Rom. 11:35). Scripture asks us to answer the puzzling question with. . . . the answer is beyond us.⁶¹

Wente maintains that "The perplexing problem, 'Why, then, are not all saved?' is one which human reason cannot solve."⁶² He says that

human reason is not a source of divine truth. The Christian is bound to Scripture as the only source and rule of faith, and Scripture does not give the answer to the question, 'Why some rather than others?' Scripture. . . does not explain why of two sinners who are in the same guilt the one is saved and the other not.⁶³

In connection with this subject Lutherans sometimes speak of the revealed and hidden will of God.⁶⁴

But what about predestination, or election to salvation? Some Christians teach that God has willed, or elected some to be saved, and willed, or chosen others to be damned. On this question

the Lutherans do not attempt to understand the ways of God's will, but limit themselves strictly to what the Bible says. What the Bible infers they do not assume, but they leave unanswered. In this connection the Formula of Concord cautions

Neither should we attempt to investigate the secret concealed abyss of divine predestination, but should give heed to the revealed will of God. For He has made known unto us the mystery of His will, and made it manifest through Christ that it might be preached.⁶⁵

The writers of the Formula cite the words of Paul to the Ephesians "For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him" (Eph. 1: 9,10). They also make reference to II Timothy 1: 9ff.

The Lutheran position on predestination is summarized in a confessional statement in the catechism

I firmly believe that as God has in time called me by the Gospel, enlightened, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith, even so He has from eternity chosen me unto the adoption of children and unto life everlasting, and no man shall pluck me out of His hand.⁶⁶

Supportive Scripture for this statement is Paul's declaration to the Ephesians where he says that God chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world. . . .He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:45). Also Romans 8: 29,30

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined

to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born of many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."

The surety of election is based on such Bible verses as Jesus "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (John 10: 28). Other important passages are Acts 13: 48 and II Timothy 1: 9.⁶⁷ The Formula of Concord states "The predestination or eternal election of God. . . . extends only over the godly, beloved children of God, being a cause of their salvation, which He also provides, as well as disposes what belongs thereto."⁶⁸ Dietrich wrote that "It is not unconditional, but is so fixed, according to a certain order, so as to embrace all the causes and means of our salvation."⁶⁹

There was a bitter controversy regarding predestination in the Lutheran Church in America in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It had long term consequences, was destructive of unity, and resulted in a serious break in fellowship. It had to do with God's reason for electing individuals to salvation. What motivated God to choose people to be saved?

Two strong factions in the church, the Missouri Synod and the Ohio Synod, held opposing views. Both claimed to represent the position of the Scriptures and the historic Lutheran Confessions. Lutherans of other Synods were, in the main, aligned with either Ohio or Missouri--the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods with Missouri, and the Iowa Synod and the Norwegians with Ohio.

The Missouri Synod position was developed and delineated by its leader, C.F.W. Walther. John Tietjen writes of Walther that he

was anxious to ascribe all honor for salvation to God alone and insisted that nothing in man was responsible for salvation. He therefore emphasized God's decree of election and distinguished it from the doctrine of salvation through Christ. He taught that those who are converted receive a richer measure of grace than the regular grace bestowed on all men.⁷⁰

The Ohio Synod charged that the Missouri Synod's position was an unscriptural and Calvinistic view of election.⁷¹

The Ohio Synod, originally through the influence of F. A. Schmidt, emphasized the decree of salvation, not election. Schmidt had said that election to salvation was not by an unknown, hidden decree, but only through Christ and the plan of salvation revealed in Him. He held that election is inseparable from salvation, that God's decree of election is none other than the universal counsel of grace revealed in the Gospel.⁷² Election is not immediate. It comes through grace accepted by faith. God elects "in view of faith."⁷³ He used the phrase intuitu fidei, declaring that God elects "in view of" His foreknowledge that He would work grace and faith in a person.⁷⁴ Missouri's Walther called Schmidt a Synergist, meaning one who believed that something in man is responsible, at least in part, for conversion.⁷⁵

Apparently both sides wish to maintain that salvation is totally the work of grace, and not of man, not even his willingness to believe.

Both also wished to assert that damnation is totally the fault of man, and in no way the result of a divine decree of damnation. Wilfried Joist of Germany has observed that

The Missouri faction was in danger of over-emphasizing the former of these two truths to such an extent that man's faith response was robbed of its nature as an act of will and acceptance. The other side was in danger of misinterpreting this response as a cause why God should offer His grace to man.⁷⁶

An impasse between Ohio and Missouri was reached in the matter. In a convention in 1881, the Missouri Synod adopted a resolution which stated that it would be unionism for the Synod to continue fellowship with those who did not accept the Synod's position on election.⁷⁷ At a subsequent convention of the Ohio Synod a similar resolution was adopted, declaring a break in fellowship with Missouri.⁷⁸ It was not until 1969 that fellowship was resumed between Missouri and Ohio. The Ohio Synod, by that time, had become part of the American Lutheran Church. Pulpit and altar fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church became a reality at the Denver convention of the Missouri Synod in July of 1969.⁷⁹

The controversy on election, as such, was never brought to a definite conclusion. It is one of the best demonstrations of the paradoxical character of the doctrine of predestination. Joist says "human logic is not equal to solving this problem, and when consistently applied only leads into grave errors, either on the left or on the right."⁸⁰ Fred Kramer writes

Holy Scripture does not solve the discrepancy which exists in the human mind between the doctrine of universal grace and the doctrines of election and salvation by grace alone. . . .23 are here confronted with a mystery for the solution of which we must await the light of eternity.⁸¹

Chapter 5

GOD'S WILL REGARDING SANCTIFICATION OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE

It is the will of God that Christian people live holy lives. Christian holiness is a gradual process which begins with conversion. It is the continuing work of God in the believing individuals.

When referring to making people holy, the Bible often uses the words sanctify and sanctification. Sanctify means to make holy.¹ The gradual process of developing such holiness is sanctification. The words are used in both a wider and a narrower sense.

Roger L. Sommer says that

in its wider sense the term sanctification includes all these effects of God's word produced in the heart and life of man beginning with his rebirth from spiritual death to spiritual life and culminating in spiritual perfection in life eternal.²

When the words sanctify and sanctification are used in this way, they include the call received by the individual, his conversion and regeneration, illumination and justification, and the renewing

of God's image in him.³ The word sanctify is used in this broad sense in Ephesians 5: 25b-27

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Other Bible verses in which these words occur in the wider sense are Acts 26: 28; II Thessalonians 2: 13; Hebrews 10: 14; and I Peter 1: 2.

Hoever, the word sanctification is generally used in a narrower sense in the Scriptures. Sommer writes that in the narrower sense it

expresses the work of God in the heart of one who is already a Christian, whom God is now leading step by step in the renewing of the image of God. . . .in righteousness of life in thought, word, and deed, in holiness of conduct, in emotions, in prayers, in devotions, and in charity toward everyone.⁴

When used in this way it refers to the spiritual growth which follows faith.

It is God's will that such spiritual growth take place in the life of the Christians. Using the word in the narrow sense, the Apostle Paul said, "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (I Thess. 4: 3). Commenting on this verse Lenski wrote that what God wills "is the condition of the Thessalonians in which they are wholly set apart for God and are separated in life and conduct from the world which is not thus set apart and does not even know God."⁵ Kretzmann says, "It is God's will that the Christians should grow

in sanctification, that they should flee from sin more and more, that they should consecrate themselves to Him, that they should walk in newness of life."⁶ Herman Gockel has written "Christianity is not only a way of faith, it is also a way of life."⁷

To the Corinthians Paul declared, "He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (II Cor. 5: 15). The love of Christ, which He manifested on the cross, is the motivating force and power in the heart of the Christian.⁸ The brief Scripture statement is "the love of Christ controls us" (II Cor. 5: 14a). The sanctified life is a life completely dedicated to God through faith in Christ. Martin Luther said, "If anyone would rap at the door of my heart and ask, 'Who lives here?' I would answer 'Martin Luther once lived here. But Martin Luther has moved out, and Jesus Christ has moved in!'"⁹ After his conversion on the Damascus road, Paul's first words were, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9: 6 K.J.V.). He gave his whole life to God, to be used for God's purposes. He told the Galatians, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2: 20). He urged the Christians at Rome, "Give yourselves to God, as men who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes" (Rom. 6: 13b T.E.V.).

Gockel says, "Servants of God serve God's purpose."¹⁰ Mueller writes that, "Scripture describes true Christians as regenerate persons who consecrate themselves entirely to the holy grateful service of God in Christ Jesus."¹¹ In the explanation of the second article of the Apostle's Creed,

Luther states. "I believe that Jesus Christ. . . . has redeemed me. . . .that I may. . . . serve Him."¹² Elsewhere Luther makes the statement, "Where there are true Christians, they give themselves and all they have to serve Christ and His own."¹³ J. E. Hermann expresses it this way

In. . . .completely giving our lives in love and gratitude to Him who gave His life for us God would fulfill His purpose for our lives. . . .In giving our lives completely into His riven hands God uses us to build His beautiful and everlasting kingdom among men.¹⁴

God wills the total dedication and consecration of the life of the Christian to Himself. The Christian's entire person and being is involved. This involves in the words of Luther, "my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses."¹⁵

In Romans 12: 1, Paul specifically speaks of the surrender of the body of the Christian to God's will and purposes, saying "I appeal to youbrethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship." Lenski says, "Our body is the organ for our actions, and when we present that to God it means that all our actions together with their instruments are to be directed solely by him."¹⁶ Matthias Loy writes, "The body is the material organism through which our inner life finds expression."¹⁷ He also says, "The body. . . .must be brought into the service of God; that our words and works. . . . may execute His will."¹⁸

The Bible has much to say about the body of the believer being used in response to God. Paul asked

the Corinthians, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?" (I Cor. 6: 19). He then exhorts them "glorify God in your body" (I Cor. 6: 20). Simon P. Long preached, "Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost and it is your duty to keep that body holy, to keep that body acceptable unto God, and to render a living sacrifice."¹⁹ Henry Sieck told his congregation, "render unto God the service of your whole body."²⁰

Scripture speaks in a variety of ways, often with reference to various parts of the body, urging God's people to use their bodies to His glory and service. Some such passages are Proverbs 23: 26; Ecclesiastes 5: 1; and Ephesians 4: 28, 29.

W. C. Birkner makes the observation that it is God's

expectation that we treat our body as a precious gift, guarding it against abuse, supplying it with the necessary food, rest, and relaxation in order that our physical strength and the skills which our hands develop may be placed in His service.²¹

Helge Brattgard of Sweden writes, "We must live a healthy physical life. The body must not be ruined or weakened through our own fault. It must rather be kept in the best condition. . . .for the sake of service."²²

This surrender and dedication of the Christian life to God not only involves his body, but also his mental attitudes and abilities. Mental abilities are gifts from God. Birkner writes, "God gives us our reasoning ability; we are created to think, to comprehend, to remember."²³ He says that a good Christian "will train his mental faculties

to the degree that God gives him opportunity. He will observe and read and study to improve himself."²⁴

Regarding the mind Paul urged the Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12: 2). J. B. Phillips renders the verse in this meaningful way

Don't let the world around you squeeze into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity" (Rom. 12: 2 Phillips).

Brattgard says that the Christian

receives a Christian insight 'which can grow' even stronger with time. . . .he receives the ability to decide, in a variety of situations, what is right, what the will of God is. This refers. . . .to. . . .'the renewal of the mind,' which expresses itself in moral judgments. . . .the ability to 'decide what is most correct' is. . . .an important element in sanctification, and for this reason we ought to pray more and more for 'knowledge and all discernment.'²⁵

Otto A. Geiseman wrote

God says not only: 'Don't conform yourselves to the world,' but also 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' God wants you as His sons and daughters to have a totally different outlook on life. Your whole sense of values should be different.²⁶

Sieck says that "we Christians should show to the children of this world that we are being actuated by. . . the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God."²⁷

According to Birkner

Our thinking apparatus is to be used to meditate on the eternal mysteries of God's love in Christ, to appreciate ever more deeply the gracious providence of God, to ponder on the methods and the possibility of stretching forth the curtains of the habitations of God, and thus to carry out, in a measure at least, the injunction of our Lord, to be about our Father's business.²⁸

Long treated body and mind together and said, "Your mind must be transformed and become like the mind of Christ, and then your body will be used to work harmoniously with your mind."²⁹ Loy wrote that such a renewal of mind "must have taken place before you could present your bodies as a sacrifice wholly and acceptable to God."³⁰ God wills that the surrender and dedication of the Christian be complete. Robert W. Helberg says, "Sacrificial service demands that we realize and agree fully that God wants all of us, not just a little part. It demands that we consent freely to this concept of total surrender."³¹

Even though the dedicated life is His will for His people, God knows that they cannot achieve this kind of life by their own power or strength. God supplies to the Christian both the will and the enabling power through His Holy Spirit.³² To the Philippians Paul wrote, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1: 6 K.J.V.). Luke points out that even the disciples of Jesus could not

carry out their tasks until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 3ff). In Philip-
pians 2: 13 Paul wrote, "God is at work in you,
both to will and to work for his good pleasure."
Sommer says, "God must make the unwilling will-
ing."³³ Loy writes that "He is constantly carry-
ing on his sanctifying work in the hearts of be-
lievers that they. . . .may abound more and more
in the work to which they are called as servants
of the living God."³⁴ Hermann says, "The new
life is sustained in the Christian through the
Holy Spirit."³⁵

Every week in their worship liturgy Lutherans
sing the words of Psalm 51 "Create in me a clean
heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within
me."³⁶ The Formula of Concord states that "the
truly believing are verily moved by God's spirit,
and thus, according to the inner man, do God's
will."³⁷ Gustav Wingren writes "in the Holy Spirit
one loves one's neighbor, purposes his well-being
and bears his burdens. . . .when regeneration has
taken place. . . .God is present, creative, and
effective within man through the Holy Spirit."³⁸
Hollaz wrote that in the justified man the Holy
Spirit produces "internal and external affections
conformed to the divine will. . . .that he may
live piously, soberly, and justly to the glory of
God."³⁹ In a sermon, Harlan Hartner said, "The
Christian is different. The Holy Spirit changes
his attitudes and ideals. God's standards are
now his standards; God's will, his will."⁴⁰

Lutherans believe that the Spirit works through
the "means of grace," the Word of God, and the
Sacraments.⁴¹

The Word of God is a sanctifying means. Jesus
prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth, they word is
truth" (John 17: 17). In answer to the question,

"How can a young man keep his way pure?" the author of Psalm 119 writes, "By guarding it according to thy word" (Ps. 119: 9). Other Bible verses presenting the Word of God as a means to sanctification are Psalm 19: 7. 8; Psalm 119: 72. 88. 99. 100. 105. 130; II Timothy 3: 16, 17; and I Peter 2: 2. Sommer writes, "To hear God's Word, to read it, study it, is not merely our duty, but we need to do it that God may have opportunity to work in us, work out our sanctification, through His Word."⁴²

Regarding the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Koehler says, "The Lord's Supper. . . .increases our love toward God and toward our neighbor, so that we make greater efforts in leading a God-pleasing life. . . .the Sacrament helps us lead a godly life."⁴³ In his Small Catechism, Luther asks, "How can such bodily eating and drinking do such great things? The answer given is, "It is not the eating and drinking indeed that does them, but the words. . . .'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.'"⁴⁴ Sommer says, "Even in the Sacraments, it is the Word of God, it is the Gospel, which produced the fruit of the Spirit."⁴⁵

As the Spirit works in the lives of Christians, through the means, fruit is produced. Paul lists such fruit in Galatians 5: 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Paul uses the singular word fruit in this passage. Lenski says, "Fruit is. . . .a singular although it is a collective."⁴⁶ J. P. Koehler speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as

the growth of the new life which forms a unit as one life of the Spirit. It cannot but produce many glorious inner fruits,

which do not have to be produced by many individual commandments. They are fruits of life which self-evidently are revealed outwardly, too."⁴⁷

Kretzmann says that the virtues listed as the fruit of the Spirit "agree fully with the Law of God, they are in accordance with His holy will."⁴⁸ The Formula of Concord says

When man is. . . led by the Spirit of Christ he lives according to the immutable will of God comprised in the Law, and so far as he is born anew, does everything from a free, cheerful spirit; and these are called not properly works of the Law, but works and fruits of the Spirit."⁴⁹

While properly speaking the fruit of the Spirit manifested in the lives of Christian people are not called "works of the Law," the Law of God still performs a useful and salutary purpose in the lives of the regenerated. Koehler writes that Christians

inasmuch as they are regenerated, are not slaves of the Law in the sense that they keep it because they are forced to do so . . . they . . . earnestly desire to please their dear Father in heaven, they delight to do His will.⁵⁰

Such Christians need only to be shown what God would have them to do. They learn this from the Law.⁵¹ Their attitude is that of the Psalmist David, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart (Ps. 40: 8). Aulen' writes that the Law of God becomes "real and meaningful to men through the Spirit as He introduces man into the continuous, creative activity of God."⁵² Mattson says

Christian ethics finds its basis in the will of God, and it looks upon the law as the expression of the will of God. . . .the law, as an expression of God's will, is not only something negative, but also something positive. . . .The will of God and the law of God is a unity.⁵³

Mueller briefly states "the divine Law" is "the immutable will of God."⁵⁴

Lutherans distinguish three uses of the Law. The Catechism says that the Law: 1) checks to some extent the coarse outbursts of sin and thereby keeps order in the world (a curb); 2) shows us our sins (a mirror); and 3) teaches us Christians what works we must do to lead a God-pleasing life (a rule).⁵⁵ It is the third use which has special application in the sanctifying of Christian people.⁵⁶ Writing for children Erwin Kurth says

The Law is a guide-line. In the Dakotas, where the blizzards rage, the farmers have a guide-line stretching from the house to the barn. It shows them where to walk. So the Law. In baseball, rule books are used. The Law is the Christian's rule book. . . .To please God we don't have to put peas in our shoes, or torture our bodies, or go into a monastery, as Luther did at one time, but rather to keep the commandments.⁵⁷

Walter Geihlsler wrote, "From the Law of the Holy God as revealed in the Scriptures, the child of God must learn day by day to know and understand more thoroughly the will of the heavenly father."⁵⁸

The will of God for human life and conduct is summarized in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments.

In the words of the Formula of Concord "the Holy Ghost employs the Law to teach the regenerate from it, and to point out and show them in the Ten Commandments what is the good and acceptable will of God."⁵⁹ Luther wrote that "we have in the Ten Commandments, a compend of divine doctrine, as to what we are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God."⁶⁰ He says that "outside the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God."⁶¹ Cord Cordes says that "Christians need to be reminded of the Law of God as set forth in the Ten Commandments."⁶²

Lutherans distinguish two tables in God's law as revealed in the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments (according to the numbering system followed by Lutherans and Roman Catholics) pertain to the Christian's relationship to God.⁶³ The motivation for endeavoring to keep these commandments is love to God. They see in the Scripture words, quoted by Jesus, a summary of the first three commandments. The Catechism asks "What is the summary of the First Table of the Law? (Commandments 1 - 3) 'Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.'"⁶⁴ Commandments four through ten cover relationship between people. Likewise, love is seen as the motivating force. The Catechism similarly asks, "What is the summary of the Second Table? (Commandments 4 - 10) 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"⁶⁵ Mattson says, "The sum and substance of the law is love, and the law finds its unity in love."⁶⁶ St. Paul said to the Romans, "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13: 10b). Koehler comments "Because we love God and our neighbor, we should do what the commandments require of us."⁶⁷

In the first commandment God requires "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me."⁶⁸ Luther says

that this means, "We should fear and love and trust in God above all things."⁶⁹ Jesus said, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matt. 4: 10). Idol worship is explicitly forbidden in Isaiah 42: 8 where God says, "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to graven images." Lutherans believe that God not only condemns actual idol worship but they teach that people have other gods when they fear, love or trust in any other person or thing as they should fear, love and trust in God alone.⁷⁰ Passages adduced in support of this include Psalm 14: 1; Proverbs 3: 5; Matthew 10: 28. 37; Mark 10: 24; Ephesians 5: 5; and Philippians 3: 19. Kurth says that this is the most important commandment, and therefore it stands at the beginning. Out of the fear and love of God, the fulfillment of all other commandments should flow.⁷¹

God is concerned about the use of His name. The second commandment reads, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain."⁷² When He gave this commandment, God said, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" (Ex. 20: 7). In connection with this commandment, Lutherans teach that we should "not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie or deceive by His name."⁷³ Supportive Scriptures include Leviticus 19: 12. 31; 24: 15; Deuteronomy 12: 22; 18: 10 - 12; Jeremiah 23: 31; Matthew 5: 33 - 37; 7: 21; 15: 8. 9; and James 3: 9. 10. Swearing in weighty matters is not considered to be wrong.⁷⁴ This is based on such verses as Deuteronomy 6: 13; Matthew 26: 63. 64; II Corinthians 1: 23; and Hebrews 6: 16. Regarding the proper use of God's name, Luther says "we should call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks."⁷⁵ Key passages are Psalm 50: 15; 103: 1; 118: 1; and Matthew 7: 7.

It is God's will that His people take time to worship Him. The commandment, as printed in the Catechism, is "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Thou shalt sanctify the holy day)."⁷⁶ Lutherans do not believe that God requires Christians of the New Testament era to observe the Sabbath (Saturday) and other holy days of the Old Testament. A principal supportive passage is Colossians 2: 16. 17, "Let no one pass judgement on you in question of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Mattson says

The Sabbath commandment has a ceremonial side as well as a moral side. . . . Paul includes the Sabbath commandment among those features of the law which have fallen away with the coming of Christ. . . . The Christian observance of Sunday is not a transfer of the Old Testament Sabbath observance.⁷⁷

In his explanation of the commandment, Luther says nothing of the day, but simply says, "We should so fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."⁷⁸ A verse which Lutherans stress for New Testament Christians is "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10: 25).

John Daniel writes that "the family, husband, and wife, parents and children" are "a unit formed by God Himself, the basic unit of society."⁷⁹ Two commandments fundamentally have to do with matters of the family. These are the fourth and sixth commandments.

The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is used by Lutherans to treat God's

will in so far as marriage and relations between the sexes are concerned.⁸⁰ Lutherans view marriage as God's institution.⁸¹ They hold that it is the life-long union of one man and one woman unto one flesh.⁸² Jesus said, "they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19: 6). The Catechism says, "God forbids the breaking of the marriage vow by unfaithfulness or desertion. He permits the innocent party to procure a divorce when the other party is guilty of fornication."⁸³ In matters of sex, God forbids all unchaste and unclean thoughts, desires, words, and deeds.⁸⁴ Honosexual behavior is considered to be in violation of God's will.⁸⁵ Luther says that we should "lead a chaste and decent life and each love and honor his spouse."⁸⁶ Some significant passages in connection with matters of the sixth commandment are Matthew 5: 28; 15: 19; 19: 9; I Corinthians 6: 18; Ephesians 4: 29; 5: 3. 4. 12; Philippians 4: 8; I Timothy 2: 22; Hebrews 13: 4; and I Peter 2: 11.

The fourth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth," speaks of God's will in parent-child relationship. To children Paul says, "obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Col. 3: 20). To parents, God's Word is "do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col. 3: 21). Luther wrote, "We should fear and love God that we may not despise our parents. . . .nor provoke them to anger, but give them honor, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem."⁸⁷ Kurth says that Christian parents will "attend to the physical needs of their children. . . .train their minds. . . .help them acquire social graces. . . . bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."⁸⁸

In the fifth commandment God reveals His will in regard to human life and well being. The basic statement is "Thou shalt not kill."⁸⁹ Lutherans teach that God forbids us to take the life of a fellow man (murder) or our own life (suicide).⁹⁰ Euthanasia and abortion are considered to be murder."⁹¹ God wants us to "help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need" and to "be merciful, kind, and forgiving."⁹² Supportive passages are Matthew 5: 7. 9. 25; 6: 15; Romans 12: 20; and Ephesians 4: 32. He does not wish us "to hurt or harm our neighbor in his bodyto do or say anything which may destroy, shorten, or embitter his life. . . .to bear hatred and anger in our hearts."⁹³ Important Bible verses are Matthew 5: 22; 15: 19; Romans 12: 19; Ephesians 4: 26; and I John 3: 15.

God's will in the area of property rights has its Decalogue summary in the seventh commandment "Thou shalt not steal."⁹⁴ God expects us to respect the property rights of others. All forms of stealing are forbidden by God. These include robbery, theft, fraud, and cheating.⁹⁵ Key Scriptures are Leviticus 19: 35; Psalm 27: 31; Jeremiah 22: 13; and Ephesians 4: 28. In a positive way it is the will of God that we "help our neighbor to improve and protect his property and business."⁹⁶ This is illustrated by Exodus 23: 4, "If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him."

It is the will of God that when we speak about other people we should, in the words of the Catechism,

defend our neighbor. . . .take his part and shield him against false accusations. . . . speak well of our neighbor. . . .praise his good qualities and deeds so far as it can be

done in keeping with the truth. . . .put the best construction on everything. . . .cover up his faults and explain in his favor what can be so explained.⁹⁷

This is in harmony with such passages as Proverbs 31: 8. 9; I Corinthians 13: 7; and I Peter 4: 8. On the other hand, it is counter to the will of God when people "deceitfully belie, betray, slander," or "defame" the neighbor.⁹⁸ God does not wish His people to make untrue statements about others in court (Prov. 19: 5). He does not want them to lie about their neighbors, or lie to him, or withhold the truth from him (Prov. 19: 5) (Eph. 4: 25) (80: 75). They are not to reveal secrets (Prov. 11: 3).

In the civil realm God has established the orders of government and authority. Koehler says, "It is the will of God that there should be government among men, anarchy is contrary to His will."⁹⁹ To the Romans, Paul wrote "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those who exist have been created by God" (Rom. 13: 1). Governments may levy taxes in accordance with God's will. In the same paragraph Paul writes, "you should also pay taxes, for the authorities are the ministers of God, attending to this very thing" (Rom. 13: 6). This concurs with the words of Jesus, "Render. . . .to Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matt. 22: 21a). Paul's summary remarks include "Pay all of them their dues. . . . respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13: 7). God permits the state the right to inflict the death penalty and to wage just wars (Rom. 13: 4). In a trial in court, or when a person becomes a citizen, or is inducted into military service, or makes a declaration of his

taxable property, the government has a right to demand an oath. Christians should obey (Matt. 26: 63. 64) (Rom. 13: 1). In their writings Lutherans treat matters of government under the second, fourth, fifth, and eighth commandments.¹⁰⁰

God wants His people to watch the desires of their hearts. In two commandments He says "Thou shalt not covet."¹⁰¹ Koehler says "Lest we think that an outward compliance with the letter of the Law is sufficient, God in the last two commandments points particularly to the heart, and demands that our hearts be holy and free of every evil lust."¹⁰² To covet means to lust. We should not covet things that are forbidden to us, as Eve lusted the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3: 3 - 6). Paul told the Corinthians that they should "not lust after evil things" (I Cor. 10: 6 K.J.V.).

Martin Luther wrote that God "promises grace and every blessing to all who keep the commandments. Therefore we should also love and trust in Him and willingly do according to His commandments."¹⁰³

When Christians thus do the will of God, they are doing good works. According to the Formula of Concord "it is God's will and express command that believers should do good works."¹⁰⁴ Paul told the Ephesians that they were "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2: 10). What is a good work? Mueller says "every thought, desire, word, and deed which a believer does through faith in Christ Jesus."¹⁰⁵ Hollaz defined good works as the "internal affections of the heart and the movements of the will" which flow from faith.¹⁰⁶ Quenstedt defined a good work as "that which God commands, and which is done with the disposition, manner, and purpose for which it has been commanded."¹⁰⁷ The writers of the Catechism spell it out explicitly and say that "a good work is everything that a child

of God does, speaks or thinks in faith according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God, for the benefit of his neighbor."¹⁰⁸ Only Christians can do works pleasing to God.¹⁰⁹ The Bible says "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11: 6a). Jesus said "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15: 5b). The Formula writers say

the person must first be accepted of God, and that for the sake of Christ alone, if also the works of the person are to please Himit is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, just as impossible as it is for heat and light to be separated.¹¹⁰

God expects Christians to produce good works. This is not something optional. The Formula of Concord says "It is false. . . .when it is asserted and taught as though good works were free to the believer in the sense that it were optional with them to do or to omit them."¹¹¹ In his Epistle, James wrote, "What does it profit. . . .if a man says he has faith but has no works? Can his faith save him?. . . .faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2: 14. 17). Pieter Boendermaker remarks, "James demands good works as the necessary expression of a living faith."¹¹² Likewise, Adolph Koeberle says, "Living faith cannot exist without good works. A faith without works is vain and false."¹¹³ Speaking positively Kurth says, "Good works flow out of faith as naturally as flowers and fruit proceed out of a tree, or water out of a spring."¹¹⁴ Mueller writes that "The performance of good works is the real objective of the Christian's life on earth."¹¹⁵

As part of the life of faith, God expects Christians to practice good stewardship of all He has entrusted to them.¹¹⁶

This includes the time a Christian has at his disposal. Brattgard wrote "God is the Lord of time."¹¹⁷ Birkner says

It is God who allots us our span of time. In the time He gives us. . . .the stewardship obligations of our heavenly calling must receive first consideration. We simply must find time, take time, to place at the service of God.¹¹⁸

Commenting on Paul's words in Ephesians 5: 16, "Redeem the time because the days are evil." he says that the Apostle encourages you to "make good use of the short time at your disposal; plan to put first things first; arrange your day systematically; give a generous portion of your time to the Lord's work."¹¹⁹

Also included are the talents of the Christian. God's people have received many and diverse gifts, talents, characteristics, and abilities which can be used to God's glory. Paul said to the Romans "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them" (Rom. 12: 6a).

The treasures of the child of God are also included. Material possessions, including money, are a trust from God. Really they all belong to Him. The Psalmist said, "The earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24: 1). From what He has entrusted to them, God wills that His people give to support the work of the church. Speaking of giving, Birkner writes "this is according to the will of God, who could have His kingdom expanded without us but who decided He would draw us into partnership."¹²⁰ God would have Christians give willingly, for the apostle says, "God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9: 7). Giving should be done according to a regular schedule -- the

Corinthians were advised: "upon the first day of the week" (I Cor. 16: 2). It should be done liberally and generously. The scriptural exhortation is that each should give "as God has prospered him" (I Cor. 16: 2b).

God blesses those who practice faithful stewardship. This is the promise of Scripture. Malachi wrote, "Bring the full tithes unto the storehouse. . . .and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing" (Mal. 3: 10). The Bible is replete with such promise passages. Some such Scriptures are I Sam. 2: 30; Prov. 3: 9 & 10; Prov. 11: 25; Prov. 22: 9; I Cor. 9: 6 and Heb. 6: 10.

Hymn No. 400 in the Lutheran Hymnal provides an appropriate prayer response to God's sanctification will. The words of the hymn are as follows:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for Thee. 121

Chapter 6

THE WILL AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN CATASTROPHIES, MASSIVE EVENTS, NATURE, LENGTH OF LIFE, ETC.

Sin is the cause of all catastrophies and calamities in the world. All of God's creation was affected by the sin of man. Paul states that because man sinned "the whole creation was subjected to futility" and "the whole creation has been groaning together in travail until now" (Rom. 8: 20. 22). Lenski says that "this is nothing mysterious but something all Christians know from their own observation."¹ He writes, "multitudinous is the suppressed agonizing of the whole creature world under the distress which man's sin and death have brought upon it. A million things are wrong, and all nature . . . shows it."² Nygren briefly comments "Through man's sin. . .the whole existence in which we are involved stands in bondage to corruption."³

In the pulpit Lutherans have clearly identified sin as the cause of calamities and catastrophies. Samuel J. Roth, Jr. explained it in this way

In God's great plan all the upheavals in nature, all the tragedy of the universe, all the sorrow of God's creatures, ultimately are there because of sin. Sin disrupted the relationship between man and God. It also disrupted the relationship between all of creation and God.

Roth gives specific examples

The wind offers cooling refreshment on a hot day, but it can also develop into tornados that destroy. The rains fall gently on the ground to give food to plants, but they can cause rivers to flood and ravage the countryside as well. The beautiful flakes of snow that make the world so clean and white can also disrupt travel and commerce and cause hardship and suffering.

Robert E. Spannaus told his congregation

When man fell into sin. . . the whole course of nature was changed. The ground brought forth thorns and thistles as well as useful crops and nature's bounty. All created life became subject to strife and death. Nature in the raw often became wild and destructive. The earth itself and its atmosphere became subject to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, extremes of heat and cold, storms and tornadoic force.⁶

Some seventy years ago F. Kuegle said to his rural parishioners, "Barrenness of the soil, poisonous plants, noxious insects, death-dealing miasms and a thousand evils of which the world is full would not be so if man had not sinned."⁷ He further said, "The barren waste, the thorny brier, the crawling serpent, the destroying insect should all remind us of sin."⁸ Loy stated that "only. . . man sinned," but "the curse that came upon him affected all his environment."⁹

Sin not only is the root cause of all that is wrong and disrupted in God's creation, but current sin is identified in Scripture as the reason for current catastrophies and calamities in the realm of nature, and in the experience of God's creatures. An illuminating text in this regard is Hosea 4: 1-3

Hear the word of the Lord, O People of Israel; for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land, there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea are taken away."

In a similar vein the prophet Jeremiah asks, "How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who dwell in it beasts and birds are swept away" (Jer. 12: 4).

Massive happenings affect all kinds of people, both the Godly and the ungodly. They are basically of two kinds. There are those which occur in the realm of nature, such as floods, famines, and earthquakes. Others, such as war, are brought on directly by the actions of men. What are the dynamics involved where calamities and catastrophes occur? Who is in charge? Who ultimately is responsible?

Koehler writes that

God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. He guides the stars on their course, and controls the laws of nature. He makes the seed to germinate, the flowers to bloom, and the fruit to ripen; He sends rain and sunshine, gives seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night (Gen. 8: 22).¹⁰

Not all today would agree with such a statement. Berkouwer reports that

In modern times 'enlightened' human thought grants nature independence from God. Thunder and lightning, rain and clouds, conception and birth, historical events and their consequences -- these are tracked down to their natural causes and endowed by human thought with their own immanent force. They form an independent power, which the Divine activity seems able only to limit and curtail.

He then says, "Not so with Israel and her fear of God."¹¹ It is the position of the Bible that all the forces of nature are controlled by God. Bente writes that "The laws of nature are God's will as to the manner in which He chooses to operate in and through His creatures."¹² In answer to the question, "Is God bound by His own will?" Bente replies, "So long as He chooses and no longer."¹³

The Scriptures ascribe to God absolute control over the elements of nature. In the account of the ten plagues which God visited upon Egypt, this is vividly illustrated in the record of the plague of hail.

The Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt; there was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail. . . .The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt. . . .Only in the land of Goshen where the people of Israel were, there was no hail." (Ex. 9: 23 - 26).

The writer of Psalm 107 says that "He turns rivers into desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste. . . .he turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water" (Ps. 107: 33 -35). He also says

"he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed" (Ps. 107: 29). The Bible is replete with passages declaring God's control. Some such verses are Psalm 65: 7,9; 89: 9; 104: 3ff; 147: 8. 15-18; Jeremiah 5: 24; Matthew 8: 26; and Acts 14: 17.

In Psalms 29, verses 3 - 9, there is an interesting discussion regarding the "voice of the Lord: in the thunder of storms. In the next verse (verse 10) the Psalmist says, "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood." In his commentary, Leupold links this thought to that of the deluge at the time of Noah. He says verse 10 should accurately be translated "The Lord sat enthroned over the Flood." He further remarks that

behind all such elemental forces as the one just described stands the Lord, always in full and perfect control. The most notable instance of His perfect power was the Flood. The word here used (mabbul) refers invariably and exclusively to the great Deluge. When it occurred, never for a moment was it out of control. The vast cataclysmic forces unleashed remained obedient to His will: 'He sat enthroned over the Flood.'¹⁴

Bente states that

Divine providence normally expresses itself in definite laws. . . .God does not exercise His providence by caprice and catastrophe. . . .Neither does He ordinarily resort to catastrophe to execute His will.¹⁵

Then, in reference to the great Flood, he writes

Once. . . .He interrupted the even tenor of His government and swept the earth clean of

all inhabitants except those carried to safety in the Ark of Noah. . . .After the Flood, God covenanted with Noah on behalf of the human race; 'while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease' (Gen. 8: 22).¹⁶

Regarding present day occurrences he writes, "Even catastrophies like tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, eclipses, and other unusual phenomena of nature follow definite laws of cause and effect."¹⁷

In the fourth chapter of the Book of Amos there are strong words about God's powerful control in the realm of nature

I also withheld the rain from you. . . .I would send rain upon another city; one field would be rained upon, and the field on which it did not rain withered. . . .I smote you with blight and mildew; I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards: your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured (Amos 4: 7 - 9).

The Protestant scholar Arthur W. Pink has commented

The mutations of the elements are beneath God's sovereign control. It is God who withholds the rain, and it is God who gives the rain when He wills, and on whom He wills. Weather Bureaus may attempt to give forecasts of the weather but how frequently God mocks their calculations.¹⁸

He makes the summary statement, "Earth and air, fire and water, hail and snow, stormy winds and angry seas, all perform the word of His power and fulfil His sovereign pleasure."¹⁹

God controls and directs according to His own designs and purposes. Another Protestant writer, Alexander Carson, discusses the story about Jesus being in a boat which was overtaken by a storm (Matt. 8: 23 - 27). He asks, "If there is a Providence, might we not expect that, when the Son of God was sailing, the sea should be quiet?"²⁰ He tells the story and then says that

this was a wise Providence. It glorified the Son of God, by giving him an opportunity of manifesting himself as the Lord of the seas and the winds. . . . This Providence was also good for the disciples. It increased their faith in the Son of God.²¹

When Jonah received the call to preach to the people of Ninevah, he boarded a ship to flee the presence of the Lord. "But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest upon the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up" (Jonah 1: 4). The storm was the first step in the recall of Jonah. It was God who caused the lot to fall upon Jonah (verse 7), and when the sailors had cast him into the sea, God provided the great fish which swallowed him (verse 17).

Regarding catastrophies of all kinds, Pieper wrote that

The repeated occurances of great catastrophies such as earthquakes, floods, wars, panics, is viewed by some as denying God's goodness. But these ravages are employed by God in the interest of His saving goodness. They are a call to repentance to all men.²²

His words concur with those of Jesus

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood

Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon the tower of Siloam fell and killed them were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish' (Luke 13: 1 - 5).

During the early days of World War II, Manfred E. Reinke said to his congregation

War is one of God's four sore judgements! After sparing our country from its horrors for more than two years after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, America has also begun to feel the punitive hand of the Almighty. . . .Time and again God warned our country. . . .but His voice, whether He spoke in economic depression or in far-flung dust storms or in devastating earthquakes, was disregarded.²³

He told his people

There are many stern lessons to be learned in the school of war, but if we will not learn these lessons, God still has other means at His disposal to make us listen to His voice and take to heart His warning.²⁴

Reinke's understanding of God using war to accomplish His purposes is Scriptural. The Bible speaks both of God as the originator of wars, and as the One who brings war to an end. The author of Chronicles reports that "the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and

of the Arabs who are near the Ethiopians; and they came up against Judah, and invaded it" (II Chron. 21: 16, 17a). Carson says

In like manner God, in his Providence, in every age stirs up nations to punish those whom his purposes doom to ruin. . . . Even when the dogs of war are let loose, destruction is guided by the finger of Providence.²⁵

Of Babylon God said

I am stirring up the Medes against them. . . . Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children. And Babylon. . . . will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them (Is. 13: 17 - 19).

Similarly, God brings wars to their conclusions. According to Psalm 46, "He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire!" (Ps. 46: 9).

God can let the forces of nature run their course, or He can miraculously change their course. Pieper says

God is above the laws of nature and can disperse with them at will. . . . Strictly speaking, there are no immutably fixed laws of nature. In reality the laws of nature are nothing more than the will of God as applied to the creature.²⁶

God sometimes sees fit to change the course of events, because His people pray. Chemnitz wrote "If necessary God will perform a miracle and break

the laws of nature to answer the prayers of His people and help them in their need."²⁷

Eddie Rickenbacker tells how he and his companions, adrift in the Pacific, prayed for rain. They saw a shower pass by a short distance away. As they kept praying, it turned against the wind and overtook them, providing the water they needed to preserve their lives.²⁸

When the writer of this paper was pastoring three rural churches in Wisconsin, he had an experience which impressed upon him the power which God has invested in prayer in this regard. The churches which the writer served at the time were: St. Peter's Lutheran of Foster (where he lived); St. Paul's of Cleghorn (seven miles northwest of his home); and St. John's of Fall Creek (seven miles northeast of where he lived). Their Sunday worship service times were 9:00 a.m. at Cleghorn, 10:30 a.m. at Foster, and 2:00 p.m. at Fall Creek.

The members of the parish were nearly all farmers. There had been no rain for six weeks during the early summer prime growing season. The area was threatened with drought. Several parishoners approached the writer and asked if he would lead the congregation in prayer for rain on the following Sunday. He consented. On Saturday evening he watched the weather show on television. According to the forecast there was "no rain in sight." Sunday morning he went to St. Paul's and during the service led the worshippers in the following prayer

O God, most merciful Father, we beseech Thee to open the windows of heaven and to send a fruitful rain upon us, to revive the earth,

and to refresh the fruits thereof, for all things droop and wither. Graciously hear our prayer in this our necessity, that we may glorify Thy name forever and ever; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord.
Amen.²⁹

As he drove between St. Paul's and St. Peter's. he listened to the car radio and still the prediction was for continued dry weather--absolutely no rain expected. He led the Foster congregation in the same prayer.

During the noon hour clouds began to appear in the sky. He helped his wife with the dinner dishes, and then carried the garbage out to the trash can in the back yard. As he did this, he noticed that it was beginning to sprinkle. The family got into the car, and they drove to Fall Creek. It continued to sprinkle lightly. During the sermon at St. John's, it began to rain very hard. The morning prayers were being answered! It was raining so much that when prayer time in the service was reached, he omitted to pray the prayer for rain. It continued to rain for three more days. The weather man's explanation was that a low pressure cell in the west had taken a very fast unexpected turn toward west central Wisconsin. The writer knows that the real answer is to be found in God's response to prayer.

When massive happenings occur, God may have a variety of purposes in the same event for various people. Luther wrote that

public calamities hit saints and prophets, too, but not as happens in the case of the godless and ungrateful--out of wrath and to punish them, but for their salvation, to test and to try their faith, love and

patience, that the godly may learn to bear patiently the hand of God in His governmentBut the godless are plagued to punish and to offend them, so that they are hardened and become worse. For they are not improved by the good and are only made worse by the evil. This is why nothing is achieved, whether a joyful or a sorrowful song be sung to them.³⁰

God can miraculously single out and spare individuals when He chooses. A classic Biblical example is that of God and his family when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. Abraham had asked God if He would spare the cities if ten righteous persons were found there. God assured him that he would. When ten were not found, God made special provision for the deliverance of Lot and his family. On the morning of the destruction God's angels urged Lot "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed" (Gne. 18: 20 - 19: 28). Luther says in the Large Catechism "We ought. . . . to remember. . . .whenever we escape from calamity or danger, that it is God who gives and does all these things, that therein we sense and see His paternal heart and His transcendent love toward us."³¹

Accidents, massive happenings, and natural occurrences affect many "innocents." Why? We cannot know. Preus simply reminds us that "God is directly and personally active in everyone's life." He says that "nothing in anyone's life happens by accident."³² Likewise Walther states that "To God nothing is an accident."³³ Koehler writes that "Nothing happens accidentally or by chance in God's government of the world."³⁴ Kurth says that there is "no chance, lawlessness, caprice in my life. All happenings are marshalled under the law of His love."³⁵ The Lutheran Christian sings:

What God ordains is always good;
His will abideth holy.
As He directs my life for me,
I follow meek and lowly.³⁶

Bente says that regarding life itself, the Bible teaches "on one hand. . . the end of each man's life is immutably fixed" and "on the other hand Scripture teaches with equal emphasis that human life can be lengthened."³⁷ The concept that the end of each life is immutably fixed is based on such Scriptures as "his days are determined, and the number of his months is with thee, and thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14: 5). The idea that human life may be lengthened or shortened is also based on clear Biblical statements. An example is the experience of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was sick. God sent the prophet Isaiah to him. Isaiah was to tell him "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shalt not recover." Hezekiah prayed and God said "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold I will add fifteen years to your life" (Is. 38: 1 - 5). Another pertinent passage is Psalm 55: 23 where we read "men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days."

Preus asks "How are the ideas of providence and contingency reconciled in this particular case?"³⁸ Lutherans deal with the matter in several ways.

Friedman Bechman, a seventeenth century theologian, discussed this subject at length. He distinguished between God working through ordinary, general providence, according to general laws and the course of nature, and God working through special, extraordinary providence, apart from secondary causes and the course of nature. According to ordinary providence God sets the limits of man's life according to the contingent circumstances of

the natural realm. This includes the individual's own temperament and secondary causes. God foresees from eternity every person's hereditary characteristics and how each person will be permitted by environment to conduct their life. God, in turn, determines events to occur in accordance with their foreknowledge. At the same time God determines the circumstances and time of an individual's death according to His special and extraordinary providence. God is not bound by secondary causes. He works freely apart from secondary causes and the usual course of nature, lengthening or shortening life according to His grace or judgment. In His wrath He frequently enters into history and shortens the lives of those who do evil. In His grace God sometimes lengthens the lives of His people. He may shorten their lives to spare them the dangers and miseries to which they would be subject.³⁹

John Meyer writes that "God has, in a general way, determined the length of man's life."⁴⁰ His Bible references are Psalm 90: 10 and Psalm 102: 23, 24. He then states "God has also determined the years of each individual."⁴¹ The Scriptural basis for this statement is in such passages as Job 14: 5; Psalm 31: 15; 39: 4, 5; 91: 7; and Acts 17: 26. He says that God has made this individual determination "by giving man a certain constitution, placing him in a certain environment, leading him in a certain career."⁴² He also states that "In pre-determining the end of an individual life, God pays due regard to natural causes, man's conduct, etc." Supporting Scripture includes II Kings 20: 1 - 6; Psalm 5: 7; and Acts 27: 24. On the basis of such Bible verses as Genesis 4: 15 and Luke 2: 26, 29 - 32, Meyer says that "In determining the end of the life God is guided by His love."⁴³

Regarding the belief that the end of each life

is immutably fixed, Bente says that this view "is stated from the point of view of God."⁴⁴ The understanding that lives may be shortened or lengthened is from "the point of view. . . of man."⁴⁵ He remarks that "It is a gracious condescension that God speaks to us concerning the hour of death from the human point of view and directs us to those means which He has ordained for the preservation of life."⁴⁶

Hinrichs says that God "from the viewpoint of human responsibility, changes the natural limit of human life, of both the saint and the ungodly."⁴⁷ He writes that "God may prolong the life of the godly as a reward for obedience."⁴⁸ This statement is supported by I Kings 3: 14; Proverbs 3: 1, 2; 10: 27; and Isaiah 65: 22. He adduces the example of Hezekiah for the statement that "God may extend the life of His saints for the benefit of His kingdom." Agreeing with Bechman, Hinrichs states that "God may shorten the life of the faithful to preserve him from great distress and evil." He bases this on such Scriptures as Job 13: 15; 14: 13; and Isaiah 57: 1. He also writes that "God may shorten the life of the ungodly because of his wickedness."⁴⁹ The Biblical basis is Genesis 37: 8; Psalm 55: 23; and Prov. 10: 27.

After mentioning a number of things which an individual may or may not know about his or her impending death, Carson beautifully says

But this we know, and let it be enough for us to know this, that our death shall be for the glory of God; and that the time, and the manner, and all the circumstances of it, will be arranged by wisdom and love, as well as by Sovereign power."⁵⁰

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