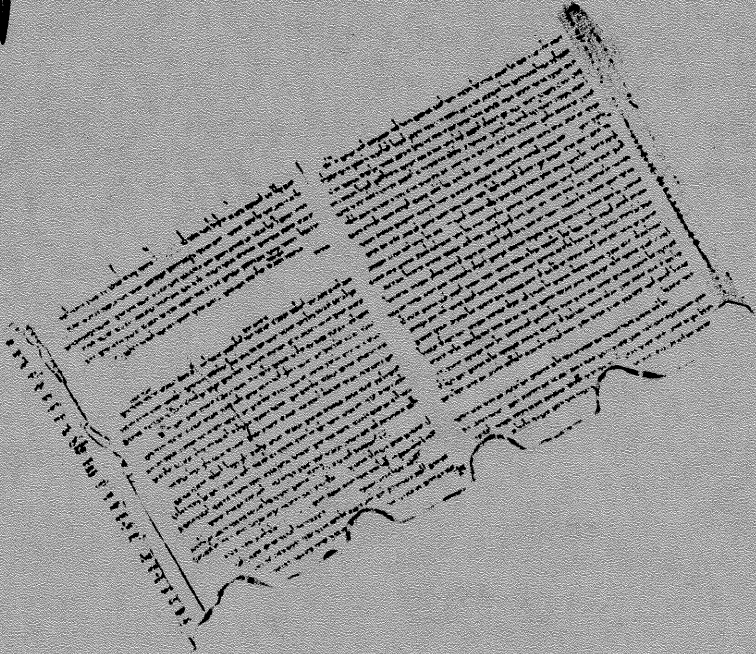


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FOREWORD

This issue of the Quarterly contains a sermon delivered by Pastor Alf Merseeth to the 1986 seminary graduation on Sunday, June 15th, at the Bethany Lutheran College Chapel.

We are also pleased to present an article by Professor Steven Reagles entitled PREACHING THE IMPRINT OF PARADOX. It originally appeared in the September 1985 issue of the Concordia Journal. We are grateful to the Journal for granting permission to reprint it in our Quarterly. Prof. Reagles is Dean of Student Services and Professor of Religion and English at Bethany Lutheran College.

The article ROBERT BARNES, LUTHER'S AMBASSADOR TO THE ENGLISH was submitted by the Reverend Bruce Adams of Australia. Pastor Adams has been a long-time reader of the Quarterly and has engaged in correspondence with the editor. We thank him for his article on Robert Barnes, whom Luther described as "our good pious table companion and guest of our home, who has so graciously been called upon by God to shed his blood, for His dear Son's sake, and to become a holy martyr." Those interested in more information on Barnes may order Lutheran Martyr by Dr. N. S. Tjernagel, published by Northwestern Publishing House and available at the Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato, Minnesota.

An exegetical treatment of I Corinthians 3:1-23 entitled THE RELATIONSHIP OF GOD'S CHURCH TO HIS MINISTERS by Pastor Ted Gullixson is a reminder that pride and bickering among brethren will only hinder the work of God's kingdom while faithfulness to one's calling will bring blessings.

WWP

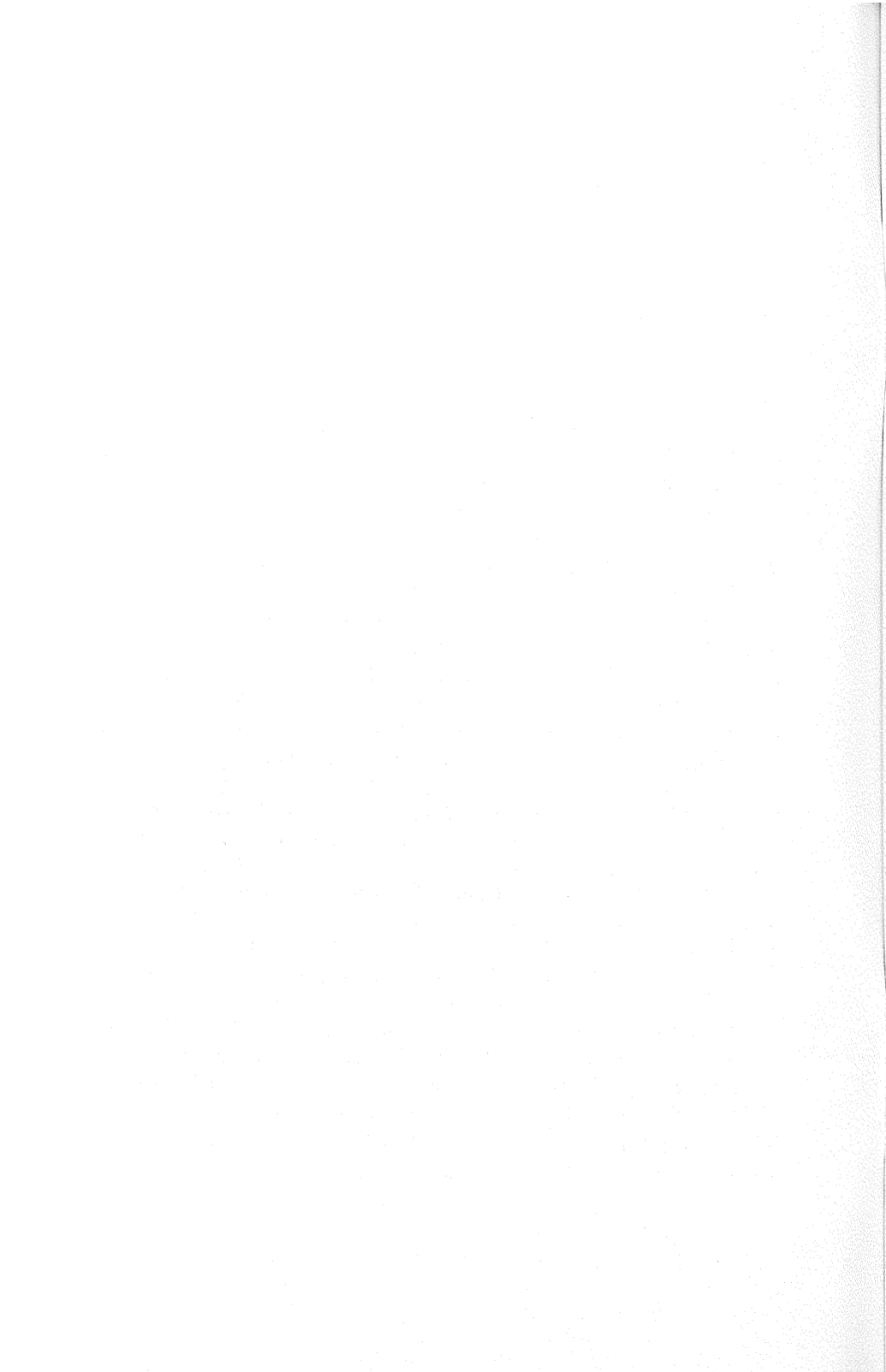


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LIVING WELLS DISPENSING THE WATER OF LIFE

Text: John 7, 37-39

There are kidney transplants; and there are liver transplants; there are lung transplants and there are heart transplants; and most recently we heard of a heart and lung transplant in one operation. The medical profession has advanced far and is able to do wonderful things for our bodies. For this the medical profession is highly honored, and rightly so.

These graduates are dedicating themselves to a profession which, though it is often despised by the world, should be even more highly honored because they are dedicating themselves to being the human instruments that God uses when He performs the operation that He describes through the pen of Ezekiel: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36, 26.

On this important day, what message shall we leave with these men: to what shall be liken them? To this:

LIVING WELLS DISPENSING THE WATER OF LIFE

We could find many quotations from Scripture which speak of "living water" and "the water of life." We look into this text for a further explanation of this terminology.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'" The 2nd verse

of this chapter tells us that they were celebrating "The Jew's Feast of Tabernacles." The word "tabernacle" had the significance of a "temporary dwelling." So during this Feast the Jews lived in "booths" (as they were also called) -- temporary dwellings made of the fresh branches of fruit trees and palm trees. This was to remind them of the care that God provided for their fathers when they wandered in the wilderness on their journey from bondage in Egypt to the promised land of Caanan.

The second feature of the feast, the feature which is most significant for our consideration today, is the ceremony of "living water." On the last day of the Feast, when the people had taken down their "booths" and waved the palm branches at the altar, a priest was selected to go to the pool of Siloam, which was considered to be "living water," and to bring a pitcher of water and pour it out at the side of the altar. This was a symbolic act, symbolizing to them the presence of "living water" which would have its fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah that God had promised.

This was all in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." In our text Jesus surely indicates that He is the fulfillment of that prophecy when at the time of that ceremony of "living water" He stands up and He invites, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Jesus indicates that He is the LIVING WATER.

Surely now, when Jesus offers drink to the thirsty He thereby indicates that He can satisfy the needs of the souls that come seeking in repentance. Those are the thirsty. Jesus is the answer to the Psalmist's pleading: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

The beloved 19th century Danish hymn writer, Nicholai Gruntvig, paraphrased words of the Psalmist and applied them to us in these words:

"As after water-brooks panteth
The Hart, when it sinks in the chase,
So thirsteth my soul, as it fainteth,
For Thee, O my God, and Thy grace;
For Thou art the fount ever-lasting,
Who unto the thirsty art giving
The water of life that I need."

(N.F.S. Gruntvig, 1812)

The "living water" that the Savior will give to the thirsting who come seeking in repentance and faith is the full salvation that He has prepared for all sinners. It is His complete and perfect fulfillment of the law of God. It is His assuming all the guilt and all the punishment for your sins and mine, and bearing these sins in His own body to the cross. It is His making complete payment for our debt before God with His Holy precious blood. It is His resurrection, by which the Father declared that the sins of the whole world are forgiven. In this "living water" there is forgiveness of sins, here there is salvation, here in Jesus Christ there is eternal life. If we have this water, by faith, we will "never thirst again" as Jesus assured the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

This cry of Jesus, "if any man thirst," is a powerful universal call to all sinners to "repent and believe the Gospel" as Jesus cried when He preached in Galilee at the beginning of His ministry.

The Holy Spirit of whom the Evangelist says that He had not come at the time that Jesus spoke these words--though we know that He was there and was active in the Word also in Old Testament time--

has now come in the "Mighty rushing wind" and the "cloven tongues of fire" of Pentecost Day, to make His presence known in the New Testament church, and through His indwelling in "those who believe in me," as Jesus says, to bring that "living water" to a world dead in their own sins, through the use of the Means of Grace, the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. Luther said: "For that is the special work and office of the Holy Spirit, that He reveal and glorify Christ, that He preach and give testimony concerning Him."

It is "He that believeth on me" of whom Jesus says, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He is thus describing all believers. He is describing all of us who are Spirit-filled Christians. For even as the Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way rejoicing after he had received the Holy Spirit through the waters of baptism on the road down to Gaza; and even as the Jews of the dispersion, who were scattered because of the continuing persecution of the church in Jerusalem, "went everywhere preaching the Gospel"; and even as Cornelius, who received the Holy Spirit through the preaching and baptism by Peter, taught his household, spoke to his fellowmen and to his fellow-soldiers of the "living water" found in Christ, so surely must every believer of today, every Spirit-filled Christian of today, DISPENSE THE WATER OF LIFE in his or her own way. These Christians will spread, they will defend, and they will support that Word which tells of Jesus.

You graduates, however, have been called by your Lord to be DISPENSERS OF THAT LIVING WATER in a special way. You will be DISPENSERS OF THAT LIVING WATER in undertaking the functions of that office of the ministry which our Lord has established in His church. You are dedicating yourself to that office. You are Spirit-filled believers

who are dedicating yourselves to being under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and to leading the sheep of His flock to the "living waters" in whatever area of His church you are asked to serve. Of you, and of me, together with himself, the Apostle Paul says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." "Ministers." You are to be servants of Christ -- servants serving only Christ and the Gospel. You are to be "stewards," Spirit-filled Christians who are in charge of and are responsible to God for the administration of His Means of Grace. You are LIVING WELLS DISPENSING THE WATER OF LIFE through administering the mysteries of God. Be that the Word of Truth which has in it the mysterious "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek," a power which no other word has. Be that the mysterious power of the water of baptism, connected with the powerful Word and used by the Holy Spirit to plant or to confirm faith in the hearts of His people. Be that the mystery of the sacramental union of the bread and body of Christ and the wine and the blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, which gives and seals to you and your people the forgiveness of sins. What a service you are undertaking.

Do as St. Paul said to Timothy, "Preach the Word." You have nothing else to preach and teach. That "Word is truth" says Jesus, and we must promote and defend that truth. It is that true Word of Jesus of which Peter says, "But the word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." He surely implies that if we permit that Word to be falsified in any way, it will not endure forever. What a tragedy that would be.

Administer the sacraments in their truth and purity. It is "the Word of God which is in and with the water...that is a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost." As we learned in our Catechism, it is "under the bread and wine" that the true body and blood of the Savior is received "for the remission of sins." For St. Paul surely says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What a tragedy it is if these sacraments are not administered correctly, for surely then the value and the efficacy of the sacraments are destroyed.

We would never think of giving our loved ones a cup of cyanide-laced water; so when you DISPENSE THE WATER OF LIFE, be sure it is THE PURE WATER.

When this is done then we can say with certainty that blessings will follow for you and for those you serve. Those blessings which will be both temporal and eternal are these: That "water of life" gives and preserves faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts while we live here and thus we have spiritual life now. That "water of life" gives the assurance of the forgiveness of sins; it gives peace and comfort such as can be found only in Christ; it gives strength of faith for the daily Christian life; and it gives assurance that the hope of eternal life which the believer in Christ has now will be fulfilled.

What can we urge you to do but this? Bring your people JESUS CHRIST. Bring them cleansing for their sins through the WATER OF LIFE. Bring them salvation. Lead them to that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Revelation 22, 1 Amen.

-- Rev. Alf Merseth
Pastor of Northwood Lutheran Parish, Northwood, Iowa

PREACHING THE IMPRINT OF PARADOX

Rev. Steven L. Reagles

When during the sixteenth-century debate on free will Erasmus accused Luther of "transfixing paradoxes into dogmas" (to use Roland Bainton's words), Luther replied, "they are not my paradoxes . . . they are God's paradoxes!"¹ Many of the truths of Scripture are paradoxical. In appearance they seem contradictory, display a tension between opposites, and baffle the brightest mind that seeks to plumb the mystery. The Trinity, two natures of Christ, virgin birth, and the resurrection, to name a few, are doctrines of the Christian faith which thwart dissection, while they beckon to the eye of faith. Scripture bears the *imprint* of God's paradoxes.

Life is paradoxical also. As G. K. Chesterton has said, "wildness lies in wait," for those who would stamp the imprint of pure logic upon the universe. Yet, this essay is not so much interested in considering the paradoxes in the universe as it is with those which rest in Scripture. While some have misused the concept of "paradox" as an epistemology for a dialectic of uncertainty, it is the proposition of this essay that Holy Writ declares paradoxes to us and that therefore it is of paramount importance that we preach them and publish them.

When Erasmus argued that Luther's publication of his paradoxes of "Free Will" would lead to confusion and harm, Luther replied, "It should be enough to say simply that God has willed their publication!"²

Steven Reagles is Dean of Students and professor of religion at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato.

The first part of this paper attempts, ever so cursorily, to provide a general conceptual framework for understanding the term "paradox" by sampling its imprint upon some of man's thought. With that discussion as a backdrop, the second part examines the imprint of "paradox" on Scripture and Lutheran theology. Finally, since "God has willed their publication," the essay offers a method for imprinting the paradoxes upon our preaching.

The Imprint of "Paradox Upon Thought"

Today, in subjects as diverse as business, physics and photography, poetry and foreign policy, the "paradox" is being utilized to conceptualize some of the contradictions, ambiguities, and conflicts of life. In one writer's opinion, "perhaps never before in history of thought has it [the paradox] been used so widely and been taken more seriously than today."³ The best seller, In Search of Excellence, proposes that modern business management harness the ability to "manage ambiguity and paradox," as the authors remind us, using these words of F. Scott Fitzgerald as an epigram for their chapter: "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."⁴ According to current scientific paradigm, "the physical universe is fundamentally paradoxical. Our universe seems to be composed of facts and their opposites at the same time."⁵ Some photographers have sought to imprint paradox upon their photos so that the viewer has to "look twice" to find the meaning locked in contradiction.⁶ Cleanth Brooks, the eminent literary critic, has written that "many of the important things which the poet has to say have to be said by means of paradox."⁷ A recent Time article (also citing Fitzgerald's maxim) insists that the art of international diplomacy with the Russians calls for the

paradox of being "hard line" and "flexible" at the same time.⁸

In both Western and Eastern thought, paradox has occupied the mind of the conceptualizers. While Western philosophies have occupied themselves with Zeno's paradoxes and the dialectic of Heraclitus of Ephesus ("Opposites agree, and complete unity comes from things which differ"),⁹ Eastern thought has, like Heraclitus, syncretistically combined opposites together (as with the idea of "yin" and "yang") in a paradox foreign to Western thinking, until recently.¹⁰ While George Hegel gave his own particular twist to paradox, advocating that "all reality is divided into poles, and that truth must be sought through thesis, antithesis, and synthesis,"¹¹ it was Kierkegaard whose use of the term influenced much liberal Protestant theology.¹² Paradox is a central concept in the nineteenth-century Dane's thought: "Philosophy's idea of mediation--Christianity the paradox."¹³ While certain Evangelicals have praised Kierkegaard,¹⁴ others have censured him for his "unrelenting overemphasis upon irresoluble paradox in all human thought and experience, particularly if it be Christian."¹⁵

If, then, the term is so widespread, and some might argue, misused and filled with powerful non-Christian connotation, is it "expedient" (1 Cor. 6:12) or "the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13) to propose, as this paper does, that we make use of Scriptural paradox and consider it of paramount importance in our preaching? While legitimate criticism may be offered about the non-Christian connotations of "paradox," that should not prevent a "repristination" of its usage. St. Paul "Christianized" the word "mystery," baptized it, and sent it out in service to the Gospel! Whether one chooses to use the word, or not, the fact remains:

life is paradoxical. There are those things in life and Scripture which fall under the dictionary definition of paradox: "a statement that *seems* contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but that may actually be true in fact. . . .a person, situation, act, etc., that *seems* to have contradictory or inconsistent qualities"¹⁶ (emphases mine). Daily life seems filled with conundrum, anomaly, clash, with its own "necker cubes," "love-hate relationships," happy funerals, time-eternity incongruities.

The really relevant questions still remain. Are Scripture, Luther, and confessional theology aware of paradox? Is the term useful in any way in theology and, specifically, the communication of Scriptural truth? The rest of this essay will attempt to deal with these questions.

The Imprint of "Paradox" Upon Scripture and Lutheran Theology

Confessional Lutheran theology, since the Reformation, has upheld the principle of the fundamental *clarity* of Scripture.¹⁷ There may be reasoning "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16), and parts "unsearchable" (Rom. 11:33), but the basic message is plain. Coupled with the clarity of proposition is the principle of the *certainty* of truth in Scripture (2 Peter 1:19). While apparent contradictions exist in Scripture, a "quia" confessional subscription upholds Luther's dictum that "Scripture will not contradict itself or any single article of faith, even though *in your head* it is contradictory and does not harmonize"¹⁸ (emphasis mine).

That God's written Word is clear does not remove the fact that Scriptural proposition is often paradoxical proposition. St. Paul intimated that on this side of heaven mystery and paradox confront us.

"At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face" (I Cor. 13:12; Phillips).

While "the paradox is coming to play a heuristic role in contemporary thought,"¹⁹ the church has discovered throughout the ages the thematic opposites which exist side by side in Scripture. Exodus 34: 6,7 pictures the Lord as the God who is both compassionate and forgiving, yet the God who "does not leave the guilty unpunished." This is the God of reverses who, Paul says, "gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). An apostle's life was one of living contradiction, a tension between opposites. The apostle was "known, yet regarded as unknown; dying and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor. 6:9,10; NIV). The life of every Christian is found by losing it (Matt. 10:39) --and if man lives by sight, Christians live by the "blindness" of faith (Heb. 11). In Christ the rich are poor and the poor rich (Luke 16), the foolish are wise and the wise foolish (1 Cor. 1,2) the last first and the first last (Matt. 20:16), the dying live and the living die (2 Cor. 5,6). The Scripture is a lively portrait of life's polarities: of joy in sorrow, victory in defeat, hatred of self as love for self (John 12:25), of Christ who is mortal and immortal, God and man, king and slave, master and servant, possessor of all power, might, glory, yet in appearance everted to reveal humility.

If the written Word of God has been viewed as paradoxically imprinted, the same can be said about the confessional expression of fundamental Christian truth. The doctrine of the triune God and the two natures of Christ pose two examples, and the classic

Lutheran doctrines of Law and Gospel, justification (especially with reference to man as *simul iustus et peccator*), and the means of grace express three others.

The Christian doctrine of God as triune proposes a seeming contradiction, that God is three and yet one. The mystery is insoluble to human reason, yet Scripturally exact in its reflection of the written Word. The very word "triune" is a creation of the church to symbolize, *in print*, the Scriptural *imprint*. From a semiotic viewpoint the church has generally recognized the validity of the triangle as representing the Scriptural imprint while at the same time devaluing other examples (e.g., Hans Egede's snow, water, ice water) as being imperfect "signs" for the Biblical paradox. According to Christian verity, the tension of paradox must be maintained in order to think correctly about the Scriptural revelation (consider, for example, the Athanasian Creed).

Just as Christian faith confesses the paradox of Trinity, it upholds the proposition that Christ has two natures--He is both God and man in one person. In the words of Chemnitz, "In Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, are two natures, a divine, that of the Word (*ὁ λόγος*), and a human nature, so united that Christ is one person."²⁰ Philip Hughes has described the importance of maintaining paradox in Christian teaching to prevent that which is heterodox.

As with every Christian paradox, the truth lies, and only lies, in the retention and combination of its poles. 'Explanation' of the paradox solely in terms of one of its poles is nothing other than rationalization. To dissolve a mystery in this way is not to solve it....It was attempts to explain the

mystery of the person of the Incarnate Son, by stressing either the pole of His divinity or the pole of His humanity, that gave rise to the heresies which threatened the survival of the early church.²¹

In confessional Lutheran theology there is paradox surrounding the doctrine of Law and Gospel. At the cross God shows his greatest hatred for sinful mankind by requiring the penalty of death. Yet paradoxically God displays His overwhelming love there, at the same time, by releasing man from the penalty of death and giving him life. The guilty go free while the Guiltless One is punished. Yet justice is perfectly served--a seeming contradiction. The Righteous One is "made sin" while the sinful ones are declared righteous.

In order to use and understand the Law and Gospel paradox properly, one must understand the justification paradox. Man is justified by a forensic act of God, on account of the active and passive obedience of Christ. All people *are* righteous, yet only those who appropriate it by faith *possess* it. Another paradox appears: man cannot himself appropriate faith; God must give it through the Gospel. Justified, declared righteous, the Christian still remains a sinner. The *simul iustus et peccator* paradox demands that both Law and Gospel still be preached to the Christian. The dialectic of properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel becomes the theologian's *sine qua non* for preaching the paradox to all people, including Christians who are living the conflict of opposites, flesh versus spirit, old Adam against new man, in one person. It was this dramatic tension which led Paul to communicate the inner ambivalence this way:

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work

in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work in my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom. 7:21-24; NIV).

While there must always remain a tension between Law and Gospel in the Christian faith,²² confessional Lutheran theology resolves the "paradox" as Paul does here, with the Gospel having the last word, for that represents the truth as it is imprinted in Scripture (Rom. 8:31-39; Gal. 3).

Intricately connected to the paradox of the person of Christ, discussed above, is the mystery of the Lord's supper. That the early church thought of it as a "paradox" is certain, for Clement of Alexandria calls the Lord's Supper "ὁ τοῦ παραδοχοῦ μυστήριου,"²³ and paradox it is, for Christ is "really present" in the Sacrament "in, under, and with" the bread and wine, "the entire Christ, in his divine and in his human nature."²⁴ Yet this very same Christ remains "at the right hand of God," as the ascended Lord--a paradox, yet true to the imprint in Scripture.

Paradox in Luther's Theology

Not only Scripture and Lutheran theology in general bear the imprint of paradox, but specifically, Luther's theology bears the mark also. Luther was a lover of paradox as Plass has so well shown in his collection, What Luther Says.²⁵ A good example of Luther's propensity for juxtaposition is found in his well-known expression from The Freedom of a Christian: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."²⁶ Luther's

penchant for paradox surfaced quickly in his dispute with Erasmus over the freedom of the will (note his Introduction). Luther refers to the *paradoxa* of God's Word and then exemplifies them in language that is wild with the tension, clash, conflict and seeming contradiction of the Christian faith.

. . . Faith's object is things not seen. That there may be room for faith, therefore, all that is believed must be hidden. Yet it is not hidden more deeply than under a contrary appearance of sight, sense, and experience. Thus, when God quickens, He does so by killing; when He justifies, He does so by pronouncing guilty; when He carries up to heaven, He does so by bringing down to hell. As Scripture says in 1 Kings 2, 'The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up' (1 Sam. 2:6)... Thus God conceals His eternal mercy and loving kindness beneath eternal wrath, His righteousness beneath unrighteousness. Now, the highest degree of faith is to believe that He is merciful, though He saves so few and damns so many; to believe that He is just, though of His own will He makes us perforce proper subjects for damnation, and seems (in Erasmus' words) 'to delight in the torments of poor wretches and to be a fitter object for hate than for love.' If I could by any means understand how this same God, who makes such a show of wrath and unrighteousness, can yet be merciful and just, there would be no need for faith. But as it is, the impossibility of understanding makes room for the exercise of faith when these things are preached and published; just as, when God kills, faith in life is exercised in death.²⁷

From this brief discussion of Scripture and confessional Lutheran theology it becomes evident that the imprint of paradox is upon both. As Luther says, these Biblical contrarieties are to be "*preached and published*" that they might be believed by faith. The church must preach and the message must be declared with the insignia of Biblical paradox upon it.

Preaching With the Imprint, and Structure, of "Paradox"

It is not a love for "the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21), or a desire for rhetorical innovation which endears one to preaching the paradoxes of God's Word, but a love for "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13; NIV), to quote St. Paul. Scriptural paradox, if it is presented according to sound hermeneutical and exegetical principle, will not be opaque, vague, and unclear, but will lucidly express the truth as clearly as Scripture expresses it. None of the proven principles of homiletical art lay upon a preacher the charge to bisect and evaginate the paradoxes and mysteries of the written Word so that they are perfectly understandable to reason. The things that come from the Spirit of God are as Paul says, "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). The preacher is to declare the truths of the Gospel, whether they are very basic, or...very mysterious.

Since, however, it is possible to "declare" Christian truth in many creative ways, we might ask ourselves the question: Is it possible, given the special nature of "paradox," to harness its peculiarities and imprint the structure of a sermon with the clash, conflict, tension of opposites, delineated in the text? Is it possible to weave rhetorically the polarities of Scripture against one another so that, like a Scottish plaid the

inlaid opposites especially clash in the heart of the hearer, fresh with contrast, wild with truth? Is there any reason to believe that Scriptural paradox, in itself, offers a creative heuristic for sermon structure?

It is a surprise, indeed, to learn from studies in creativity that "some of the most remarkable creative achievements begin with *the awareness of a tension of opposites*"²⁸ (emphasis mine). Albert Rothenberg has shown that such "awareness," which he calls "janusian thinking," leaves a "surprising, paradoxical imprint on great works."²⁹ In his study of Nobel Prize, National Book Award, and Pulitzer Prize recipients, Rothenberg suggests that creativity came as the result of the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory entities together, with the creative product growing out of the conflict. "In janusian thinking, two or more opposites or antitheses are conceived simultaneously, either as existing side by side, or as equally operative or true."³⁰

The most inappropriate comment which can be made here is that God has never been given the Nobel Prize, National Book Award, or Pulitzer prize in recognition of His own creative work, which has the most "surprising, paradoxical imprints" of all; but we have it in our hands with its "tensions of opposites" as a catalyst for *our* creativity! Given the Biblical assertion that the Spirit is still present in the Word (Heb. 4:12)--the Spirit of creativity (Gen. 1:2,3)--the paradoxes of Scripture remain, throbbing with divine life and dramatic power, waiting to be tapped.

Structuring Paradox

It will come as no surprise to confessional Lutheran homileticians that in fashioning a sermon after

the sound Law/Gospel dialectic, paradox is being imprinted upon the sermon structure. In addition, as a heuristic, "janusian-style" preaching (or "paradox" preaching) studies the portion of Scripture selections in order to discover the other major opposites which rest there, overtly or covertly. Part two of this essay suggests some of the possibilities. Not every text may lend itself well to "janusian-style" exploration, but many do. Those texts that do not produce the overt kind of paradox discussed above may be "interrogated" for their opposites. For example, a text which deals exclusively with love will remind one of other texts which deal with the opposite, hatred. Using the wider context of Scripture, one is able to isolate appropriate tensions, clashes, and conflicts which may be exploited in the sermon.

Haddon Robinson, in a recent interview by Preaching Today, suggests a method for structuring paradox in a sermon. Ironically, he suggests that "tension" in a sermon is essential to its structure and that like a good play, when there is no tension remaining, the sermon is done, even though the preacher may go on for another half hour.

I think all sermons have tension. The tension is created, if you're doing it well, in the introduction, and then it is created after each point when you come to transition. Whenever a sermon loses its tension the sermon is over. . . . If I give my sermon away in the introduction, if I tell folks all in essence that I'm going to say, the tension is gone.³¹

Robinson's "tension principle" becomes even more relevant as he elaborates how tension caused by paradox may be woven into the introduction to prepare the listener for the textual sermon which follows.

If, in the introduction to the sermon, I raise the question how God can be sovereign and at the same time there can be blatant tragedy in life, what I'm doing in that introduction is raising the tension, the tension of God who is good, in control of all things, allowing a baby to die of some terrible disease. The audience says at that point, "O.K. If you got an answer to that, this is going to be worth thirty minutes."³²

Many of the sermons of Walter A. Maier are compelling reading even today, it seems, because they cultivate "tension" in their introduction. The following introduction to a 1936 Maier sermon on the problem of pain (based on Job 23:10) seems tailor-made for Robinson's comment above.

"Why must I suffer?" "Why do miseries crowd in on *my* life?" "Why are *my* ambitions always crushed into dust?" These bitter, resentful questions that men have asked since the cradle days of humanity have never been repeated in more piteous protest than in the baffling discouragement of these tragic (depression) years. The sick and the maimed, who face dismal prospects of long and unrelieved suffering, exclaim with impatient bitterness: "If there is any justice in earth or in heaven, why are we the victims of these endless miseries?" The frugal, God-fearing folk who have worked and saved, hoped and prayed, only to have their plans shattered, demand: "Why does the scourge of God beat us while money and pleasure overflow for the open enemies of God?" A bereft mother crushes the lifeless form of her only child in a last embrace and screams: "If there is a God in heaven, why did He rob me of my baby when millions of wives refuse to become mothers or neglect their unwanted children?"

There is one and only one true answer to this everlasting "why" of humanity's sorrow: the solution found in God's neverfailing Word. The light for the darkness of our pain and affliction comes to us with practical, everyday force from the Book of Job...³³

Helmut Thielicke, in a sermon on Luke 14:25-33, "The Parable of the Cost of Building a Tower," also displays a "janusian-style" introduction when he deals with the enigmatic words of Christ. The paradoxical tension stems from the ostensibly contradictory portraits of Christ, who while being loving and compassionate, in Luke 14 says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple" (v. 26: NIV). Thielicke begins his sermon by saying:

We can hardly listen to this remarkable and in many respects harsh account without running into a certain confusion. How often we have heard the stories: the story of the Saviour of sinners, the good physician, the worker of miracles, the shepherd of souls....

Ordinarily, Jesus strikes us as being attractive, the man with the shepherd's voice calling out for the lost, the man who never wearies of describing the glory of all that awaits us if we come to him--security, peace, new life, a free life. Ordinarily, he calls "Come unto me!"--and he says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and everything dear to him, he cannot be my disciple." Whoever puts his trust in me must declare his mistrust of all others. Instead of pleading, he repels, and actually warns us against himself. Instead of saying, "I give you eternal life," he says, "Count

what it will cost you in this life and consider whether you are equal to my discipleship." Instead of inflaming, he pours on cold water.... How can we reconcile all this?³⁴

The homiletician may disagree with the way Maier or Thielicke exegetically resolve the tensions in their sermons. Nevertheless, these two examples illustrate how Robinson's (and this paper's) proposition may be carried out in sermon writing. It is possible to isolate paradoxes in the text of Scripture and then leave their imprint upon the structure and content of a sermon, by introducing the tension of opposites in the beginning.

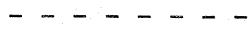
Conclusion

If we began this essay with the proposition that the modern world has discovered "paradox," we end with the insightful reminder that in times past the Scriptures *revealed* the mysterious paradoxes of the triune God, and that the church taught them. The truth might have seemed incongruous--full of seeming conflict, polarities, opposites, ambivalence--but under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, through that same Word, the paradoxes were sanctified by faith in the hearts of God's people. They were God's paradoxes. That was sufficient. They were as clear as they needed to be.

In ancient times, Job; in the Renaissance, Shakespeare; today, Kenneth Burke, remind us that life is high drama, and drama means conflict and tension. The Scriptures reveal man caught in a spiritual conflict with the devil, the world, and the flesh. That means a life imprinted with paradox inward and outward. Man seeks answers to resolve the inner and outer conflicts, to make the paradoxes, if not understandable, at least bearable. To use the psychologist Leon Festinger's terms,

man seeks amidst the conflicts of life to "reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance."³⁵

It is the task of preaching to convey to man caught amidst life's tensions the resolution of forgiveness in Christ, the message of consonance with the Father, and the calming solace of the Holy Spirit. Preaching seeks to confront the tensions, the opposites of life and to resolve them not by the explanatory dialectic of reason, but by the reconciling message of the Gospel. In Christ the visible and invisible, glory and shame, wisdom and folly, certainty and *Anfechtung*, trial and triumph, freedom and captivity, darkness and light, love and hate, victory and defeat, death and life paradoxes are resolved and reconciled, because of His life, because of His blood, because of His death, because of His resurrection.



Notes

¹ Roland Bainton, Here I Stand, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 254.

² Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957), p. 100.

³ Howard A. Slaatte, The Pertinence of the Paradox, (New York: Humanities Press, 1968) p. 1.

⁴ Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., In Search of Excellence, (New York: Warner Books, 1982), pp. 89ff.

⁵ Fred Alan Wolf, Taking the Quantum Leap, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 130.

6 Tim DeMarce, "MSU Photographer Looks for Paradox and the Way Light Wraps Around Things," Mankato Free Press, January 10, 1985, p. 17.

7 Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, Harvest Book ed., (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), p. 17.

8 Henry Grunwald, "Reagan II: A Foreign Policy Consensus?," Time, December 10, 1984, p. 118.

9 Joseph Katz and Rudolph H. Weingartner, ed., Philosophy in the West, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 9.

10 Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics, (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1980). Capra's work claims to "reconcile Eastern Philosophy and Western Science."

11 Erwin L. Lueker, ed. Lutheran Cyclopedia, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 234.

12 Van A. Harvey, A Handbook of Theological Terms, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1964), p. 174.

13 Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, ed., and trans., Soren Kierkegaard's Journals & Papers, 7 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), vol. 3, p. 399.

14 C. Stephen Evans, "A Misunderstood Reformer," Christianity Today, September 21, 1984, pp. 26-29.

15 Stanley Obitts, "The Meaning and Use of Religious Language," in Tensions in Contemporary Theology, eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976) pp. 106, 107.

16 David B. Guralnik, ed. Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Ed., (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), p. 1029.

17 Ralph A. Bohlmann, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp.60-64.

18 Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), vol.1, p. 148. Pieper here is quoting Luther.

19 Slatte, p. 2.

20 The quote by Chemnitz is cited in Heinrich Schmid's The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3rd rev. ed. trans. by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1875), p. 294. The definitive work on the two natures is Martin Chemnitz's The Two Natures in Christ, trans. J.A.O. Preus, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971).

21 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, ed. Creative Minds in Centemporary Theology, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 15. The Ebionites, Alogi, and Dynamic Monarchians denied the divinity; the Docetists, Gnostics, and Modalists rejected the humanity.

22 The Antinomian denies the pole of the Law; the legalist by emphasizing the pole of the Law denies the Gospel.

23 Herman Sasse, This Is My Body, rev. ed. (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 279. Sasse shows the importance of keeping the doctrine of the two natures of Christ intimately connected to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Speaking about the Christology of Luther and the Formula of Concord, Sasse comments that, "There can be no doubt that the Christology of Luther and of the Formula of Concord in discussing the reality of the union of the natures in the person of Christ, is doing full justice to the 'paradox,' the mystery of the God-man. And only he who acknowledges this mystery can accept the mystery of the Real Presence of the entire Christ" p. 279 (emphasis mine).

24 Sasse, p. 279.

25 Ewald M. Plass, ed. What Luther Says, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959). The index in Vol. 3 lists a host of references to "paradox" in Luther. Luther's hyperbolic paradox "Be a sinner and sin mightily; but trust more mightily and rejoice in Christ" (sec. 4207 in Plass), Plass points out, did not offend Roman Catholic scholar Joseph Lortz. Lortz defends Luther against the charge of antinomianism, while expressing reservations about the appropriateness of Luther's comment which is "in its paradoxical recklessness [?] a typically 'Lutherish' sentence," (emphasis mine).

26 Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," trans. W. A. Lambert, rev. by Harold J. Grimm in Three Treatises, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 277.

27 Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 101.

28 Albert Rothenberg, "Creative Contradictions," Psychology Today, June 1979, p. 55.

29 Rothenberg, p. 55.

30 Rothenberg, p. 55.

31 Haddon Robinson, interview, Preaching Today (a monthly sermon resource produced by Christianity Today and Leadership), tape 14, Carol Springs, IL, 1984.

32 Ibid.

33 Paul L. Maier, The Best of Walter A. Maier, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1980, p. 156.

34 Helmut Thielicke, The Waiting Father, Trans. John W. Doberstein, (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 147-148.

35 Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 3.

ROBERT BARNES, LUTHER'S AMBASSADOR TO THE ENGLISH

Rev. Bruce W. Adams

For Lutheran Christians living in the seventeenth century England, there emerged a day to remember. On September 13th, 1672, King Charles II issued 'The Charter or Letters Patent' in which he granted permission to worship, erect a church, to "all companions of the Augustan profession, of what nation whatsoever professing the same faith and religion and the same sacred rites to use and enjoy the said Temple being so built."¹ Thus, 310 years ago, at the height of the repressive laws being enacted by the Restoration Parliament, the Stuart King granted his approval for the erection of a Lutheran Church in the city of London.

Begun in November 1672 and dedicated thirteen months later, the new church building and congregation bore the name of Trinity Lutheran Church, after Holy Trinity the Less Anglican parish church destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Those responsible for its erection included a Danish Lutheran, Caius Cibber, who was Sir Christopher Wren's chief sculptor during the rebuilding of London. Among the six founders of Trinity church was one Theodore Jacobsen, who before London's holocaust by fire, served as a vestryman of All Hallows the Great in Upper Thames Street. In that same church nearby Old St. Pauls, pews had been reserved for Lutherans. This was a special

¹For detailed account see E. Geo. Pearce, "The Story of the Lutheran Church in Britain," (Walter Jenn Ltd. 1969).

provision for the Steelyard marchants, many of whom had settled in England and become naturalized subjects.

Prior to the foundation of the Trinity congregation, evangelical Lutheranism within England had been a movement within the national Church of England, impressing itself with varying degrees of success upon bishops, clerics, and adherents. Oftimes those of Lutheran conviction endured rejection, sometimes recognition, and occasionally favour in the reign of Elizabeth I. The Queen probably voiced her convictions when she praised to the Count of Feria, the Spanish ambassador, the Augsburg Confession and belief in the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper. Certainly the faith of Dr. Martin Luther had crossed the English Channel. It touched the religious beliefs of the Cambridge reformers and Queen Anne Boleyn.

A member of the company of those Cambridge scholars from St. John's, the King's College and Queen's College who resorted to the White Horse for the study of God's Word, was Robert Barnes, prior of the Augustinians.

If Barnes proved a stormy petrel when thrust into situations of extreme danger and opportunity yet he rose to be a gifted preacher of the Gospel and competent controversialist in the times of Henry VIII. Bishop Hugh Latimer, a prince of English preachers and contemporary of Dr. Robert Barnes paid this tribute to his friend: "Mr. Doctor Barnes hath preached here with me at Bartlebury, and at my request at Worcester, and also at Evesham. Surely he is alone in handling a piece of scripture, and setting forth of Christ he hath no fellow."²

²Harold S. Darby, "Hugh Latimer" (The Epworth Press 1953), p. 131.

In our age of intensifying humanist propaganda and dispensation of 'light fare' via a noisy media, we do well to pause awhile to reflect on a faithful man of God who made England his parish and the infallible Scriptures his authority. In the hour of final condemnation and martyrdom Dr. Barnes vindicated for all to hear his trust in the efficacy of the blood of Christ his Saviour. His profession did not die; it must not be neglected when contingency is being enforced at the expense of erudition and a faith rooted in God's revelation.

Church of St. Edward, Cambridge

Most travellers and 'pilgrims' to Cambridge make their way to the splendid Chapel of King's College, built between 1446-1515. There with bated breath they gaze at the stained glass windows, the colourful coats of arms, the exquisite carvings, and the ethereal fan-vaulting, all of which bespeak something of man's creative genius under God. Who cannot but be moved?

Yet, not far from King's College, tucked away among old buildings and adjacent to a small lane, stands the less pretentious church of St. Edward, king and martyr, built in 1175. Only the base remains of the tower of that 12th century church, the rest being rebuilt in 1400. For evangelicals who treasure the Reformation of the Christian Church, the comely shrine of St. Edward witnesses to the early English reformers whose hearts the Holy Spirit opened to the Scriptures.

On this subject Professor A. G. Dickens has these timely words: "If modern admirers of early English Protestantism desired to establish a national shrine, they could select none better than the little Cambridge Church of St. Edward, King and Martyr. It still contains the small pulpit, made about 1510,

from which Barnes, Bilney, and Latimer preached. It was the church of Trinity Hall and Clare, the colleges of the two latter Reformers, and its parish contained (on the site now appropriately occupied by the Cavendish Laboratory) the Augustinian Friary whence Robert Barnes went forth on the travels which ultimately led him to the feet of Martin Luther."³

Within the parish of St. Edward stood the White Horse Inn where Cambridge men would resort to study the works of Dr. Martin Luther and the Holy Scriptures to which he pointed. The chairman of this company of young scholars was Robert Barnes, an Austin Prior. Among his colleagues attending the meetings in the White Horse were Bilney, Coverdale, Latimer, Stafford, Frith, Lambert, Matthew Parker, Joye, Rowland Taylor, and others who became leaders in the English Reformation, some of them accepting martyrdom in the cause of the Gospel. Dr. Neelak Tjernagel regards these years as the most significant in the history of Cambridge University: "It is certain," he writes, "that Cambridge was to the English Reformation what Wittenberg had been to the Continental Reformation. We shall do Robert Barnes much less than justice if we overlook his crucial role of those days at Cambridge when his personal stature and his qualities of leadership led brave men on to such sacrifices as the Wittenberg men were not asked to make."⁴

While most evangelicals are well acquainted with names like Tyndale, Cranmer, and Parker,

³A. G. Dickens, "The English Reformation" (Fontana Library 1967), p. 102.

⁴Neelak S. Tjernagel, "Lutheran Martyr" (Northwestern Publishing House 1982), p. 70.

less is commonly known of the Augustinian Robert Barnes, who became Luther's 'apostle' to the English. After Barnes' testimony unto death Luther added the words: "Our good, pious table companion and guest of our home ... this holy martyr, St. Robert."

Scholar and Ambassador

Like Thomas Bilney and John Lambert, Robert Barnes was a Norfolk man. He was born in the ancient town of Kings Lynn in 1495. At the age of 19 he was enrolled with the Austin Friars and, because of his partiality to learning, was directed for advanced study to the University of Louvain noted for its humanist scholarship. It is more than probable that while a student at the Louvain, Barnes met Erasmus, who lectured there from 1517-21. He became a Doctor of Divinity at Louvain and in 1523 he received the same degree at the University of Cambridge by incorporation.

Influenced by the ethos of humanism, Dr. Barnes returned to the Augustinian House in Cambridge imbued with the spirit and methodology of the new learning. He introduced the friars to Terence, Plautus, and Cicero. His pupils included Miles Coverdale. But a change was coming. Along with Miles Coverdale, Barnes began to read the Pauline Epistles and to school himself in the Scriptures.

Meantime, a Father Thomas Bilney had come to embrace evangelical doctrine and sought to make converts to Christ among the students, priests, and scholars in Cambridge. Foxe informs us that Robert Barnes became acquainted with Bilney and was "through his instrumentality, converted to Christ."

Whenever a new thrust forward begins in the

cause of Christ and His eternal Gospel, God calls a person, and through that person a group is formed to carry out the mission of bringing salvation by grace alone to the world. Repeatedly this occurs in history. Joining the little society which met in the White Horse Inn, Barnes found strengthening, friendship, and nurture in what he came to call "the most glorious and heavenly Word of God." Because they studied the writings of Luther, the circle was nicknamed "Little Germany."

Then something dramatic was to occur. It was Christmas Eve and the fourth Sunday in Advent 1525. By arrangement Barnes exchanged pulpits with his friend, Hugh Latimer. Whilst Latimer was to preach in the Augustinian chapel, Barnes preached from Latimer's pulpit in St. Edward's Church. If Barnes was hardly wise on this occasion, he was brave in exposing his life to danger. Instead of preaching directly on the Epistle of the Day (Philippians 4: 4-7), the Austin prior used it to launch into a tirade against the moral corruption of the clergy in general, especially the abuse of litigation and observance of festivals, and what was so dear to Cardinal Wolsey in particular, wordly pomp and glory. Soon after leaving the pulpit the preacher was commanded to recant his statements. Failing to reach a compromise with the university authorities, on February 5, 1526, Barnes was placed under arrest in the Convocation House. Next day he was taken to Westminster to stand trial under Cardinal Wolsey. In a personal interview before the Cardinal he was offered Wolsey's personal help if he would submit to his authority. While Dr. Barnes politely thanked his superior for his goodwill, he added: "I will stick to the Scriptures, and to God's book according to the simple talent that God hath lent me."

Eventually penance was paid to the ruling authorities of church and university. It was either

revoke all before the Court, or die. Barnes chose submission. For his trouble the turbulent priest was committed to Fleet prison for six months. But what a nuisance! After becoming a free prisoner at the Augustinian priory in London, he began distributing copies of Tyndale's English Bible. Friends in the German Steelyard kept Barnes supplied with Testiments. Buyers were not wanting.

Friend and Confidant of Luther

Obviously at this stage of life circumstances had made Barnes anticlerical, without a "carefully conceived system of theology."⁵ But England was no longer safe for a relapsed heretic. In November, 1528, under the disguise of a poor man, he fled England for the Continent, whence he was to make his way to Wittenberg. Dr. Marcus Loane observes that "There was a bond between Barnes and Luther in the fact that they had both once belonged to the Augustinian Order, and Barnes was to provide the main personal connection between the English and the Lutheran Reformation."⁶

As the cause of evangelical doctrine was never far from the thinking of this Cambridge scholar, the "trim, merry friar" (to quote Stephen Gardiner) was moulded into a reformer, writer, preacher, and exponent of Biblical theology. Who could remain unaffected listening to a giant of Luther's calibre both preach and teach the Word of God? From Barnes' pen came the 'Sentences,' a series of 19 Theses

⁵Neelak S. Thernagel "Henry VIII and The Lutherans" (Concordia Publishing House 1965) p. 54.

⁶Marcus L. Loane "Pioneers of The Reformation in England" (Church Book Room Press 1973) pp.61-62.

defending the faith, likewise formulated in the Augsburg Confession and published in 1530. The most important of Barnes' literary works, 'The Supplication,' was written in English and addressed to King Henry VIII. Throughout his essays there is a constant regard for Scripture as the inspired Word of God and the only infallible source of religious knowledge. His grasp of the teachings of the early Church Fathers was a core element in his support of doctrines rooted in the Holy Scriptures. He was no innovator, but a defender of the Faith. That he wanted his king and all men to know.

Space does not permit a detailed account of those strange and heady events which permitted Barnes to return to England under safe conduct, where for nine years he remained in the royal service as a chaplain to Henry VIII. As well, he proved an able Lutheran ambassador to the English king and to English churchmen.

Difficult Days Under King Henry VIII

Things were hard for Dr. Barnes from the start. The English King imagined that he could win over Luther for an approval of his divorce from Queen Catherine. In no way was the German Reformer willing to bend to royal whims. A few days before Christmas 1531, Barnes stood before his sovereign to present Luther's unfavourable verdict that King Henry was bound under pain of eternal damnation to retain the wife he had married. How arduous to be an ambassador acting as an intermediary between an unscrupulous king, with designs of lording it over the church as supreme head in England, and all the complexities of Continental diplomacy!

Both Thomas Cromwell and Robert Barnes became the victims of Henry's intrigue. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike suffered at the hands of a

clever, yet unscrupulous monarch.

A significant period of negotiation between the English and Wittenberg divines, and one in which Robert Barnes played no small role, was at Wittenberg in 1436. This Anglo-Lutheran conference, which included Edward Fox, Nicholas Heath, and Robert Barnes, with the Lutherans of Wittenberg, produced the Wittenberg Articles of 1536. They represent an extraordinary agreement in the apostolic and catholic faith; a precursor of the doctrines set forth in the later 39 Articles of the Church of England. Had not Henry VIII replied with the Ten Articles, which side-stepped the definitive teachings of the Wittenberg Articles, a remarkable degree of unity might have been established between the English and German churches. It was not to be. Barnes was already losing favour in royal circles.

Dr. James McGoldrick in his fine study of "Luther's English Connection" comes to the conclusion: "By 1530 Robert Barnes had become a thoroughgoing Lutheran in his beliefs, and from that date forward he was a heretic by Henry's standards..... It was not until Dr. Barnes had outlived his usefulness that Henry found his theology intolerable. Clearly Robert Barnes died a victim of expediency."⁷

In 1538 another meeting of German and English theologians took place in London, and spelt out their common faith in the Thirteen Articles. Thomas Cranmer, Frederick Myconius, and Robert Barnes were among those present. Two words keep re-appearing in those Articles - "We teach." Dr. Barnes was not only a gifted preacher and a competent theologian, he was also a teacher of the evangelical faith.

⁷J. E. McGoldrick, "Luther's English Connection" (Northwestern Publishing House 1979) p. 34.

Teacher and Confessor

On four burning issues of the day, indeed of our time, Barnes' crisp teaching style is evident throughout his essays and works.

What is the church? Multitudes within and without visualize the church as a building, a society of mutual "do-gooders," and even a comfortable club for nice people. Let Dr. Barnes answer in his own personal and challenging way: "If Christ has not washed you and chosen you, then you are not of this church, though you ride with a thousand spiritual horses and have all the spiritual tokens on earth. But they that believe that Christ has washed them from their sins, and stick fast to His merits and to the promise made to them in Him, they are the church."⁸

Faithfulness to God's Word and Sacraments and the outliving of the Gospel in everyday life are integral to any understanding of Barnes' doctrine of the church: "It is plain that the holy church is the congregation of faithful men wherever they are in the world."⁹ He warned that "As soon as you forsake Christ and His holy Word, so soon are you the congregation of the devil and are thieves and murderers."¹⁰

Lest it be imagined that the church is a 'silent majority' cut off from action in the world, there is this earthy statement: "Where we see good works that do openly agree with the doctrine of the Gospel,

⁸Neelak S. Tjernagel, "The Reformation Essays of Dr. Robert Barnes" (Concordia Publishing House Ltd. London 1963), p. 39.

⁹Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 47.

these are good and sure tokens whereby we may judge that there are some men of the holy church."¹¹

As to the marks of the church and the fruits of faith, they are present when "the Word of God is purely and sincerely preached and the sacraments orderly ministered after the blessed ordinance of Christ.... Where men patiently suffer for the truth, and the hearers apply their living to Christ's doctrine and with meekness receive the holy sacraments: these are good and perfect tokens to judge that in that place there are members of the church."¹² Just in case his readers imagine that church is only a 'Sunday religion!', this confessor of God's whole counsel emphasizes that true believers live by the Gospel and are ready to follow in the steps of the Christ who suffered (1 Peter 2:21).

What is the ministry? Barnes refused to advocate one pattern of churchly government. The ministry is the ministry of the Word. "Man is but a minister and servant to this Word."¹³ All authority and godly order in the church flow from the authority of the inscripturated and living Word which Christ gave to His church. The ministers of Christ are therefore ministers of the common treasure and not lords over and above the church. Having said this, Barnes was no anarchist to ancient structures in the Church of God. Provided the Word was preached and the Sacraments rightly dispensed, as preacher and reformer he accepted the episcopal administration of the visible church. As one responsible for the drafting of the Wittenberg Articles of 1536, Barnes agreed with Article X: "We teach that bishops or pastors have the authority to establish

¹¹Ibid., p. 48.

¹²Ibid., p. 52.

¹³Ibid., p. 55.

ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies as well as such usages as feast days, ranks of clergymen, etc. Moreover, we teach that all things in the church should be done decently and in order and that such rites and ceremonies as may be observed without sin and which serve the cause of peace and order ought to be observed by everyone for the sake of peace and Christian love."

What is the place of the Bible? Is it merely a book of devotion? Is it a mixture of error and truth? Dr. McGoldrick draws out teacher Barnes on this question: "Throughout his theological writings Robert Barnes consistently regarded the Scriptures as the Word of God, and therefore his confidence in the authority of the sacred text was unbounded. He was fond of asserting that the words of Scripture were "written by the Holy Ghost." Barnes equated the Word of God with the words of Holy Scripture. He concluded that "to take away the scriptures from laymen is as much as to take Christ away from them."¹⁴ Like Luther, Barnes gave priority to the literal-historical sense, to the Christocentric perspective, and the discipline of comparing Scripture with Scripture to arrive at the right interpretation.

How is man saved from sin and hell? Is it by science, evolutionary development, education, a second spiritual baptism, kindly deeds? For Robert Barnes the doctrine of justification by faith alone is pivotal to understanding God's Word, and central to the whole plan of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. Dr. Marcus Loane regards Barnes' chapter entitled "Only Faith justifieth before God," as "the most able exposition of the doctrine on the part of any early English writer, and it reflects clearly how much he had learned from Luther."¹⁵

¹⁴J. E. McGoldrick, op cit., p. 65.

¹⁵Marcus L. Loane, op cit., p. 65.

The reformer was meticulous to keep the balance between the subjective character of faith and the objective action of God's salvation in the atoning death of Christ upon the Cross. The merits of Christ's work he applied in a personal way: "True it is that we do not mean that faith justifies us for the sake of its own dignity or perfection. But Scripture says that faith alone justifies because it is that through which alone I cling to Christ. By faith alone I am a partaker of the merits and mercy purchased by Christ's blood. It is faith alone that receives the promises made in Christ. Through our faith the merits, goodness, grace, and favour of Christ are imputed and reckoned to us."¹⁶

Condemned to Death

Open conflict broke out between Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Robert Barnes. The climax came in the debate on justification and purgatory. Bishop Gardiner supported the redemptive value of purgatory. These turned into lonely days for Barnes as he upheld the efficacy of the blood of the Lord Jesus. He felt deeply his aloneness: "but hitherto I stand alone in doing it. For although many persons approve my statements, yet no one stands forward but Latimer." Actually he was not alone. His Saviour was with him, providing added encouragement in the brave confessions of Jerome and Garrett.

In May 1540, acting on a report of a special council, Henry sent all three to the Tower of London. Having recourse to the terrible Act of Attainder, on July 30th, 1540, the three preachers, along with three Roman Catholics, were taken through

¹⁶Neelak S. Tjernagel, op cit., 35f.

the streets of London to be burned at Smithfield. Before the ordeal of fire, Robert Barnes was permitted to speak. Rising to the occasion he affirmed his belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, his own profession of Christian orthodoxy, and his fine exclamation: "I trust in no good work that ever I did, but only in the death of Christ. I do not doubt but through Him to inherit the kingdom of heaven."

So, Thomas Garrett, curate of London, and William Jerome, vicar of Stepney, along with Dr. Robert Barnes, pastor and defender of the Faith, faced the flames with hands joined together. Gentle and unfaltering they died in the Cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of the world.

"This Doctor, I say, we knew very well and it is an especial day to us to hear, that our good pious table companion and guest of our home, has been so graciously called upon by God to shed his blood, for His dear Son's sake, and to become a holy martyr. Thanks, praise and glory be to the Father of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, that He has permitted us to see again, as in the beginning, the times, wherein Christians who have eaten and drunk with us, are taken before our eyes, and from our eyes and sides, to become martyrs, i.e., to go to Heaven and become saints. Twenty years ago, who would have believed that Christ our Lord would be so near us, and, through His precious martyrs and dear saints, would eat and drink and speak and live at our table and home."

.....Martin Luther

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF GOD'S CHURCH TO HIS MINISTERS

EXEGESIS OF I CORINTHIANS 3:1-23*

-- Theodore Gullixson

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is filled with information about the proper life of a Christian congregation. In the first chapter Paul commends the members saying, "you are enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge ...so that you come short in no gift" (I Cor. 1: 5, 7). Yet Paul's whole letter discusses many problems in the congregation. The discussion of the difference between the wisdom of God and the foolishness of mankind is extended into Chapter 2. The natural man cannot know the things of God's Spirit unless these are revealed to him by the preaching of the cross. This foolishness of the human race can infect a Christian congregation until it does not walk in the Spirit but after the wisdom of this age (3:18).

The Corinthian congregation was infected with worldliness and childishness (3:1) so that Paul had to deal with many problems in his letter: divisions (Chapter 3), immorality (5), suing Christians (6), marriage (7), eating things offered to idols (8), supporting ministers (9), idolatry (10), resurrection of the body (15). Factions and divisions head the list because it is the root cause and source of most of the other problems mentioned in the letter.

*This exegetical paper is a slightly abbreviated version of the presentation made to the Arizona-California Pastoral Conference of the ELS in January, 1985.

If there is a faulty relationship between the members and their ministers, then spiritual growth cannot take its proper course. The Corinthians did not think that their factionalism was a problem. Therefore Paul warns them not to think too much of their pastors, past or present, lest they lose sight of their real Shepherd and the foundation of their faith (3:3-4). Paul closes the chapter with a promise that all things are theirs (3:22).

Although their pastor was not a part of the problem, Paul still warned all religious leaders not to make themselves to be more than what they are (3:7). There is no room in the Christian Church for developing personality cults or for claiming credit for work, because "God gives the increase" (3:6). Pastors also should make sure they are using the right materials to build on the true foundation (3:13, 15). Paul also comforts pastors with a promise that in spite of weakness or mistakes they will be saved if they hold on to the foundation of Christ (3:14, 15).

All the quotations from Scripture are taken from the New King James Version. The commentators are mentioned in the text or in parentheses and refer to the verse under discussion. Their abbreviations are as follows: (Kretz)-Kretzmann, (Stoeck)-Stoeckhardt, (M. Henry)-Matthew Henry, (P. Common.)-Pulpit Commentary. Please note the following abbreviations used for the Bible translations: AAT--Beck's an American Translation, LB--The Living Bible, LUTH--Luther's German Bible, NASB--The New American Standard Bible, NIV--The New International Version, RSV--Revised Standard Version, and TEV--Today's English Version. Two Lexicons were used. Their abbreviations are (THYR)-for Thayer's Lexicon and (A&G)-for Arndt and Gingrich's A Greek-English Lexicon.

I Corinthians 3:1

Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλήσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.

TRANSLATION: And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual people but as to fleshly people, as to childish people in Christ.

Paul speaks with a tone of regret in this first verse. He calls them "brethren" but means to reprimand them in his kindly manner. The historical aorist ἠδυνήθην (Lenski) points to the past relationship Paul had at Corinth. He reminds them that he dealt in the past with them like children, who were new to the faith. By the verb λαλέω Paul shows that he refers to his more childish discourse rather than the more 'orderly and substantive discourse' of λέγω (Trench, p. 296).

This problem was the result of their being σάρκινοι. Paul did not call them ψυχικοί, a word he used in 2:14 to describe the non-believer. But the adjective is used metaphorically to describe the Christian who still clings to worldly actions and thinking.¹ The source of this problem is their fleshly Old Adam which has not been drowned with its sins and evil lusts as it should.² The Living Bible describes the problem as people who are not "filled with the Spirit." This is a Reformed

¹The suffix -ικος denotes relation, and sometimes 'fitness or reality' (Goodwin #851)

²The suffix -υκος denotes the source of material, time, or peoples. (Smyth #858).

concept, for every Christian has a full measure of the Spirit but not everyone makes full use of the Spirit's gifts. Barnes refers to the fleshly feelings and the works of the flesh which create their own childishness. Paul uses the same word *σάρκινος* in Rom. 7:14 to say "I am carnal, sold under sin," and the "flesh lusts against the spirit...so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Gal. 5:17). We are not to yield our members as instruments of sin (Rom. 6:13) but to "walk in the Spirit" and not "fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Paul adds that the Corinthians are "babes in Christ." This portrayal does not mean that they are sinful or only one-half saved, but it still is a dangerous condition. For Paul tells the Ephesians, "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). The danger is that the spiritual child can deceive himself. "Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe (*νήπιος*)" (Heb. 5:13). Yet Paul acknowledges that they are still "in Christ" even though they are weak spiritually. "Babes" removes the blame, but suggests an unsatisfactory condition (Lenski).

Adults can be childish when they entertain childish ideas about God or doctrine, or they are not mature in their trust and faith in God. Paul wants them to grow up: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Cor. 13:11). And Peter urges Christians to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

I CORINTHIANS 3:2

γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα, οὔπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε.
ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε,

TRANSLATION: I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able (to eat it); and now you are still not able.

Peter urges Christians "as new-born babes to desire the pure milk of the word, that they may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). The picture is one of people feeding on the Scripture as if nothing else mattered. Paul here uses 'milk' in a different sense by contrasting it to 'solid food.' One important stage in the development of infants is when their stomachs can handle solid food. Paul knew that it was hard to live a Christian life in wicked Corinth. He was concerned that they grow spiritually so that they could combat the forces of evil that were against them.

What does Paul mean by γάλα? There are various answers. Lenski is correct in saying that Paul always preached all doctrines (Acts 29:27).³ He holds that Paul is distinguishing two modes of presenting doctrine, just as Jesus taught by parables and with plain speech. Stoeckhardt supports this view by referring to 1:5, "You were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge." On the other hand, Kretzmann states that milk is only the fundamental doctrines. The Pulpit Commentary says it means 'the simpler teachings' and Barnes has 'the more simple and elementary doctrines of Scripture.'

³"For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

The above interpretations will in turn affect the interpreters' idea of what Paul means by 'solid food.' Those who opt for milk meaning 'fundamental doctrines' state that 'solid food' represents the mysteries of the Scriptures. Reference is made to John 16:13: "I have still many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." On the other hand, Lenski quotes Mark 4:33: "And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it."

Since Paul "declared to (them) the whole counsel of God," the contrast of milk with solid food deals with how deeply he was able to instruct them. In this letter Paul could not teach them about how to proclaim the Gospel because he must deal with their factionalism over ministers. He could not talk about the unio mystica between Christ and His Church, but must discuss divorce, marriage and incest. He could not present the blessings of the Lord's Supper, because he had to chastise them for their love feasts and discuss what it meant to be an unworthy communicant. Here we see that it is the duty of ministers to know the capacities of their hearers and teach what they can bear, not all that the ministers know (M. Henry).

Paul is not blaming their minister, Apollos, for their spiritual weakness. The Corinthians themselves were presumptuous in acting "as if they had already graduated from the elementary department of Christian doctrine" (Kretz). Christians have themselves to blame when they do not endeavor to grow up (M. Henry). The author of Hebrews declares: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12).

What is remarkable to Paul is that after all

these years they "now are still not able" to eat or bear more difficult instruction. The present tense δύνασθε shows that this condition persists. His surprise at this state of affairs is shown by the particles he piles up, οὐδέ ἔτι νῦν. He implies that by now they should be able to digest more of God's Word than the most rudimentary teaching.

The KJV, NIV, and LB end the verse with a period. The other translations carry the thought to the next verse to show the reason why they are not able to bear more.

I CORINTHIANS 3:3

ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζήλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;

TRANSLATION: For you are still fleshly. For where there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and walking according to man?

Paul is a master in eliciting self-condemnation from his readers. After stating the charge that they were fleshly, he calls on them to see for themselves if their jealousy and strife were Christian virtues. We see how Paul follows his own admonition, "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). By using a question which expects a 'yes' answer, Paul leads them to convict themselves. There is no superior attitude from Paul, but one that is concerned with their spiritual weakness.

The Corinthians are and remain fleshly. The present tense (ἐστέ) describes a continuing state. Paul uses σαρκικός to show that whereas before there was a weakness of faith, now they are under the dominance of the fleshly state which prevents

them from growing up. Some commentators feel that Paul uses σάρκινος and σαρκικός interchangeably with no difference in meaning, but Lenski shows that the distinction is important.

Paul does not accuse the Corinthians of doctrinal differences, but of jealousy and strife (Grosheise). Some manuscripts add the word διχοστασία to the list, but it may have been added because of 1:10.⁴ Ἔργος and ζήλος are used four times together.⁵ All four references occur within a list of sins. Ζήλος refers to the vice of the heart that loves to lower others and exalt oneself. Its natural product is ἔργος (Lenski). Since Paul calls them "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:20), there is a real danger that the Corinthians could be led into sin and unbelief. "Factious spirits act on human principles, guided by pride and passions" (M. Henry). And James states, "For where envy (ζήλος) and self-seeking (ἐριθεία) exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there" (James 3:16).

Paul says that such conditions prove that the Corinthians are "fleshly and walking according to men." The last phrase explains what Paul means by σαρκίνοις καὶ νηπίοις of verse 1. The phrase

⁴The following MSS and καὶ διχοστασία (and dissension): p⁴⁶ (200 AD), Uncial D 96th Cent), and Minuscule 33 (9th Cent). The following omit the words: p¹¹ (7th Cent), Uncials § (4th Cent), "A" (5th Cent), "B" (4th Cent), and "C" (5th Cent), and Clement and Origen. This word is listed in the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:20. I Cor. 1:10 uses σχίσματα, but may have been the reason why διχοστασία was added to this verse. The KJV, AAT, and LB include the word in their translations.

⁵Romans 13:13, I Cor. 3:3, 2 Cor. 12:20 and Gal. 5:20.

κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε depicts the person who furnishes the standard of living. Used metaphorically, it delineates the direction of one's life (THYR). This phrase describes the limited nature of human thinking in contrast to God's (Kittel). The Corinthians are Christians, but their "walk" (way of Christian living) is in conflict with the Gospel, being a form of humanistic philosophy and life style. Commenting on this last phrase, Grosheide says it refers to the standard of 'natural men' who live as "unchanged men." This Reformed term is unacceptable. Barnes states: "You advance the same spirit that the great mass of men do." And Kretzmann refers to Romans 8:5. "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

The problem of strife and jealousy is ever with the Church militant. In spite of the Gospel preaching, which should result in Christian love, and admonitions "that you be perfectly joined in the same mind" (1:10), strife and jealousy still arise. Parishioners who compare pastors and refuse to listen to some they don't like are just as wrong as pastors who are jealous of the position and skills of fellow pastors. The history of the Christian Church gives many sad examples of where envy has caused strife. This is why Paul is so insistent in his letters that Christians "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25), "walk worthy of your calling" (Eph. 4:1), "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8), and "as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Gal. 2:6).

I CORINTHIANS 3:4

ὅταν γὰρ λέγη τις,
'Εγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δέ, 'Εγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, οὐκ
ἄνθρωποι ἐστε;

TRANSLATION: For whenever someone says, 'I am of Paul,' and another says, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not men?

Verse four is a Present General Condition, which states a general truth (Goodwin, #1393). The two genitives Παύλου and Ἀπολλῶ are not genitives of possession but of source, as the TEV and NIV translate. For in verse five Paul says "they are servants through whom you believed." The μέν...δέ construction emphasizes the sharp distinction that these factions made. It is difficult to translate ἄνθρωποι into English. The versions add words like "mere," "ordinary," and "worldly" to indicate Paul's disparaging use of the word.

Who was the better Christian? Which faction had the most truth? These are the questions that concerned the Corinthians. Paul mentions only two factions here because they are enough to make his point. (He depicts four groups in 1:12.) Evidently the Corinthians did not consider these disputes to be a serious matter, believing they showed great spiritual acumen (Stoeck). But to glorify men at the cost of Jesus is to assail Christ (Lenski). It took a lot of courage for Paul to rebuke his own adherents (P. Comm.), but Paul never counted the judgment of men to be anything (I Cor. 4:3) and would glory only in Christ (I Cor. 2:2).

The Bible clearly states that congregations are to respect their pastors (I Cor. 4:1), to rejoice at his coming (Phil. 2:28), to esteem them highly "for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:12), to give them double honor, "especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (I Tim. 5:17), and to "obey

them that have the rule over you...for they watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17). But members are not to honor past or present pastors more than others, for the honor should go to the Word that they preach and to Christ who sent them.

I CORINTHIANS 3:5

τί οὖν ἐστὶν Ἀπολλῶς; τί δέ ἐστιν
Παῦλος; δῆκονοι δι' ὧν ἐπιστεύσατε, καὶ ἑκάστῳ ὡς
ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν.

TRANSLATION: What therefore is Apollos? And what is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one.

By placing Apollos' name first, Paul shows his humility and declares that the order is not significant. Paul does not ask τίς (who?) but τί (what?) to emphasize the significance of the office and not the person (Grosheide), something that the LB and TEV miss. He wants to give all attention to God and not to men. Nor does he ask "What was Paul?" because he still claims a relationship to the Corinthians as the one who founded their congregation (1:6, 10) and as the apostle who writes to them (1:1).

While Paul did not allow anyone to criticize his office (Gal. 1:1), here he describes the true relationship between God and His ministers, or δῆκονοι. Elsewhere Paul calls himself a "δοῦλος Χριστοῦ" (slave of Christ--Rom. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Titus 1:1). Here he wants to emphasize that God was behind the work of Paul and Apollos, since δῆκονος means "one who executes the commands of a master" (THYR). In Chapter 4 Paul says, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1).

The work done by the 'deacons' is identified by

the phrase "through whom you believed," an historical Aorist pointing back to the fact of their conversion. Διὰ is an instrumental preposition describing the tools God used to bring them to faith. For Paul and Apollos are simply God's instruments in that work (Kretzmann). Just as a tennis racket or golf club is not praised for winning a game, neither should Paul or Apollos be praised. The one who wields the instrument deserves all the glory. The work of Paul and Apollos is not the real work (Grosheide). Faith is the result of God's handiwork. Therefore δούκονος is a most proper term to denote their inferior status before God, they being under His command (Barnes). Paul shows that faith is a work extra nos: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2).

The last phrase of verse 5 is variously translated. The LB ignores the phrase and the rest seem to state that God gives each minister abilities to be His instruments. Barnes typically speaks in terms of God's sovereignty in distributing His gifts to men. Again Paul shows true humility in giving all glory to God, as he does in Rom. 12:6, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, let us use them," and 3 Cor. 3:6, "Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant."

There is no cause for pride among pastors, as Paul will demonstrate in the next verses and as Jesus' parable concludes, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do!'" (Luke 17:10). Too often congregations have divided into factions over their ministers because their ministers have forgotten their true status before God.

I CORINTHIANS 3:6

ἐγὼ ἐφύτευσα, Ἀπολλῶς ἐπότισεν, ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς ἤρξανε·

TRANSLATION: I planted, Apollos watered, but God brought about growth.

This short verse begins Paul's discussion of the work of God in Corinth and the true relationship between God, His ministers, and His believers. Paul uses a picture from nature just as Jesus did in His parables of the Sower, the Tares and Wheat, and the Vineyard.

Paul is not so foolish as to state that no differences exist between ministers. But the differences lie in the nature of the work, not in the source or the results. Paul is not bragging when he says, "I planted," it is an historical fact, as all three verb forms declare. God gave Paul the gift to know how to use the Word to till the soil with the law to prepare hearts for the planting of the Gospel. Paul was born a Roman and a Hebrew and was educated a Greek and a Jew. He knew how to address those whom he met, as we see in Athens (Acts 17). He stayed at Corinth a year and a half doing this work of planting the seed.

The work of watering was given to Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, baptized into John's baptism, and taught by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28). He was "fervent in spirit...taught accurately the things of the Lord...(and) he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly." If he wrote Hebrews, Apollos was also eloquent, knew the Old Testament, and could present the Gospel with much imagery (P. Comm). The picture of watering refers to using Word and Sacrament to help the believers to "continue in God's Word" (Jn 8:31) and "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Lenski says that only the Orientals understand the need for constant watering as they live in lands where it does not rain for the whole summer. The Pulpit Commentary notes that St. Augustine referred this watering to baptism, which it calls a case of "distortion by ecclesiasticism." One could consider Augustine to be allegorizing here, yet it is true that reminding the people of their baptism and adding to their numbers through Baptism are parts of the work of watering.

Farmers work hard but cannot make one seed grow, it is a miracle of God. When one born dead in trespasses and sins is given spiritual life, that too is God's doing: "put on the new man which was created according to God" (Eph. 4:24). Paul and Apollos were merely instruments of God by which He brought the Corinthians to faith. Without God, all their work would have been in vain. God brings people to faith and causes that faith to grow.

From this historical fact Paul draws a conclusion which is both startling and necessary if the Corinthians are to stop quarreling.

I CORINTHIANS 3:7

*ὥστε οὔτε ὁ φυτεύων ἐστίν
τι οὔτε ὁ ποτίζων, ἀλλ' ὁ αἰξάνων θεός.*

TRANSLATION: So neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters, but God who causes it to grow.

This conclusion of Paul's is almost a proverb (Grosheide). By mentioning no names, Paul extends the truth he has stated to all ministers of every congregation. The present participles indicate that these acts of planting and watering continue into the future. The double negatives rule out

any standing on the part of men, while ἀλλὰ is strongly adversative. Θεός is placed last in the emphatic position to declare that He is Lord over all (Lenski).

Τι (anything) is to be taken in comparison with their relationship to God who is everything (Barnes). The work of planting and watering is not real work in comparison with what God does. The Treatise (Smalcald Articles) states: "In I Cor. 3:6, Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers.... Let not the authority of any avail more than the Word of God." (Treatise, Para. 11, Triglot, p. 507; Tappert, p. 321).

Paul is not deprecating the work of planting or watering, but the Epitome adds, "Without His grace our 'will and effort,' our planting, sowing, and watering are in vain unless He 'gives the growth.' Christ also states, 'Apart from me you can do nothing.'" (Epitome, Article II:6, Tappert, p. 470; Triglot, p. 787). Though Paul declares that he lacked nothing as an apostle, he says, "I am nothing" (2 Cor. 12:11). "For necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:16), Paul adds.

Barnes comments that God does not work miracles in the face of man's indolence. Just as God blesses the work of the farmer, so God uses sinful men to plant and water His Church so that He may cause it to grow. Therefore all honor should go to God, as Paul says: "He who glorifies, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:31 and Jer. 9:24).

This verse can comfort pastors. If they are faithful in planting the seed, watering with the Word, and building up their faith, God promises, "So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth,

it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please" (Isa. 55:11).

I CORINTHIANS 3:8

ὁ φυτεύων
δὲ καὶ ὁ ποτίζων ἓν εἰσιν, ἕκαστος δὲ τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν
λήμψεται κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον.

TRANSLATION: Both the one planting and the one watching are one, and each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Paul engages in modern math, of sorts. He just stated that both he and Apollos are "nothing." Now he adds them both together in verse eight and comes up with "one." Paul refers to the work in both verses. In relationship to God, their work is nothing. In relationship to each other, their work is one--that of proclaiming the Gospel. The tools are the same, the work is the same, and the results lead to the same goal. Apollos and Paul are not rivals, but they complement each other (Kretz). ἓν is neuter, indicating that the oneness is not found in the persons but in the work of preaching the Gospel.

Pride in or for any minister is doubly foolish because God is the rewarder of their work, not man. Ministers who work for the praise of men "are such as do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18).

Paul does not say that he shall "take, or carry away" his reward, for his work is nothing. λαμβάνω is passive in sense (to receive from another) as in Gal. 3:2, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

What is the standard by which the reward will be granted? Paul says, "to each according to his own labor." Melancthon states that this means the saints cannot bestow their merits on one another.⁶ The reward is given on the basis of the work and not on its success (Kretz). The apology puts it in proper perspective. "For the righteousness of the Gospel, which has to do with the promise of grace, freely receives justification and quickening. For the fulfilling of the Law, which follows faith, has to do with the Law, in which a reward is offered and is due, not freely, but according to our works. But those who merit this are justified before they do the Law."⁷

There is no thought of Jewish works here (Kittel). Grosheide comments that this is one more way Paul shows his subordination to God. As their leader, God does not receive rewards but grants them.

Paul spoke of rewards for him here on earth. His reward is to preach the Gospel without charge (I Cor. 9:18). The Corinthians themselves are the reward of his work (I Cor. 9:1). Concerning the future Paul states, "Whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord" (Eph. 6:8). God Himself says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life: (Rev. 2:10). Jesus promised His disciples twelve thrones (Matt. 19:28), and in a parable the Lord promised authority over ten cities to those "who were faithful in a very little" (Matt. 18:15-16), and He says, "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me,

⁶Ap XXI:29, Triglot p. 351; Tappert, p. 233.

⁷Ap III:245, Triglot p. 321; Ap IV:365, Tappert p. 163.

to give to every one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12). And Daniel says, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

Pastors do not need to be judged by mankind for their work. In comparison to God's reward, the rewards given by the Corinthians were a farce (Lenksi). The pastor's many labors, which are nothing, will be recompensed by a gracious God. The word *κόπον* implies more than 'work,' it implies "intense labor, toil," something the LB reflects. "The dangers, labors, and sermons of the apostle Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, and other teachers of the church are holy works, true sacrifices acceptable to God, battles by which Christ restrained the devil and drove him away from believers."⁸ The pastor may often toil at many labors, be disheartened, and even persecuted, all unknown to members. But all is known before the throne of God, who will reward us according to our toil. Now some may mind the work more than others, some may pursue it more, be asked to suffer more in view of their testimony and will receive different rewards (M. Henry).⁹

⁸Ap III:69, Triglot p. 175; Ap IV:190, Tappert p. 133.

⁹"We teach that good works are meritorious--not for the forgiveness of sins, grace, or justification (for we obtain these only by faith) but for other physical and spiritual rewards of this life and in that which is to come, as Paul says (I Cor. 3:8), 'Each shall receive his wages according to his labor.' Therefore there will be different rewards for different labors" (Ap IV: 194, Tappert p. 133; Ap III:73-74, Triglot p. 175).

In verse 8 Paul is not urging ministers to work harder for a reward. He is chastizing the Corinthians for their hubris (pride) and for causing divisions where none ought to exist. The next verse places pastor and congregation in their proper relationship.

I CORINTHIANS 3:9

θεοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί· θεοῦ γεώργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε.

TRANSLATION: For we are fellow-workers of God;
you are God's field, God's building.

In this transition verse, the picture of the field points back to the planting and watering of the Word, while the building metaphor points forward to the discussion that follows (Grosheide). The γάρ shows that Paul is stating a conclusion from the previous verse. He shall receive a reward because he is a co-worker with God. The two verbs ἐσμέν and ἐστέ place the pastors and laypeople in their proper relationship to God and His Word. By the present tense Paul indicates that the true state of the Corinthian congregation is found in the words 'field' and 'building.' Paul masterfully places Θεοῦ at the beginning of each phrase to show that God is the source and ruler of the whole Church--ministers and members.

Paul calls Apollos a fellow-worker because the work is the same as he just stated in the last verse. But he does not imply that Apollos' office has the same responsibilities and nature as an apostle's. Grosheide comments that the word συνεργός is in itself ambiguous, whether it means men who cooperate with God or it refers to men who cooperate in the service of God. The latter is clearly Paul's meaning here. Lenski points out that Paul does not call them co-laborers,

for God works but never labors. Pastors work with God in cultivating and building up His Church, as it is written, "They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).

This verse shows that the ministry is a distinctive office and is more than simple membership in the congregation. The Corinthians acted as if the ministers were theirs, but Paul takes the ministers out of their hands and judgment (Lenski). Members sin against their pastors when they judge them according to outward talents and abilities (Kretz).

As co-workers, Paul planted and Apollos watered. But Paul calls the Corinthian congregation "the field of God" because God sent Paul to preach to them, caused them to believe, kept them in the faith, purchased them with the blood of His Son, and led them under the rulership of Christ.¹⁰

With the change of metaphor, Paul uses a common picture of the holy Christian Church to continue describing the relationship of pastor and congregation: "You also, as living stones, are being

¹⁰The Bible contains many pictures of the Church as a vineyard or cultivated field: "My well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill" (Isa. 5:1), and "A vineyard of red wine! I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day" (Isa. 27:2). See also the parables of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-30) and of the Fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). In Rom. 11:6-24 Paul talks about how the Gentiles were grafted into the old olive tree of Israel.

built up a spiritual house" (I Pet. 2:5).¹¹ The field picture points to the work of God upon each individual, while the building metaphor describes the unity and togetherness which should result from the preaching of God's Word.

I CORINTHIANS 3:10-11

Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον ἔθηκα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. ἕκαστος δὲ βλέπω πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ. θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρὰ τὸν κείμενον, ὃς ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

TRANSLATION: According to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise architect I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. Now let each one take heed how he builds upon it. For no one is able to lay another foundation than what has been laid, which is Christ.

Paul's letters are filled with references to God's grace as a source of his apostleship. It never ceased to amaze Paul that "it pleased God... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him

¹¹Paul also says that the Ephesian Christians have built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple" (Eph. 2:20-22). Again, to the Corinthians, "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16). And the Lord speaks of building on the solid rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

among the Gentiles...." (Gal. 1:15). Paul knew he was totally undeserving of God's grace because he "persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (Gal. 1:13).¹² Pulpit Commentary calls δοθεῖσθαι Paul's baptismal Aorist because Paul dates these gifts back to his conversion in Damascus through baptism.

God's grace made Paul a "wise architect." Here σοφός means "skillful, or judicious" (Barnes). This 'wisdom' means subordinating every pretense of human wisdom to God's will (P. Comm). Paul's special skill was to be a bridge between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek and Roman cultures. Those skills are aptly described by Kretzmann: "Paul was not the possessor of only a single gift of grace. He had great executive ability, he was a forceful preacher, he possessed great tact in approaching difficult cases, he could adapt himself to a great variety of conditions with great readiness." (pp. 99-100). It takes a master-builder to lay the right foundation if the congregation is to remain sure.

Paul also implies that God gave others the gift to build up the congregation. Some pastors are able to attract people to the Gospel, others

¹²Also: "I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). "By the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10). "I have written more boldly to you...because of the grace given to me by God" (Rom. 15:15). "And when James...perceived the grace that had been given to me...." (Gal. 2:9). And "If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you" (Eph. 3:2).

build up their faith by patient teaching, "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Each works as the Spirit gives him grace, for "there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord" (I Cor. 4-11). Notice that the Aorist tense is used to describe Paul's foundation work and the present durative shows the continuing work of Apollos (Lenski).

Verse 11 identifies just what the foundation is: Jesus Christ. He places the two on opposite ends of the verse for emphasis. The negative construction is used to eliminate all competing foundations. There is no need for Paul to draw up a new blueprint every time he starts a new congregation as we do with houses. For κείμενον indicates that the foundation has already been laid (perfect passive) by God from eternity (Kretz), as it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16).¹³

With this foundation the Corinthians can test the work of those who claim to be building up the Church (Lenski). Paul is not favoring Gospel reductionism here, for to believe in Christ is to believe all that He commanded and taught.¹⁴ The antecedent

¹³Also Jesus' words: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16-18). After Isaiah 28:16, Jesus is called the chief cornerstone in I Peter 2:6, Acts 4:11-12, and Eph. 2:20.

¹⁴Barnes lists the following foundation doctrines: "His incarnation, His Divine nature, His instructions, His examples, His atonement, His resurrection, and His ascension."

of the definite relative ος is Θεμέλιον, so Paul is saying that the foundation is none other than Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry also refers here to I Cor. 4:15: "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel."

The minor workmen must follow the direction of the master-builder (Kretz). Ministers dare not inject their fancies or false reasonings (M. Henry). Those who attempt to lay "other foundations" do so from their own subjective speculations (Lenski). The true foundation cannot be modified to please people without damage to the whole building (Barnes). So "If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). Since some in Corinth insist on building upon personalities, the members must give heed to what they are hearing. Paul has reason to fear that the work will not be done right (Lenski). Hence the warning in verse 10. "Mere zeal for the Lord, a mere avidity for work, is not sufficient to determine the method of the ministry of Christ" (Kretz).

On the other hand, Luther's word also reassures us: "I have...noted in all histories of all Christendom that all those that correctly had and held the chief article of Jesus Christ, remained well and secure in the true Christian faith....For he who herein stands correct and firm that Jesus Christ is true God and man, who died for us and rose again, for him all the other articles will fall in line and stand firmly by his side, so altogether sure it is what St. Paul says, Christ is the chief good, basis, foundation, and all in one" (Kretz. p. 100).

Ministers must ever remain humble about their work. Pride has ruined the ministry of many men and has offended many laypeople. Neither can we

let anyone disparage the grace God has given us, since God's glory and Word are at stake. As usual, we must walk the thin line that avoids either problem and be able to know the difference between the two.

I CORINTHIANS 3:12-13

εἰ δέ τις ἐποικοδομεῖ ἐπὶ τὸν θεμέλιον χρυσόν, ἄργυρον, λίθους τιμίους, ξύλα, χόρτον, καλάμην, ἑκάστου τὸ ἔργον φανερόν γενήσεται, ἢ γὰρ ἡμέρα δηλώσει· ὅτι ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται, καὶ ἑκάστου τὸ ἔργον ὁποῖόν ἐστιν τὸ πῦρ [αὐτὸ] δοκιμάσει.

TRANSLATION: Now if someone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each one shall become evident, for the day makes it manifest; because it is being made known by fire, and the fire shall prove the work of each one whatever manner it is.

This Simple Conditional sentence (verse 12 is the protasis and verse 13 is the apodosis), "was used when one wished to assume or seem to assume the reality of his premise."¹⁵ Following Paul's warning in verse 10, Paul extends the metaphor to show how each should build upon the true foundation. He lists six building materials that pastors use. This list clearly contains two groups of three each, distinguished by their durability against fire. The commentators discuss whether Paul envisioned one building in which all six materials are used, or two buildings in which one of the two

¹⁵Dana and Mantey, p. 289. The εἰ can go with any indicative tense in the protasis, with no fixed form in the apodosis. All the conditional sentences of Chapter 3 have this construction.

groups of three is used. Calvin opts for the former; Barnes, the TEV, and the LB hold to the latter, which seems to be the best interpretation. The twice-used phrase ἐκάστου τοῦ ἔργου seems to show that Paul does not accuse every pastor of building with wood, hay, or straw.

Now to what do the six materials refer? Paul definitely does not mean false doctrines, because they build on a false foundation. Nor is he thinking of real gold in pagan temples of Corinth (P. Comm). Also, it would be foolish to think of building a real house with gold, silver, or grass. Paul uses them as a figure for the different teachings that are used to build up the Church of God. The gold, silver, and marble refer to the true doctrine of pastors that rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) which can stand the test of fire. Since Paul is speaking about building up the Church, the ἔργον of verse 13 must refer to the work of the ministry of the Gospel.

The more difficult question is to what does the latter group refer if false doctrine is ruled out? All commentators agree that the true foundation remains, but that unprofitable ideas are brought into the teachings. Stoeckhardt mentions the thoughts and pet ideas of men where human reasoning and imagination try to prop up Christian tenets or try to make the Gospel appealing through flowery rhetoric.¹⁶

¹⁶Lenski says the problem was that the Corinthians were judging 'woody' teachings and practices as gold and silver, but this was just a step away from using the wrong material and losing Christ. Barnes declares that much is mistaken for true piety like "enthusiasm, wildfire, fanaticism, bigotry; much affected humility; much that is supposed

On the last day all these materials will be tested by fire. The wood, hay, and stubble will be burned, destroying all falsehood and leaving truth and reality (Lenski). The works of factionalism in Corinth are stubble and will be burned.

This fire does not just reveal the works, but tests and consumes them (Lenski). The Roman Catholics declare that this fire refers to purgatory. All the commentators are agreed that this is false because the fire is applied to works, not to men; and is employed on the Last Day, not now. Paul uses the figure of the fire to picture God's judgment upon the works of believing pastors, just as the Bible elsewhere speaks of the 'refiner's pot' for testing (Prov. 17:3, 27:21) and the 'refiner's fire' (Mal. 3:2).¹⁷

to be orthodoxy; much regard to forms and ceremony; to 'days, and months, and times, and years' (Gal. 4:10); much overheated zeal, and much precision and much sanctimoniousness." The Apology adds: "Of course, there are also many weak people in it (Church) who build on this foundation perishing structures of stubble, that is, unprofitable opinions" (Ap VII:20, Tappert, p. 171-172; Triglot, p. 233).

¹⁷Barnes notes that Macknight refers to the fire of persecution while Whitby speaks of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans--both false. In the N.T. fire is used figuratively for cleansing judgment (Grosheide) or for testing and purifying. Jesus used the former in Matt. 3:10--"every tree which does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire," and "God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29, Deut. 4:24), and "come in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God" (2 Thess. 1:8). The latter is found in I Pet. 1:7 and Mal. 3:3.

In this present life many things are unclear because they are not correctly evaluated (Grosheide). The Corinthians were making mistakes in their judgments concerning their pastors. But on the Last Day, the Judge "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart" (I Cor. 4:5).¹⁸

That Paul is referring to the Last Day is shown by the three future verbs of verse 13, which describe God's revealing work. The verb γενήσεται is middle in form but may be passive in sense, for God Himself will make everything evident (φανερὸν), that is, 'visible to the eyes.' That all shall become visible and recognized as truth by all (δηλώσει) is due to the fire's ἀποκάλυψις. This interesting verb ἀποκαλύπτεται is a futuristic present. This means that the action is so certain that it is seen as already coming to pass.¹⁹ The fire will 'uncover' and 'make bare' all that is hidden so that everyone will see and acknowledge God's righteous judgment.

God will be testing the works of each pastor for their genuineness, to show their suitability for a reward or for judgment. He will surprise

¹⁸See also Heb. 4:18, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eye of him with whom we have to do." And Psalm 139:4, "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether." Just as all people must account for every idle word (Matt. 12:36), so pastors will have to account for all their work before God (Heb. 13:17).

¹⁹Dana and Mantey, p. 185. A construction similar to the Hebrew prophetic perfect.

some pastors who had the praise of men by showing that their works were straw. Even faithful pastors will be surprised at the result (Matt. 25:37). Earthly gold will perish with the earth, but the golden works of faith will remain untouched by the fire.

Paul does not need to judge the Corinthians and their works, he leaves that to God's revelation. But the Corinthians need to take heed lest their works be burned. For verses 14 and 15 describe the result.

I CORINTHIANS 3:14-15

εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον μενεῖ ὃ ἐποικοδόμησεν, μισθὸν
λήμψεται· εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαήσεται, ζημιω-
θήσεται, αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται, οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός.

TRANSLATION: If the work which someone built remains, he shall receive a reward. If the work of someone shall be burned up, he shall suffer loss, yet he shall be saved, but so as through fire.

The results of the fire of judgment are described by these two conditional sentences. Both verses begin with the same four words, followed by directly opposite verbs: μενεῖ and κατακαήσεται, both futures. The results are just the opposite of each other. For one has a reward and the other suffers a loss. It shows why Paul's warning to take heed how each pastor builds is so important. Ἔργον is modified and identified by ὃ ἐποικοδόμησεν (Lenski). This is not the sanctified life of the Christian, but the work of the pastor as he shepherds his flock and feeds his sheep. This Aorist Participle suggests that the work has already been done when the test is made. By the indefinite τινος, Paul includes the work of all who build on the true foundation with

the true and precious teachings of the Gospel. All true ministers are included in the apodosis also. They shall receive a reward. This is a reward of grace, not of merit, for by God's grace the work is done, by grace it stands the test, and by grace it is rewarded!²⁰

Those who build with wood, grass, or straw shall suffer loss because their works will be burned by the fire. God is again the active agent of the passive verb. Now the works of Schleiermacher, Kant, Albert Schweitzer, R. Schuller, and Sun Myung Moon will be judged on a different scale.²¹ They will suffer personal loss in the fires of hell if they believed as they wrote. On the other hand, God will have to judge how much of the works will be burned of Origen, Flacius, Calvin, Arminius, Stub, or Billy Graham, if they remained on the true foundation. Melancthon writes, "The writings of the holy fathers show that even they sometimes built stubble on the foundation but that this did not overthrow their faith. Most of what our opponents maintain, on the other hand, does overthrow faith."²²

Through a fortunate inconsistency, some will still believe in Jesus while holding to false ideas. The danger remains that they may lose their faith because of the false ideas. How much money, effort, time, and talents have been wasted in following foolish human notions, preaching for effect, and teaching to show off knowledge. How much good work

²⁰ See verse 8 for a discussion of what the reward refers to.

²¹ See Jesus' parables of the burning of chaff and tares: Matt. 3:12, 13:30, 40; Heb. 13:11 and Mal. 4:1.

²² Ap VII:21, Tappert, p. 172; Triglot, p. 233.

is ruined through envying, petty jealousies among brethren, anger, and other sins.

Yet they will be saved! Their works will be burned and they will suffer the loss of some heavenly glory, but just what the loss is Paul does not say, and we might not be able to comprehend it. Their rescue still depends on the fact that Jesus died to pay for all the sins of the world. We can be comforted by knowing that God will be gracious to us in spite of our weaknesses and sins. But Paul also warns, "I discipline my body...lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Cor. 9:27).

There are various ways of translating the last phrase of verse 15. Beck and the Living Bible picture one who goes through a wall of flames. Others just say "escaping through fire" (NIV). Kretzmann describes a person who is saved from a shipwreck but loses all his possessions, or like one who runs from a burning house naked. The idea is one of narrow escape, as in Amos 4:11--"You were a firebrand plucked from the burning" and in Jude 23 --"But others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

I CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ
οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν; εἴ τις τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φθειρεῖ,
φθερεῖ³ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν,
οἷτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς.

TRANSLATION: Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If someone defiles the temple of God, God will defile him; for the temple of God is holy, whoever you are.

Paul lovingly calls upon the Corinthians to remember what they already know. It is a favorite device for emphasizing important points (Lenski). Through this rhetorical question Paul avoids a better-than-you attitude and informs them that they are established on the true foundation and that Apollos has used gold to build them up to be a temple of God.

But the Corinthians seem to have forgotten, in their factions and strife, what it means to be the temple of God (Grosheide). The temple of God is holy. Now the Jews believed that their Temple was holy in itself. But Paul is speaking of another temple, the Una Sancta, calling it the temple of God, in which the Holy Spirit dwells. The holiness of the temple does not consist in the actions of the members but in the objective holiness of Christ (Grosheide), not in the attributes of the Spirit given to men but in his holy activities through the means of grace.²³ For by faith in Christ the Spirit consecrates the believer to God and sets him apart for holy living.

Because of that faith, the Corinthians are the

²³Barnes on the indwelling of the Spirit: It does NOT mean 1) that the Spirit is personally united to Christians, 2) that any communication of His attributes or nature is given to Christians, or 3) that there is any union of essence or nature with Christians. The indwelling is the Holy Spirit's influence or agency. It DOES MEAN: 1) that the Church is the seat of His operations, 2) that as in Gal. 5:22, 23 His influences are present, 3) that the Spirit produces consolation and sustains and guides His people, 4) that people are regarded as consecrated to Him, and 5) that Christians are dear to the Spirit.

temple of God (present tense). The Pulpit Commentary applies ναός to both individuals and the community. In Kittel, Lenski and Barnes, ναός refers to the community of Christians. The latter is to be preferred since both ἐστε and ὑμῶν are plural in number. How can Paul call the Corinthian church the temple of God when there are so many people with problems and they have to be told to discipline a member? While the congregation in Corinth contained hypocrites, Paul refers to those in whom the Spirit dwelt, "whoever you are."

Just as God inhabited the Israelite Tabernacle (Ex. 31:7), so the Spirit dwells with the holy Christian Church. Most translators use "to live" for ὀικεῖ, while the NASB and RSV use "to dwell." The latter is to be preferred, because it best describes the unio mystica of the Spirit. Paul is not here speaking of God's omnipresence. This indwelling unity with the Spirit is mediated through the Word and Sacraments which unite believers in the same faith. Paul states, "You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens...having been built on the foundation of God in the Spirit" Eph. 2:19-22). The Spirit dwelt among the Corinthian believers so that they might know the truth and take heed of those who would defile the temple.

The first part of verse 17 is in the form of an adage or proverb (Barnes). Paul uses the chiasmic construction to put the two subjects at each end and the two verbs next to each other. The two verbs have the same meaning, though the KJV uses two different words (defile...destroy). God's Church cannot be "destroyed" as most translations suggest. It can be defiled by those who bring in wood, hay, or stubble to build up the temple. This does not affect the holiness of the Una Sancta. Perversion of doctrine, inciting to wrath and deceptions

Kretz), factions and false teachers (P. Comm), or lies and deceptions that drive the Spirit from the hearts of the Corinthians (Lenski) can hurt the spread of the Gospel and trouble their faith. But Jesus says, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Those who defile the temple will most assuredly be defiled by God on the Last Day. Paul cannot mean those who will be saved as through fire. The defilers are those who "secretly bring in destructive heresies...and bring on themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). Paul does not have to state how God will do this. The pronoun τοῦτου, the object of φθερεῖ, agrees in gender and number with ναὸν, but τις is the antecedent. For God will not defile the temple but the one who defiles the temple.

Just what οὔτινες ἐστε ὑμεῖς means will continue to puzzle the scholars (Lenski). The subject ὑμεῖς is plural, but its antecedent ναὸς is singular. Most translations join ναὸς to οὔτινες, while the NASB makes it refer to ἄγιος. Paul will not identify those who are in the temple, God knows who they are. But everyone in Corinth will need to examine himself and watch for self-deception.

I CORINTHIANS 3:18

Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός.

TRANSLATION: Let no one deceive himself; if someone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become foolish in order that he may become wise.

The fact that the Corinthians have allowed factions to grow among them means that they are in danger of self-deception. Ἐξαπατάτω plus ἑαυτὸν

is reflexive, indicating the Corinthians must blame themselves if they are deceived. This verb means both 'entice' (as Samson's wife was ordered to do) and 'hoodwink by a lie' (as Satan deceived Eve). Deception results in error when people "by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18), and sin as in "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression" (2 Tim. 2:14). The negative μή is regular with imperative (Lenski).

Self-flattery is one step away from self-deceit (Lenski). The translations make wisdom of this age the standard of self-deception, while Lenski declares that ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι modifies the whole phrase, not just "wise." Paul shows what his attitude of worldly wisdom is by the phrase δοκεῖ σοφός εἶναι. Some of the leaders in Jerusalem seemed to be wise but weren't (Gal. 2:6). The wisdom leading to self-deception is not the subjective evaluation of oneself, but the objective detraction from Christ by worldly wisdom (Lenski). This type of deception is evident in the modern Gnostics-Armstrong, Jehovah Witness, Christian Science, and most Millennialists, Charmismatics and cults. The church might resort to the wisdom of the world to further its work, but this too is self-deception.

The Corinthians pretended to be wise, but Paul did not yield to their pretensions. They were still "babes in Christ." Paul has already discussed the difference between God's wisdom and man's foolishness.²⁴ Paul does not disparage true

²⁴See Chapter 1: "The world through wisdom did not know God" (21), "The foolishness of God is wiser than man" (25), "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" (27); and Chapter 2: "The things of the Spirit are foolishness to the natural man" (14), and "we speak wisdom among those who are mature (6).

education, for he was the most educated of the apostles. Genuine science and earthly knowledge are not repudiated; but all hypotheses, theories, and speculations in the realm of science and philosophy are rejected because they lord it over the wisdom of God and the knowledge of Christ (Lenski). The test for all knowledge is whether or not it conflicts with God's Word (Kretz).²⁵

Through a favorite paradox, Paul declares that only the humble 'fool' can be 'wise.' For "it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe" (I Cor. 1:21). In order to become wise, a person must become foolish, *μωρὸς γενέσθω*. In each of these developments the agent is God. For by the second use of the Law He causes us to confess our sins and despair of human worth and knowledge. The result is true wisdom, "The law becomes our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

Every pastor must bow before God's 'foolishness' and preach the Gospel "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect" (I Cor. 1:17). Though we be mocked a thousand times as a fool or as a narrow-minded bigot, we dare not seek the world's wisdom to help the church (Kretz). Therefore, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

²⁵The story of Galileo shows that the church must know God's Word so that it does not reject what true science has discovered.

I CORINTHIANS 3:19-20

ἡ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ
τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν· γέγραπται γάρ,
'Ὁ δρασσόμενος τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν
καὶ πάλιν,
Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν
ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι.

TRANSLATION: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God; for it is written, "He takes the wise in their craftiness;" and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are useless."

Paul here reaches an important conclusion (Grosheide) as the two O.T. quotations show. Σοφία is the subject of the sentence, not God as the AAT has. This noun is strongly contrasted with μωρία just as in 1:25, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." The preposition παρὰ means "beside," or with the locative "with, before," which is similar to the Hebrew phrase 'in His sight.'

Just as the pagan Greeks followed after one philosopher or another, the Corinthians thought they were wise in doing the same thing with their pastors. But they should not take Paul's use of μωρία lightly. For man's foolish wisdom leads to spiritual disaster.

Just how serious this matter is to Paul is shown by the quotation from Job 5:13. God is not a passive spectator of human affairs for He catches them in their cunning (AAT-trickery, NIV-craftiness, TEV-cleverness). The LXX translates Job with ὁ καταλαμβάνων σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ φρονήσει for לִכְדּוֹת חַכְמִים בְּעִרְמָם .26 Two points are in order.

26 לִכְדּוֹת --to take as a captive, intercept, עִרְמָם --to make naked, be crafty. חַכְמִים --wise, intelligent, shrewd, subtle, crafty.

One, Paul is not afraid to make his own translation to suit his needs without doing violence to the text. And two, Paul quotes Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, whom God chastises with, "You have not spoken of Me what is right" (Job 42:7). What Eliphaz said was true, but he made a false application in respect to Job's situation (Grosheide).

Greek drama is full of stories about people being caught by their own hubris, Oedipus being one. Paul speaks to the Corinthians in terms they can understand. The Bible shows that God actively frustrates the craftiness of mankind. The heathen may rage, but God laughs at them with derision (Psalm 2:1-4).²⁷

Self-deceived people may think that God cannot know their thoughts or will not punish them. But the Bible says, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth" and that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 6:5, 8:21). Jesus did not need "that anyone should testify of men, for He knew what was in man" (John 2:24).

²⁷God laughed when man built a tower in Babel to remain united, and when Pharoah would not let the Israelites leave Egypt. Jezebel quested for Naboth's blood and God left her blood splattered over the street. The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus, but He showed them how foolish they were. They tried to get rid of Jesus, but He rose from the dead and they were destroyed by the Romans. The papal bull sought to stop Luther dead, but it led to the furtherance of the Gospel through the spread of the Reformation. The Prussian Union sought to end Lutheranism, but God sent many over to America to establish the truth in that land.

If Paul has such a high view of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), why does he change Psalm 94:11, which has "thoughts of man מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם".²⁸ Kretzmann explains that what is true of human vanity in general is also true in particular of human philosophy. And the Pulpit Commentary declares that the Psalmist referred to the perverse despisers of God, and thus Paul could rightfully make this change.

Against God all human wisdom is useless and ineffectual. The Corinthians needed to remember these passages so that they may not be deceived by the world or by those leaders who were promoting worldly wisdom (Lenski).

I CORINTHIANS 3:21-23

ὥστε μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις· πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν, εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλῶς εἴτε Κηφᾶς εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος εἴτε ἐνεστώτα εἴτε μέλλοντα, πάντα ὑμῶν, ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστοῦ, Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ.

TRANSLATION: And so let no one glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the universe, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

One might have expected Paul to use σοφοί rather than ἄνθρωποι, the word he changed in the last verse. It is foolish to take pride in or boast about men since their wisdom is useless. It is foolish to

²⁸κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι εἰσὶ μάταιοι.

יְהוָה יֵדַע מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם כִּי תְמָה הַבַּל:

glory in men when all things are ours. Paul's own letters show that he is not speaking theoretically. For Paul had impeccable Jewish qualifications, but "these I have counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:4-8). No one could match the work and persecutions of Paul as an apostle, yet he says, "I will rather glory (καυχῆσομαι) in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 11:19-33, 12:9). Therefore Paul concludes, "God forbid that I should glory (καυχᾶσθαι) except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

Neither should Lutherans boast of Luther, Chemnitz, Walther, Pieper, or Koren. God did bless them with wonderful insights into the Scripture which we should investigate. But pastors of every generation need to study and learn the Scriptures for themselves just as the above men did. People glory in men when they boast about them, their qualities, teachings, and wisdom in any measure apart from Christ and the gospel (Lenski). The list of 'saints' in the Lutheran Book of Worship is a dangerous example of glorying in men rather than God in spite of the disclaimers, because included in the list are heretics and unbelievers.

The Corinthians tended to underrate their privileges by exaggerating their monopoly of some of them (P. Comm). Paul has to remind them that "all things are yours." That this is true is due only to Christ, with whom Christians are united by baptism (Gal. 3:27). In exalting Jesus, God "put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church" (Eph. 1:23). Since Christ works "all things together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28), Christians really rule all things through their Head by prayer. This is what Jesus promised in His sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

This is why Paul ends the chapter by saying "you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." He is not speaking about the relationships between individuals or between the Persons of God. For εἶναι τινος never refers to ranks or subordination, but it does mean 'possession' (Lenski). We are God's by election (I Cor. 1:27, 28), and by adoption as sons through faith. The Christians' royal power is exercised through Christ (Kretz).

But the Corinthians may not have caught all that Paul implied by "all things are yours." So Paul lists just what are theirs, a list similar to that of Romans 8:38. Paul includes both physical and spiritual elements, beginning with the least to the greatest, the least being Paul himself. Except for Christ and God, everything else is underneath the Christian (Lenski). Lenski adds that Christ is not in the list because He cannot be compared with men.

The Corinthians were claiming Paul or Apollos, but Paul declares that he and all ministers were their possession. "In I Cor. 3:4-8 Paul places ministers on an equity and teaches that the church is above ministers. For he says, "All things are yours...." This is to say that neither Peter nor the other ministers should assume authority over the church...."²⁹

The 'cosmos' appears to be the property of Satan. He claimed to be able to give it to Jesus if He would worship him. But the world really stands for the sake of God's elect. All states, conditions, offices, trades, and professions further the cause of Christ (Kretz). The word κόσμος bids us to look

²⁹Treatise:11, Tappert, page 321; Triglot, page 507.

beyond our globe and to consider that the whole universe operates for our good. "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).³⁰

Life gives us an opportunity to prepare for heaven (M. Henry). True life, spiritual life, is ours through Christ and ours by baptism. Death releases us from temptation and sin (Lenski) and brings us to eternal life. We possess power over death because Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

The past is God's, not ours, as the present and the future are. We own the present because God gives us all good things, and the future because God promises us an eternal future with Him. Therefore we can say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21--Cf. Mk 10:29-30). All things are ours, but Christians dare not claim or seize dominion over all things. God will give us what we need.

It is most foolish to boast in religious leaders when the Corinthians have all things. There is no need to fight over whether Ἐγὼ εἶμι Παύλου or Ἐγὼ εἶμι Ἀπολλῶ. (cf v.4) By a masterful stroke Paul declares that the Corinthians are Χριστοῦ. They do not need anyone else. Instead the Corinthians are to direct their energies to using God's gifts as He intended--to the spreading of God's honor and glory into the world (Kretz).

³⁰Luther: "Everything in the wide world belongs to Christ the Ruler. What emperors, kings, princes, government, and subjects possess, that is all Christ's. It has all been subjected to Him" (Kretz.).

As pastors who have been given grace to proclaim God's Word, we need to ever recognize that God has made us what we are, that we serve God only as long as we submit to the foolishness of preaching Christ and build with gold on the true foundation of Christ, and that by remaining faithful to our calling God will bless us here and reward us in eternity. Professional or personal pride, bickering among brethren, officiousness, yielding to human wisdom and reasoning will only tear down and defile God's church. We need to teach our congregations that only by working together can the Kingdom of God be built up.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

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