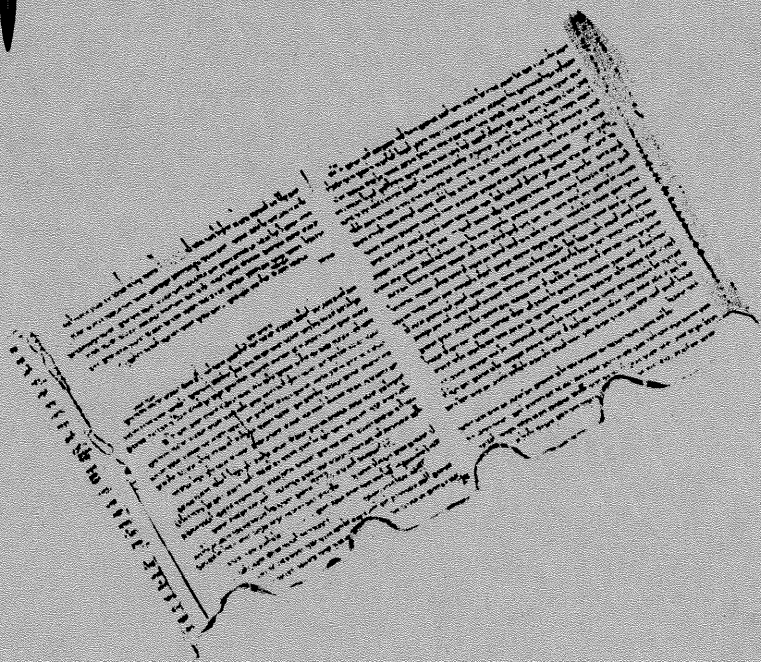


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FOREWORD

In this issue of the Quarterly the sermon by Pastor David Haeuser emphasizes that the proclamation of sin and grace must never be relegated to the background, but must always be in the forefront of all of our church work. Rev. Haeuser is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Belle Gardens, California and also director of Project Christo Rey, a Hispanic mission in that area.

The article by Pastor Herbert Larson on THE CENTEN- NIAL OF WALTHER'S DEATH is both interesting and timely. Pastor Larson shows from the history of the Norwegian Synod that there existed a warm and cordial relationship between Dr. Walther and the leaders of the Synod, and that we as a Synod are truly indebted to this man of God. Rev. Larson is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas.

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) officially comes into existence on January 1, 1988, our readers will appreciate David Jay Webber's research into the writings of some of the theologians of this new merger wherein he clearly shows that these teachings are un-Lutheran. David Webber was raised in the LCA and is presently a senior seminarian at Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

An exegetical treatment of Romans 7:14-25 by Professor Daniel Metzger explains the nature of the paradox in this section of Holy Scripture. Professor Metzger teaches religion and English at Bethany Lutheran College. He is currently on a sabbatical working on his doctorate.

We also take this opportunity to wish our readers a blessed Epiphany and a truly happy and healthy New Year in the Name of the Christ-Child in whom alone we have lasting peace and joy.

--WWP

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The following sermon was preached at the communion service of the annual convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Mankato, Minnesota, June 17, 1987, by Pastor David Haeuser of Commerce, California.

TEXT: Isaiah 53:6

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

We are here for a communion service in connection with the annual convention of our synod. So it is as God's people, concerned about God's work that we are gathered. It might be asked, then, is this the most appropriate text for us as convention delegates? Don't these basic facts about sin and grace belong rather to the background, something we've heard before and now are just understood, so that we can get to the real nuts and bolts of church work: the plans and rejections, the programs and budgets, the resolutions of encouragement and thanks--all the big and little things that are needed for an organization to function smoothly? Do we, of all people, especially need to be reminded of our guilt? And is a constantly renewed assurance of the grace of God really of such primary importance, especially for us?

If we really look closely at Isaiah's prophecy, we shall see that it is directed especially to us: that we are precisely those who stand in need of being reminded of these fundamental facts of our whole existence. In fact, there would be no point whatsoever for our gathering here in Mankato on these hot June days were it not for this simple fact: that ALL OUR GUILT WAS ON HIM.

We all have gone astray. In that lies the guilt above all. Rather than remain with the Shepherd, with Him who eagerly makes His own lie down in green pastures, who leads beside still waters, who desired to carry us in the paths of righteousness, we left Him, forsook Him. We wandered off, thinking to find yet greener pastures, and instead finding only the yawning pits and sheer cliffs of destruction. We were gone astray, helplessly lost, with no means at all of finding our way back to the Good Shepherd.

But of whom does the prophet say this? Who is the "we all" with which our verse emphatically begins? It is true that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Sin and guilt are universal according to the clear teaching of Scripture. But that is not the chief emphasis here. Isaiah, the Lord's servant, he who was called by God to announce His judgment against a wayward people, he who took God's own words on his lips, was himself a part of that people that had gone astray. His own guilt and sin, his utter unworthiness stares him in the face.

Yet Isaiah also appears as a spokesman for a group. "We all." Who are the "we?" This chapter, which so forcefully describes all the consequences of sin and iniquity, which speaks of grief, sorrows and stripes, which portrays the Servant of the Lord being stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, goes on to say, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." It is for God's own people that the Servant dies. Since the covenant that God established, calling Israel to be His own, delivering it from the bondage of Egypt, caring for it in the wilderness, tenderly calling it back to Himself through the prophets, God's people meant Israel. It was to them that God had promised a Savior and Redeemer. Since our verse, however, is prophecy, the New Testament Israel, the Church of all believers is included too.

So again, while it is true that "A lamb went uncomplaining forth, the guilt of all men bearing," we are not to look at the hideous excesses and unbridled degradation of the gays or the adulterers or the child molesters or the tyrants or bigots or oppressors out there somewhere (meanwhile feeling quite smug that since we are Christians, thank God we are not as other men). No, we are to look no further than the very real fault and guilt which is all we are and have in ourselves. Indeed, to whom much is given, much is also required. For the person to whom it has been revealed that he is an heir of God, that all the treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven are His, for him, in the face of these incomparable promises still to fall into jealousy and covetousness, may not his guilt be far greater than that of the person who believes that the material possessions of this world are all there is, and has cheated or stolen to get some of them for himself?

When Amos began his series of prophetic judgments, he denounced, one after the other, the enemy nations that surrounded Israel for real atrocities, horrible deeds, extreme cruelty, like forced resettlement of whole populations as slaves, ripping apart the bellies of the pregnant women of Israel, degrading the body of a defeated king by burning his bones to make mortar. But when he gets to Judah, he mentions none of these things which would horrify the most insensitive of the unbelievers, but rather he condemns them "because they have despised the Law of the Lord." And when he gets to Israel, the northern kingdom, which had been so highly favored by God, he speaks of their oppression of the poor, their love of luxury, their disinterest in the Word of the Lord as spoken through the prophets, and their empty formalism of bringing their sacrifices and tithes as a cover for their impenitence. It is a most interesting reason which the Lord gives for

his threat of judgment against the nation of Israel: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." You only I have chosen in love. To you only have I given my promises of redemption. You only have I called back to Myself whenever you have turned away. Therefore, because in the face of such mercy you have persisted in your rebellion, I must punish you. Grace spurned, grace abused, grace unresponded to, that is the greatest guilt of all, and demands the most severe judgment and penalty.

Yes, it is precisely to us that the message of guilt, sin, and judgment applies. "All we," yes even we, God's people, have gone astray. The fact that with all the grace God has poured out upon us, that year in and year out we can hear of the love and sacrifice of the Son of God on our behalf, and yet fall so easily into murmuring and complaint at the way God arranges our lives and circumstances, that we can still fall prey to jealousy and anger against one another, can still allow uncharitable opinions to form in our hearts concerning the judgments, motivations, and intentions of fellow congregation members, or members of synodical boards, or our pastors or our laymen, that is our guilt.

It is we, the flock, that have gone astray. And that includes us as God's people. But the temptation is always to look at that other denomination, that other synod, that other congregation, even that other individual within the congregation. But Isaiah won't let us get away with that. He not only generalizes, he individualizes. "We have turned every one to his own way." The Hebrew idiom is more accurately: "Each one has turned to his own way." There is no escaping it. That word "each" points the finger directly at me. There may be as many ways of going astray as there are

people, but every one of them leads away from the Shepherd. Each one is under guilt and the judgment of God, and I can't mitigate that guilt by comparing myself with another, by convincing myself that my way of turning to my own path is less serious than that of another whose path may be different. Both are deadly. Thus each of us stands in need of daily contrition and repentance. And that is something that is never past, that is never over and done with so that now we can get on with our real work without it. Each of us must daily confess: "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, Who shall stand?"

In the face of all this guilt, it might seem as if we have no business gathering here at God's people at all, that we must all go home and abandon ourselves hopelessly to the coming judgment. But enter the Servant of the Lord. Wonder of wonders, though our guilt is so great that God's wrath should have consumed us in a moment, as He threatened against Israel at Mount Sinai, the Lord dealt with our guilt in a totally unexpected way. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." The guilt was real. Our wandering was no innocent though tragically fatal mistake. It was rather a real affront to the holiness of God. It carried with it by its very nature an inexorable judgment. No power on earth could free us from the judgment which we deserved. But here God Himself provides a substitute who is Himself divine. Here is One who had no sin or iniquity of his own, and yet was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. Here is One who was wounded, bruised, chastised, covered with welts. Here is One who was cut off from the land of the living - yet He had done nothing amiss! What is this? The greatest miscarriage of justice in the history of the world? The injustice of a God who cruelly afflicts the innocent without cause? It would seem so, if we look only at the innocent

person of this Servant of the Lord, and try to harmonize on that basis His absolute righteousness and sinlessness with the horror of His suffering.

But it was for guilt that He suffered: our guilt, and our punishment, our griefs, our sorrows, our chastisement and our stripes. All were on Him, and therefore not on us. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The entire frightful burden, with all its judgments was shifted from us to Him, this Servant of the Lord, Christ, the Lamb of God, who on the cross of Calvary bore the guilt, suffered the penalty, and made full atonement for all our sins.

It was the Lord who laid the iniquity of us all on His own beloved Son. It was the very One who was offended, the very One who in His holiness should have consumed us in a moment, who spared us by afflicting His own Son. He it was who had revealed His name to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in mercy and truth." There is no place where God has so fully demonstrated that abundance of His mercy in not dealing with us according to our sins than in this: that "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

And that was done for all of us. Not just the strong Christian, but for the weak one as well. Not just the guilt which weighed us down before baptism, but the guilt of every sin down to the present day. Not just the involuntary sins of weakness, but even the conscious acts of rebellion in which we knew that we were defying the will of the holy God. Not just our sins in what we call our secular life, but even the sins which we have committed against brethren, against fellow believers. All our guilt, and all our punishment, was laid upon Him.

But again, the devil and our own conscience may easily play tricks on us, so that even as we hear that wonderful general promise that the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, yet we may easily be led to doubt that this promise really applies absolutely and unconditionally to me. So here, too, the Lord speaks not only in generalities, but very particularly and individually. He does it in this Sacrament which we are about to receive. For here the very Lamb of God on whom the guilt of us all has been laid gives us that body and blood which bore the punishment and paid the price for our sins. As He comes to you, and you receive that body of Christ and that blood of Christ into your mouth, at that moment He is saying to you and to you alone, so that you cannot doubt it, that your guilt has indeed been laid on the Son of God, and that it is no more.

How can you help believing that truly all your guilt has been laid on Him, when He who bore your sin and atoned for your guilt comes to you so personally, giving you the very price of your redemption, "given and shed for you, for the remission of sins." It is not someone else who is receiving that bread and wine, and in, with and under it Christ's body and blood, but you yourself, so that you cannot doubt that the promise of forgiveness is there for you personally, no matter how great your guilt or terrible your sin.

How is it that we can gather together at God's people to do God's work? In ourselves we find nothing but sin and unworthiness, so that it would seem the height of presumption to take these matters into our hands. Yet we may with joy and confidence meet as a synod, and expect God's blessing on our deliberations and decisions as to how best to carry the message of grace and forgiveness into the world, how we can communicate to our young people the

precious message of God's pardon and love, and how to feed and care for all who have been entrusted to our care. We may do so for one reason, and for one reason alone - that in His grace God has placed on Him, on Christ, the guilt of us all.

Amen.

THE CENTENNIAL OF WALTHER'S DEATH
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO OUR SYNOD'S INDEBTEDNESS TO HIM

1. The death of Dr. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was not unexpected. It came on Saturday, May 7, 1887, near half past six in the evening, in his home in St. Louis. Burial did not take place until Tuesday, May 17; thus allowing the Missouri Synod to hold its convention in Fort Wayne, Indiana, from May 8 to 14, and as many as possible of Walther's brethren to travel to St. Louis for his funeral.
2. On Friday, May 13, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Walther's body was brought to the Concordia Seminary building. Pastor George Stoeckhardt of the Holy Cross congregation in St. Louis spoke briefly to Walther's family and close neighbors, and offered prayer. Eight students of the Seminary served as pallbearers. Two were students from the Norwegian Synod: a graduate of the 1887 class, Eivind O. Vik and another whose last name was Mikkelsen. They were but two in a large number to receive their training at Concordia under an agreement between the Synod and the Missourians which began in 1857.
3. The first public service in memory of Walther was held on the following day, a week following his death. Several congregations in St. Louis held memorial services on Sunday, the 15th. A service was held at the Seminary at three in the afternoon. Then Walther's body was borne to Trinity Church, where it lay in state until Tuesday, the 17th.
4. An estimated 4000 persons filled the church, with more standing outside. Among those present were four pastors of the Norwegian Synod: its

president, Pastor Herman Amberg Preus, Pastor Ole Juul of Our Savior's and Pastor Amund Mikkelsen of First Lutheran in Chicago, and President Peter Laurentius Larsen of the Synod's Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Burial was in the Concordia Cemetary, to which a memorial wreath was brought "from the Norwegian brethren." President Larsen spoke briefly on behalf of the Norwegian Synod:

"Among the large crowd which has gathered for this burial, there are also a small number of pastors from the Norwegian Synod, among whom is its President. We want to express in the name of our brethren the sincere thanks which we feel toward God and His servant, the precious, now sainted Dr. Walther, for all the good which has flowed to us also through him. We cannot then do otherwise than to use this opportunity to also bring to the large number of Missouri Synod representatives here, whose leading man he was, our thanks for such great and sacrificial love which has been shown us from their Synod's side for now close to thirty years. Since 1858, without let up, we have had students in its theological seminaries. About half of our pastors have studied at those seminaries, and most of them have benefitted from Walther's instruction. What blessing they, and through them their congregations and our people have had from this - who can measure it? But we others also, older pastors in our Synod, who have benefitted from instruction here, not exactly as enrolled students, have we not also sat at Walther's feet? Certainly we have, and far be it from us to be ashamed if we regard it much more as an honor and even more as a great blessing which has come to us in that way. Our people have also received blessing from Walther and the Missouri Synod in that way, since not a few articles from here

have been translated into our language and distributed among our countrymen. We mention especially Walther's Church Postil and the excellent little book, The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Congregation Independent of the State.

"The faithfulness in the preservation of the divine truth, as well as in striving after true holiness, to which Walther and the Synod whose leading man he was, so strongly have led and encouraged us, O might this faithfulness - be it today our wish and our prayer - long outlive the dear departed as well in our as in his own Synod! Grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen."¹

5. There is a proper Christian spirit in which one speaks of those who have taught us the Word of God, whom we are to remember, and whose faith we are to follow, according to Hebrews 13:7. In his 1928 address to our Synod, President Christian Anderson spoke of remembering men from the past, and said in part:

"It is in order that we thereby can be encouraged to hold fast to the glorious heritage which the fathers have left behind them, and to witness just as they did." (p. 17)

This is the God-pleasing spirit in which we view Walther and our Synod's indebtedness to him.

6. Walther was a Saxon, a German, born at Langenschursdorf on October 25, 1811, a descendant of a family of ministers, a son of Gottlob Heinrich Walther, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church at Langenschursdorf. He was ordained on January 15, 1837 and became pastor of the Lutheran congregation at Braeunsdorf. On November 18, 1838 he was on the ship Johan Georg, one of five ships bringing

emigrants to the United States. After their arrival in New Orleans, the Saxons sailed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. During the spring of 1839 the majority of them moved southward to Perry County, Missouri.

7. After his older brother, Otto Herman Walther, died, C. F. W. Walther was called to succeed him as pastor of the St. Louis congregation, taking up his work there on Jubilate Sunday (the 3rd Sunday after Easter) of 1841. During the next forty-six years Walther was pastor, president, and professor at Concordia Seminary, president of the Missouri Synod, editor and writer for der Lutheraner and Lehre und Wehre, essayist at numerous conferences, and one of the founders, and the first president of The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

8. He earned the respect of many throughout Lutheranism in America and in Europe, and the opposition of others. Some who opposed him were nevertheless compelled to pay him tribute. One such was an Inspector Bauer in Germany who said of Walther and his Missouri Synod:

"With respect to faithfulness to the Confessions, the Missouri Synod represents the conscience of the Lutheran Church. We accord it this recognition without reservation."²

Superintendent Dr. Broemel in Germany wrote a book called Homiletic Character Portraits, featuring biographical information about, and an appraisal of, great preachers in the church's history. Walther was the only living preacher to be included. Broemel said of him:

"Pure doctrine also requires pure and firmly believing hearts which are prepared

to give up all outward things, because inwardly they have surrendered them. It requires theologians, who with unshaken steadfastness of faith, not confused by a skeptical theological strife, have made the whole Word of God the light of their life. Walther is such a theologian. What he preaches is nothing other than the old, familiar Lutheran orthodoxy. Nowhere has he added anything to it, nowhere taken anything from it. He stands exactly where the old Lutheran preachers and dogmaticians stand. For him, Luther and the old theologians have spoken the best words for our, as well as for all times. Walther knows his Luther, but also as a son co-equal with his father. Walther is a learned theologian, but for the most part he lives only in the doctrine which lies behind him. He is as well versed in the church-fathers, especially Luther and the Reformers, as in the Bible ... But because he is a living Christian who is completely serious about the whole of God's Word, therefore this orthodox man makes a perfectly timely, which is to say, entirely subjective impression. He is a deep and earnest preacher, who lives entirely in Jesus, his theology is thoroughly practical. He is as orthodox as John Gerhard, but also as sincere as a pietist, as correct in form as a university--or court--preacher, and yet as popular as Luther himself. If the Lutheran Church wants to bring its doctrine into the people, then it must be as faithful and sure in doctrine and use it in as engaging and relevant a form as Walther. Walther is a model preacher in the Lutheran Church. How entirely different it would be with the Lutheran Church in Germany if it contained many such preachers! Walther is filled with love of Christ and love for the brethren. But that which make Walther so impressive is, of course, not the form but

the content of his sermons. As a good Lutheran he preaches the whole of the Word of God. He has no pet ideas. He preaches the whole content of Scripture with the greatest conviction of faithfulness... He does not yield one tittle of Scripture. Dead, sluggish orthodoxy is an abomination to him. As a genuine son of the Reformers, Walther is a faithful friend of his new fatherland. Truth, freedom, and manly courage are Walther's basic elements."³

9. President Preus included these excerpts from Dr. Broemel's book in one of his own writings, as part of his response to theological adversaries of the Norwegian Synod. It is but one contemporary expression of Walther's stature. He and the Missouri Synod and the Norwegian Synod enjoyed one another's fellowship in the Gospel.

The Fellowship Begins And The Norwegian Synod Praises God

10. How did the two Synods meet? The facts which answer the question were well recorded at the time and have been repeated many times since.
11. In his essay titled "Ask for the Old Paths," delivered at our Synod's convention, Pastor Christian Anderson takes us back to the 19th century:

When the University of Christiania was established in 1811, they were so fortunate as to get two conservative Lutherans, Svend Borchmann Hersleb and Stener Johannes Sternersen, to head the theological faculty. From then on a new generation of theologians was trained to care for the spiritual needs of the people. And when the first pastors who came to work among our people in this

country were trained, another pair of staunch Lutherans headed the theological faculty, Gisle Johnson and Carl Paul Caspari.

"The first theologically trained pastors who came to work among the Norwegian immigrants were men whose training had led them to seek 'the Old Paths' of the Apostolic Church and of the Reformation, and they were thoroughly consecrated to the cause of building a true Lutheran Zion among their emigrated countrymen; most of them had, humanly speaking, left a brilliant future in the homeland in order to cast their lot with the pioneers who were struggling to build homes in the wilderness of the Northwest. The Norwegian lay people who had never been so completely imbued with the spirit of Rationalism as the theologians had been were equally desirous of founding a true Lutheran Church in the new land." (p. 21)

"Very soon after its organization our Synod entered into very close relations with the most conservative of these groups, the Missouri Synod, which for so long a time enjoyed the leadership of that richly gifted and devoted man of God, Dr. C. F. W. Walther. The fact that this choice was so easily made is an evidence of the character of our Synod." (p. 22)

12. A large emigration to America from Germany and Norway began in the early 19th century and continued through the following decades. When Pastor Justin A. Petersen read an essay at our Synod's 1938 convention titled, "Address in Commemoration of the Saxon Immigration," which had occurred 100 years previously, he said of the reasons for the emigration:

"First, we consider the motives that constrained the Saxons to leave their fatherland.

Spiritual conditions in the homeland had become well-nigh intolerable. False teachers and false doctrines were being forced upon them both from pulpit and in school room. God's pure Word, freedom of worship, a good conscience, their soul's salvation and that of their children as well, were at stake. Something drastic had to be done, and that something very soon, 'ere irreparable damage be done. The only solution that offered itself was to emigrate. And this they did, this bold band of Saxons, men, women and children, pastors, candidates, teachers, lawyers, doctors, artisans, farmers, day-laborers, but Lutheran Christians all, -- not to Australia, as originally planned, but, under God's Providence, to these our United States of America.

"With the Norwegian emigrants it was quite different. They sought these shores, not because of religious persecution at home, not to better their spiritual status - on the contrary, it appeared that they might have much to lose in this respect. No, what prompted them primarily was the desire to carve out a future for themselves and for their children in this new land of unparalleled opportunities. It was rather the material magnet that drew our fathers. This is not an uncharitable disparagement of them, but it goes to show the difference in motives; and this difference again accounts for a number of things not difficult to understand in the light of subsequent development. With the Saxons, we repeat, it was spiritual values and concerns above all. With the Norwegian emigrants it was rather material interests and ambitions, though the spiritual values were by no means lost sight of in their new surroundings, for the Norwegian

emigrants, as a class, were not materialistic; on the contrary, they were deeply religious." (p. 48f)

13. Large numbers of people who were to become the great-grandparents and the grandparents of some of us, and spiritual ancestors of us all, came to pioneer settlements in the wilderness at Fox River in northern Illinois and Muskego and Koshkonong prairie in southern Wisconsin. Pastor Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson, the first ordained Lutheran pastor, arrived from Norway in 1844, but stayed in this country only briefly before returning to the homeland. Pastor Nils O. Brandt arrived in 1851. Pastors H. A. Preus and J. A. Ottesen in 1852. Preliminary steps were soon taken which resulted in the organization of the Norwegian Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at a constituting convention held at Luther Valley, in Rock County, in southern Wisconsin, on October 5, 1853.
14. The Synod looked for a supply of pastors to come from Norway, but also immediately began to concern itself with having pastors trained in this country. An early hope was that a theological department might be established at the University of Wisconsin in Madison; but this did not materialize.
15. The early governance of the Synod between conventions was in the hands of the Kirkeraad, the Church Council, which met at intervals. The obtaining of pastors was high on the Council's agenda. It was suggested that the Synod send a small delegation to visit the seminaries of Lutherans in St. Louis, Missouri; Columbus, Ohio; and Buffalo, NY; all of which were German-Lutheran. Estimated cost of the trip was once given as \$400. The Church Council wanted the Synod to retain the option of establishing its own seminary should it be determined that it would be inadvisable to enter a

working agreement with any of the three seminaries mentioned. We see the caution with which the Synod approached the important matter of training its future pastors.

16. Pastors Ottesen and Brandt made the trip in the spring of 1857 and submitted their report, written by Ottesen, and dated August 1857, to the September 30, 1857 meeting of the Council. Their report fills almost 14 pages of Kirkelig Maanedstidende, the Synod's Norwegian language monthly publication. Almost 10 pages are given to their report of their visit to St. Louis, 2 pages to Columbus, and 2 pages to Buffalo. After discussion, Pastor Preus recommended to the Council that it recommend to the Synod that it ask permission to use the seminary in St. Louis for the training of pastors, and that the Norwegian Synod seek to arrange with Concordia for the placing of a Norwegian Synod professor on its faculty, with provisions made by the Synod for his support.

17. At the 1857 convention in the little Iowa congregation in Winneshiek County, Iowa, Pastor Koren moved that the Synod accept the Council's recommendation. Pastor Ottesen was delegated to represent the Synod at the Missouri Synod's convention later in the same month in Fort Wayne. Pastor Koren accompanied him.

18. Laur. Larsen was the first Norwegian Synod professor at St. Louis, serving from 1859 to 1861. The first three Norwegian Synod students travelled to St. Louis at the end of August 1858. They were a Torgeson, from the Waupaca, Wisconsin congregation, Jacob Larsen from the Pine Lake congregation in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, and Lasse Fosse from the Norway Grove congregation in Dane County, Wisconsin. None of the three names, however, appear in the 1903 Festschrift, which gives

biographical information of all the men who had served the Synod from 1853 to 1903; so apparently none of the three completed study at St. Louis; or, at least, entered the Synod's ministry. The first graduate from the Norwegian Synod was Ove Jakob Hjort, class of 1862.

19. This brief recital of facts has not done justice to the excitement in which the events were enveloped. Take a step or two backward, to catch some of the excitement. In touching upon it we begin to identify in specific ways what the debt is which our Synod has so long felt toward Missouri and Walther, and we begin to hear the Norwegians' praise of God and of Walther.

20. There was an especially rainy Sunday while Ottesen and Brandt were in St. Louis; so rainy that they and their host, Missouri Synod President Friedrich C. D. Wyneken were prevented from going the three miles to church. The delegates spent the day with Wyneken. The more Wyneken said, the more was Ottesen impressed, as he said later, that "This is exactly what my father has so often said. This is Lutheran doctrine! pure, unadulterated, unfalsified Lutheran doctrine, not modified by anything old or new. This is faithful to the Confessions and it is biblical Christianity."⁴ Ottesen never forgot that day, nor did he change his mind over the next half-century. He had found his own father's theology, the theology of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions which had been impressed upon him at home and in his university training, in the theology of Missouri. But however much the delegates rejoiced over the Lutheran doctrine at St. Louis, they also spoke and wrote extensively about the Christian life which they saw firsthand.

21. On their way to Columbus Ottesen and Brandt stopped at the Missouri seminary in Fort Wayne,

and took the same impressions as those taken in St. Louis. They were cordially received in Columbus and Buffalo, but they did not see and hear the same things there, and their report reflects that.

22. After the 1857 convention, as we heard, Ottesen and Koren attended Missouri's convention in Fort Wayne and went from there to a Free Conference in Pittsburgh, where they again heard and observed Walther and other Missourians. In brief parting words to the Fort Wayne convention, Pastor Koren said:

"We confess with you the faith that the true church of Christ on earth properly is invisible according to its essence, but we do, however, believe that we do not deceive ourselves, when from the words and speeches which we have heard among you, we have concluded in the glad assurance of faith, that Christ's true church is here."⁵

23. Home again at Koshkonong, Ottesen wrote a report of the two meetings for Maanedstidende, and then followed it with a lengthy article, "A Glance at the Missouri Synod." Among so much else he wrote:

"Professor Walther from St. Louis must be mentioned especially... (His) speeches on the doctrines of his faith were the most interesting, the most informative, and delivered in as clear and simple a manner as one could want to hear. The liveliness and zeal for the truth, the impressive power and self-illuminating clarity with which he always developed his equally thorough knowledge, as well as his superior ability always, as we say, to hit the nail on the head, was so persuasive and convincing that it was impossible to listen to him without thanking and praising the Lord of

the Church, who has brought to light so excellently equipped a warrior and watchman for His truth in these times of error and confusion."6

24. Pastor Koren had been a guest in the home of Professor Craemer at Fort Wayne during the convention. When Koren was again at home at Washington Prairie, near Decorah in northeastern Iowa, he wrote to him:

"We learned nothing new from you. But that which we already had learned by precept in Norway - the two great Lutheran fundamental principles of the Reformation, these we saw exemplified openly and victoriously here for the first time in the life of an entire church body. We saw them exemplified in all seriousness and in childlike joyousness, without a trace of pious pretense, but with a power which under the conditions obtaining in a free-church came into evidence in a way which would not have been possible in a state-church without a complete revolution of the situation which exists there. We saw what we have learned by precept to confess, the well-known glory of our Lutheran symbols, such as we had never seen it before."7

25. Somewhere around the time when the Norwegian-Missouri deal had been struck, Missouri responded in a letter to the Norwegian Synod's pastoral conference. The letter is an expression of what Missouri had always intended, and of course of what the Norwegian Synod was looking for. Koren quotes from the letter:

"We are convinced that from the beginning we have wanted nothing else than to hold fast to the saving Word of the pure Gospel

in the way in which it was again brought to light through the faithful service of Dr. Luther, for our own salvation, confess it before the world, defend it against alterations and falsifications, and by the grace of God, as much as possible, spread it among our countrymen and arrange for our churchly practice according to it and it alone."⁸

26. Very soon afterward Ottesen provided Maanedstidende with a Norwegian translation of a sermon by Walther, to introduce him to the Synod at large. Since then the periodicals of the old Synod and of the reorganized Synod have continued virtually without let-up to carry translations of Walther writings and sermons, articles sketching his service to the church, and expressing our Synod's thanks to God for the gift with which He has blessed us in the person and work of C. F. W. Walther. Essays read at conventions have added their comments. Presidents of the Synod have included testimony in their annual addresses at the opening of the conventions. Not to do so, many have reminded, would be to be ungrateful to God first of all, and ungrateful to those who have served Him faithfully; for instance:

27. Herman Amberg Preus was President of the Norwegian Synod from 1862 until his death in 1894, thirty-two years, or, half the lifetime of the old Synod which was organized in 1853 and passed out of existence in 1917 to join with the United Lutheran Church and Hauge's Synod in forming the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. This Preus was the grandfather of Pastor H. A. Preus of our E.L.S., who died in 1985 at the age of 98, and the great-grandfather of J. A. O. Preus and Robert Preus of the present Missouri Synod and of David Preus of the former American Lutheran Church, which

now enters the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

28. President Preus said in his address to the 1869 convention in the Spring Grove church in Houston County, Minnesota:

"Now the Lord has placed an older brother at our side in the dear Missouri Synod. We shall not forget the great guidance and strengthening it has been to us with its deep insight into the Word of God and faithful steadfastness to them, but will thank God and it for it in spite of attack, mockery and derision, of which they as well as we partake just because of our association. We can just as little measure the favorable influence this association has had on our church body's expansion, as we can measure the influence of teachers who have graduated from our schools, but it meets us in the sermons and in the life of the congregations, just as it has found its expression in the Synod as well in the discussion of various questions of doctrine, and in the newly adopted Synodical Constitution." (p. 9)

29. The 1881 convention met again at Spring Grove, with the specter of the Election Controversy looming large before the Synod. Walther was under attack from Professor Friedrich August Schmidt for alleged Calvinistic error regarding election. President Preus used the occasion to remind the Norwegian brethren:

"For the fortunate outcome of this struggle, as well as for the confessional position which our Synod has taken in the course of the years, its love and zeal for the pure doctrine of the Word of God which

we inherited from the fathers of the Reformation, we have especially to thank, as every man among us knows, next to the grace of God, the Missouri Synod and the man whom God has let be its leader for over a generation. And surely, the more people from various sides and for varying reasons are now seeking to awaken ill-will against these builders and defenders of the Lutheran Church and the faith in these western regions, the more proper it is for us to remember with gratitude all their devoted love toward our Synod and above all the richer acknowledgement of truth and the encouragement to richer use of it for a sound congregational life and true Christian life, of which God has allowed us to be partakers through them.

"I especially want to call attention to some basic truths for whose preservation and carrying out, both in theory and practice, Dr. Walther, together with the whole Missouri Synod, has lifted the banner and fought with unshaken faithfulness, namely: The freedom of a Christian man and a Christian congregation, the universality of divine grace and the total depravity of the natural man and his inability to cooperate in any way whatsoever in his conversion.

"Of what importance their testimony has been for our holding fast to these basic truths and our continuance in them in our Synod's fight over the Gospel, Absolution and Justification, among other things, and through it also for our abiding with the truth of the Word of God in these doctrinal points, I need not explain further here. If we hold fast in the future to these basic truths, then surely we shall not go astray in the fight which may be imminent, but we will continue in the truth

and emerge from the controversy victorious."
(p. 8f)

30. U. V. Koren spoke often on the subject. One of the Synod's goals in entering into the arrangement with Missouri was the establishing of its own institution of higher learning. Koren gave the dedicatory address at Luther College on October 14, 1865. His entire address is pertinent. With representatives of the Missouri Synod present, Koren said that three considerations prompted the Norwegian Synod to ask Missouri's assistance. The first was to secure workers in the immediate future. The second was to acquire insight and experience into how the Synod should organize a seminary of its own (it did not open until 1876 in Madison, Wisconsin). The third was to grow as Christians and as Christian churchmen through an association with a Synod which had proven itself in theological controversies and was on a genuinely Lutheran foundation. "Have we gotten what we wanted?" Koren asks, and then goes on to answer that God should be praised, and if

"we would be silent, if we would not honestly and willingly testify before all the world of what God has done for us through these brethren in the faith, then we might expect that He would withdraw His hand from us because of such ingratitude."⁹

31. Thus, students from Norwegian Synod congregations studied for the ministry at St. Louis or Fort Wayne. One of them was Bjug Aanondson Harstad. His teachers at St. Louis in 1871 were Walther, Craemer, E. A. Brauer and Th. Jul. Brohm, and a learned young man named Edward Preuss who left the Lutheran Church that fall to join the Roman Catholic Church. Harstad travelled to St. Louis in 1926, after a long ministry, during which he also served as President of the Minnesota District of the old

Norwegian Synod and as a member of the Synod's Church Council, and then was also the first president of the Norwegian Synod when it reorganized in 1918. That trip rekindled memories which Pastor Harstad shared with the readers of our Synod's Tidende. His words give us a brief insight into his memories as a member of Walther's classes:

"The first impression which we took from the older men was that they genuinely interested themselves in their calling and work for the glory of God and the edifying of the church. They gave us to understand immediately that we must not forget why we were here, namely not to have a good time, but in order to become prepared, through the study of the Word of God and prayer with all our strength and to be trained to attend to the most important and the most earnest calling which the Lord entrusts to any man on earth. Praying diligently was over half the battle. We should study the 119th Psalm diligently and notice how in each of the 176 verses David prays for and praises the enlightenment of the Word of God. We must know that there was no time for idleness or play. No love affairs could be tolerated. Theology should be our dear bride. Besides, we must seek to obtain a scholarly spirit. ("You must get a scholarly spirit." Walther said once.) It was pointed out to us that those who had obtained some proficiency in the ancient languages must remember their duty and their responsibility to learn to know the excellent writings of the pious fathers and the characteristic so-called knowledge of newer theologians too.

"The method of recitation or instruction proceeded for the most part about as it does with confirmands. Walther assigned the lessons

to us and expected that we give an orderly account for them each day. This was especially good for us, who thoughtlessly liked to sneak off if we could. I remember one time when nearly the whole class was acting unusually foolish. Then we all got so earnest and so penetrating a reprimand from Walther for neglect of duty, that it cut to the marrow and bone. We could not soon forget it. Is not such needed now?"¹⁰

32. What was the Norwegian Synod looking for in 1857 and what did it find in Missouri? The very theology which Walther and the Missouri Synod had, expressed in these excerpts from Walther's writings:

"When our synod came into being, it committed itself before friend and foe only to all the symbols of the old Evangelical Lutheran Church, openly and without reservation, and adopted as its motto, 'God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall to eternity endure,' and thus joyfully began its work - but it also undertook really to act in accordance with those symbols and its motto, in teaching and defense, in structure and practice. But immediately loud and intensive objections arose from the most diverse quarters and in the most diverse ways."¹¹

In his opening address at the Missouri Synod's 1866 convention, Walther discussed his Synod's history and the blessings God had given it, then said:

"But I ask you, what was the way by which the Lord caused us to share in this blessing and deigned us worthy of it? It was none other than this: Here we established nothing new or original but inquired about the former paths and walked on the good old

way; we sat as pupils at the feet of Luther and other orthodox and devout teachers already triumphing in heaven, and we followed in their footsteps; we took the church of the Reformation as our model and its pure Confessions as our banner, our guiding star, and our protecting wall. If you will, we have made the attempt to determine whether the doctrine of the 16th century could be used for the salvation of souls also in our 19th century, whether the tree of our old Lutheran Church, which for centuries produced such glorious fruits for the welfare of millions, might still demonstrate its pristine vitality and fruitfulness - and behold! our hope was not put to shame. Even though the time of our synod's existence is not as great a visitation of grace as was the time of the Lutheran reformation of the church, the old doctrine has now again demonstrated its old and eternally new power; thousands of souls have been led thereby to faith and through faith to salvation, and a church has come into being that is united in faith and confession and aglow with love and good works."¹²

What Is Our Synod's Indebtedness To Walther?

33. We have heard several 19th century witnesses.

Preus was articulate in defining it. Koren said that the Norwegian Synod learned no new doctrines from Missouri, but that it learned to appreciate more than ever before the heritage it brought from Norway. Ottesen said that the Synod found in Missouri the same theology it had learned in Norway. When the Synod reorganized in 1918 it continued to use Missouri's seminaries and to reaffirm its blessings through association with Missouri. These later voices also help to define the indebtedness; e.g.;

34. Pastor Bjug Harstad's lengthy, excellent historical work, titled "Pioneer Days" is appended to the 1928 Synod Report. He wrote:

"Especially by the example and guidance of the German Lutheran Missouri Synod, they learned from the Word of God to understand that every local Christian church, large or small, is the highest authority in all its own matters not ordered by Scripture." (p. 8)

"... the fraternal association with the Missourians did, even in the sluggish Norwegian mind, kindle a fire of intense love and study of biblical truths, the Lutheran confessions and apostolical principles for church organizations, independent of human authority." (p. 28)

35. In his 1938 address Pastor Justin A. Petersen said:

"Our main debt to the Missouri Synod is of a doctrinal nature. We would be showing little understanding and lean appreciation indeed of our debt to the Missouri Synod, if we failed to place our doctrinal debt at the very head of the list.

"However, without intending for a moment to minimize or discount our doctrinal debt to the Missouri Synod, we would not be fair to the memory of our own sainted fathers, if we failed to call attention to the fact that they, too, possessed the pure doctrine...

"It can be truly and gratefully said that from the Missouri Synod fathers, and especially Walther, our Norwegian Synod fathers learned to evaluate and appreciate their priceless possession of God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure all the more. Through their fraternal

associations with the Missouri Synod, they were confirmed and heartened in their Lutheran heritage.

"We could well classify our doctrinal debt to our Missouri brethren under the well-known watchwords - 'The Word Alone,' 'Grace Alone' and 'Faith Alone.'" (p. 50f)

Then Pastor Petersen went on to discuss these three familiar watchwords, concentrating on Grace Alone, "since these three are so interrelated and so conditioned upon one another."

36. Pastor Petersen's essay was read on Synod Sunday afternoon, which in former years climaxed, rather than began, the conventions. Synod President Norman A. Madson was at the Missouri Synod's convention in St. Louis the following week as our Synod's official representative to bring its greetings to the Missouri brethren. He said:

"The debt we owe our dear brethren of the Missouri Synod, while it is both physical and spiritual, is nevertheless chiefly of a doctrinal nature. Had not our sainted fathers come into contact with the Missourians when they did (in the fifties), God only knows what would have become of our Norwegian Synod ...

"... there is to my mind no greater contribution made to the cause of sound Lutheranism by your beloved Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther than his clear-cut enunciation of the principles governing a truly free church."¹³

37. The feelings between the two Synods were mutual. There was a face-to-face sharing of those feelings at the Norwegian Synod's 1864 convention in the Perry church in western Dane County, Wisconsin. Professors Walther, Craemer, and Wilhelm Sihler

attended the entire convention. After President Preus had given his address and report to the Synod at the convention's beginning, Professor Craemer spoke his Synod's brief greetings. At the close of the convention Walther was given the floor, and said:

"Esteemed brethren, beloved brothers of the ministry and in the faith! We cannot part from you without declaring with what heartfelt joy we have been filled, and without thanking you for the rich blessing which has here been conferred upon us.

"We have here had the joy of seeing a genuine Lutheran Synod, and this was also what we expected to find. But after we have seen you with our own eyes, we must confess that God has done more among you than we expected. Your Synod is not satisfied with the Lutheran name and with merely enlarging itself outwardly; but as a genuine Lutheran church body you place pure doctrine above everything and make it your task to bring it forth from the Word's rich mine. With joy we have been witnesses to the earnestness with which you all, teachers as well as hearers, bow beneath the Word of God and do not ask about what the world and the spirit of the time demand, but only say: 'Speak, O Lord! Thy servant heareth.' Thus have we also seen that your burning zeal for doctrine also bears fruit in a burning love, and that you wish to offer your whole life to God.

"I am reminded by that of how the Scandinavian church was the champion of the Reformation in the north 300 years ago and of how somewhat later, when the German church was in need, it reached out a helping hand under the great Gustav Adolph's direction and aided so

much toward winning the religious peace which secured outward peace for the Lutheran Church in Germany for the future. May God thus grant then that you may be the Lutheran Church's champion in America's north until the Last Day!

"And may the same faithful God who has now tied the heartfelt bond which unites our Synods, strengthen it also further and equip us thus with His gifts, so that we might be able to assist you with our small service! The joyous tidings we can bring our Synod from you will in this without doubt awaken many hearts to pray that He who began the good work in you, will also perform it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We commend ourselves to your brotherly love and intercession."

President Preus replied:

"Dear teachers and brothers in Christ! On the Synod's behalf I thank you for your presence here, for all your good counsel and for the strengthening and the instruction you have given us. We thank God if by our small testimony of our love to Christ, we have also been able to help somewhat toward strengthening you in your love. But we must be shamed over your humility, that you speak so much about thanking us, while we, however, have been your disciples, and you have worked to the strengthening and instruction mainly of teachers in our church body and through them also for the congregations. Bring then our greetings to your Synod, and let the bond of faith and love always encircle us, so that we together may strive for the good thing until we are gathered in Christ's kingdom."

Then Preus turned to the Synod and said:

"Dear fellow representatives and colleagues! During these meetings we have heard a young man preach to us, who has recently completed his studies in St. Louis and is now ready to accept a call as a pastor among us. Here is again a proof of how much we owe the dear Missouri Synod and its teachers who are present here also for the great help it has rendered us in getting pastors trained. Let us now all show our gratitude for this by rising."

When the assembly complied with the request, Professor Craemer replied: "We thank you for the undeserved thanks."¹⁴

There Was Opposition

38. Whenever individuals or church bodies believe, teach, and confess the full truth of Scripture and bring their practice into conformity with it, they can also expect opposition. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." (Matthew 10:24) "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

39. Koren is one who traces the opposition to the Norwegian Synod in this country, even before it was organized, to the activity of Hans Nielsen Hauge and Elling Eielsen. Hauge took a strong anti-state-church position in Norway. When the Norwegian Synod sought in America to be a continuation of the state church of Norway, except as a free-church, some of the Norwegian immigrants saw the Synod as the transference of the devil incarnate to this country, and opposed it vehemently.

40. We heard President Preus' 1881 defense of Walther. In 1874 Professors Sven Oftedal and

August Weenaas of the faculty of the Norwegian-Danish Lutheran Conference's seminary in Minneapolis felt themselves compelled to issue an "Open Declaration" charging the Norwegian Synod with a number of serious offences against the law of Christian love and departures from orthodox Christianity. Weenaas followed "An Open Declaration" with a book in which he further developed such charges against the Norwegian Synod, that it was founded upon Grundtvigian principles, that it was badly infected with what he labelled "Missourians," meaning that the influence of Missouri upon the Norwegian Synod was detrimental to it, and most extensively, that the Norwegian Synod was terminally ill with what he labelled "Wisconsinism." Since Preus was the Synod's president, and in many minds its chief spokesman, and since he lived in Wisconsin, Weenaas could think of nothing more derisive than to coin the word "Wisconsinism" to convey his contempt for the Synod's doctrine and practices. Preus responded in a lengthy article which appeared over the course of several issues of the Kirketidende, holding Weenaas' accusations up to the light of historic truth and the light of Scripture. Feelings ran so high among Norwegian-American Lutherans in the mid-1880's Election Controversy that some of them formed a short-lived Anti Missourian Brotherhood in protest to what they perceived to be the Norwegian Synod's pro-Missouri stance.

41. It is easy to multiply expressions of opposition to confessional Lutherans, whether past or present. It is not a passing phenomenon.

42. President Christian Anderson said in his 1927 address:

"We have had to put up with accusations of separatism, Pharisaism and many other things," "accusations ... of exclusivism and of a lack of the proper Christian love."
(p. 13.16)

43. Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker was the essayist in 1938. The subject was unionism:

"Few of our members realize the dangers with which our dear Synod is beset, nor do they often take time to count the foe which is bent on the downfall of our faith. Therefore the complaint must be heard continually: Leave us alone from the preaching against false doctrine and false churches, as if we were so much better than they. The very name, Norwegian Synod, has these seventy-five years served to identify us with a preaching and testimony which is at the same time an invitation and a warning." (p. 67)

"We are ridiculed, defamed, and persecuted, because we have disagreed with the commonly accepted slogans of church unity and union, whereby every church is obliged to recognize every other church denomination, even heathen religions, as brethren with whom we can and should build the kingdom of God." (p. 70)

44. Bjug Harstad quoted in his 1921 presidential address something which Professor Sven Oftedal wrote in the March 30, 1875 edition of the Norwegian language newspaper "Skandinaven":

"I knew that the Norwegian pastors in America, infested with the worms of Romanism, bleached out by the state-church and frozen stiff by orthodoxy, driven by a ministry of poverty and sick with thoughts of home, had been swallowed up by Missouri, and held on to lay the yoke of slavery and papal darkness upon a people whom the Lord had selected to be champions of Christianity and freedom." (p. 24)

45. "Swallowed by Missouri" was a common characterization of our Synod made by its and Missouri's

opponents. They meant that the Norwegian Synod had no identity of its own, no theology of its own, that it was nothing but a parrot of Missouri, that the Norwegian Synod could not think and speak for itself, etc. The Synod's men responded.

46. Koren discusses a point which bears on the ever-present thought in some minds that it is exercising spiritual tyranny to demand unity in all doctrines of faith:

"Through a period of twenty years the writer has attentively followed the controversies of the Missouri Synod and has read the church's periodicals which they have published, but he has not yet discovered that they have demanded any other agreement than that which God's Word demands, unity in all articles of faith which are clearly affirmed in Scripture. To demand such agreement is no spiritual tyranny for those who are of the truth, who from the heart acknowledge Scripture as the only sure and perfect rule of our faith and life; but it is indeed spiritual tyranny for all those who want to set 'their own spirit' above Scripture and make it an open field for their exercises in spiritual gymnastics."¹⁵

"No one can rightfully accuse us, however, of being parroters of him (Walther) or of others."¹⁶

47. Ottesen had to respond also. In 1863 the Norsk Kirketidende of Christiana had written about the Synod's relationship with Missouri, calling it an annex of the Missouri Synod, and accusing Ottesen especially of idolizing Walther. Ottesen responded:

"Neither I nor any of us idolize Walther or toil under his authority. We never cite Walther's mere name, or whatever Walther says

about a matter, but we cite Walther's reason and proofs from God's Word, which surely then speaks for itself, and were equally good if a child had said something just as good."17

48. Pastor Justin Petersen's words in 1938 maintain the proper perspective:

"We must not, therefore, canonize the Missouri Synod, and 'make flesh our arm.' That would be making an idol out of her - a spirit far alien to the true Missourian. Not the hosts of the Lord, but the Lord of hosts will we worship." (p. 57)

Repaying The Debt

49. Lest we be wicked borrowers who do not pay back, some time should be taken to consider our payment of the debt owed to Walther and his Synod. The debt can never be paid in full; we should never think that it has been. It is something for each of us to continue to make payments on.

50. Pastor Petersen addressed the matter in the second part of his two-part address in 1938, saying in part:

"1. First and foremost, by appreciating more clearly and more deeply what a priceless possession we have in purity of doctrine and unity of faith, partly become ours through association with our Missouri brethren; by guarding this treasure most jealously, ready, if need be, rather to shed our life's blood than to yield, compromise or obscure the truth of God's Word; by zealously spreading this truth in all our missionary activities; not forgetting, above all, to use this pure doctrine for our individual, congregational,

and synodical edification and growth 'in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' This will naturally lead to and include

"2. The bearing of fruits meet for the purity of the doctrine of grace. God expects, and rightly, more of us than He does of others less favored. 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Who should be more humble, more zealous, more fruitful than just we? In the strength of this same grace, we should constantly strive to become ever worthier sons and daughters of the true Reformation church. But is not the danger actual and ever-present to make an idol even out of purity of doctrine and the outward forms of worship, priding ourselves in the possession of the same while we fail to bear the fruits thereof in our hearts and lives? Our own Luther even in his day saw their danger and bitterly deplored the oft meager fruits of faith." (p. 55f)

51. One of the two essays at our 1925 convention was a symposium under the theme: "True Christian Progress." Fourteen of our pastors presented topics dealing with the wide range of Christians' individual, congregational, and synodical lives. Pastor H. A. Preus was at the time a member of the Synod's Publications Committee. His remarks were on the distribution and use of Christian literature:

"Patronize home trade: Lutheran literature instead of straying into the strange fields of Reformed church literature, which, sad to say, many younger pastors are prone to do, with baneful results to the Lutheran Church. They are, as a recent writer put it, 'reading themselves out of the Lutheran Church.' Yes, breathing this atmosphere

accounts for much thought and many tendencies foreign to the Lutheran Church creeping into it." (p. 96)

52. It is easy to expand upon these 1925 comments.

Walther studied Luther and more than once wrote something like this:

"If you have such a great longing to learn Lutheran doctrine, to cling to it, and faithfully to teach it, I would urge you to read Luther's writings. It cannot be otherwise but that in Luther the Lutheran doctrine is the purest, the brightest, the most complete and original (according to the Scripture). It is plain stupid to continue to argue about Lutheran doctrine, and to follow one's own presumptions, and not to turn to Luther himself. And that is my summary and general advise to you in your present critical circumstances. Buy the whole collected works of Luther, if you don't have them yet, and read them day and night. If you do you will soon become divinely certain and happy in your faith and then in your standpoint within and toward the church."¹⁸

Recall Walther's advice to Bjug Harstad's class at the seminary to dig deeply into Scripture and "the excellent writings of the pious fathers." Read the periodicals and annual Synod Reports of the old Norwegian Synod or of the reorganized Synod. Read its other publications. Read Walther. All this, in partial payment of the debt.

53. Our Synod can make partial payment by continuing to offer to pastors and congregations and individuals of the Missouri Synod or of other Lutheran bodies who are searching for a new church home during a time of much tumult within Lutheranism, the fellowship of our congregations and Synod. As

Missouri has strengthened us time and again when we needed strenghtening, we can be a source of strength to others.

54. The debt can be paid in part by our familiarizing ourselves with the history so briefly recited in these few pages, and making that history a part of ourselves. President George Albert Gullixson did some of that in his address to the 1924 convention, and said he did it:

"in order that we thereby better can understand our own position in our struggle for the preservation of the old Lutheran doctrine and in order to uphold the principle that God alone shall have the glory for everything in our proclamation ... The chief goal of our Synod is to preserve God's Word as our only rule and guide for faith, doctrine and life and to proclaim this Word to others." (p. 15)

55. President Christian A. Moldstad said in his 1937 Report:

"Our young people must be given the history of our Synod so that they will understand and appreciate God's purpose with us. The temptations to worldliness, indifference to doctrine, and church unionism are greater than ever." (p. 13)

56. Pastor Paul Ylvisaker did some musing in his 1967 essay, "The abiding Worth of our Reformation Heritage," about what it would have been like to have been with those Norwegian fathers and mothers, back then, in 19th century America. Then he wrote:

"We seem so far away from it all, and we begin to wonder whether we are not the poorer for it ... There is a legacy of loyalty among our people still, and God is raising up

new confessors of the Gospel - again by the teaching and preaching of the Gospel. But here is a good place to admit to a real doubt whether much of the rank and file of our membership is keenly aware of our heritage. And we should set about stirring up our zeal and the appreciation for the heritage of those truths without which, we say again, we be disinherited indeed." (p. 31)

57. The divine truth of Holy Scripture is timeless. Through it the Lord forged a close association between the Norwegian Synod and Dr. Walther and the Missouri Synod. Walther entered the Church Triumphant one-hundred years ago this past May 7. We in our corner of the Lutheran Church have long acknowledged a deep indebtedness to him. We have heard many expressions of it. Forty years ago the historical setting was the negotiations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with the former American Lutheran Church; today it is everything which interests and concerns us with the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Pastor A.M. Harstad was President of our Synod in 1947. In continuing payment of our indebtedness, his words then should express our sacred determination yet: "Let our Synod, by God's grace, continue to be filled with the spirit of true confessionalism." (p. 9)

To the glory of our God, may it be so, as we commemorate the centennial of Walther's death, with special reference to our Synod's indebtedness to him.

-- Pastor J. H. Larson
San Antonio, Texas

Delivered at the E. L. S. General Pastoral Conference on October 26-28, 1987, at King of Grace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota.

THE SOURCES OF THE QUOTATIONS

Many of the quotations are from the annual reports of the old Norwegian Synod and of the reorganized Synod, now known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The year is indicated in the text, with page(s) numbers given in parentheses. Translations from Norwegian are mine.

Other quotations are from the following sources:

- 1 Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende, 3 June 1877, p. 344 ("Evangelical Lutheran Church Times"), the Norwegian Synod's weekly, published from 1874 to 1917. Abbreviated KT.
- 2 Quoted in KT, 10 December 1875, p. 784.
- 3 Quoted in KT, 10 December 1875, p. 785f.
- 4 Liysbilleder fra den lutherske kirke i Amerika, the Norwegian Synod's Publishing House, Decorah, IA., no date, p. 274. Cp. Jacob Aal Ottesen, A Biography (translated from Laur. Larsen's original by the Rev. George A. R. Gullixson, published by Webpso, Inc., Wenatchee, WA., 1987, p. 24-25).
- 5 Kirkelig Maanedstidende, May 1858, p. 69 ("Churchly Monthly News"), the Norwegian Synod's monthly, published from 1855 to 1874. Abbreviated MT.
- 6 MT, May 1858, p. 65.
- 7 Samlede Skrifter (the "Collected Writings") of U. V. Koren, Vol. III, p. 476f., Lutheran Publishing House, Decorah, IA., 1912. Abbreviated SS.

- 8 SS, Vol. II, p. 338.
- 9 SS, Vol. II, p. 336ff.
- 10 Evangelisk Lutensk Tidende, 9 June 1926,
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by the reorganized Norwegian Synod from
1917 to 1953; p. 264.
- 11 Editorials from Lehre und Wehre, translated by
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House, St. Louis, MO., 1981; p. 116.
- 12 Ibid., p. 119f.
- 13 Preaching to Preachers, Norman A. Madson,
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- 14 MT, August 1864, pp. 226-228.
- 15 SS, Vol. III, p. 382f. Cp. Faith of Our Fathers,
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- 16 Ibid., p. 437; Cp. Faith of Our Fathers, p. 98.
- 17 MT, 1 February 1863, p. 43.
- 18 Selected Letters, translated by Roy A. Suelflow,
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WILL THE NEW LUTHERAN CHURCH BE TRULY "LUTHERAN"

The new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be formed on January 1, 1988, by the merger of the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. A controversial resolution submitted by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to the 1986 convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (but not adopted in its original form) asked the synod to "record its conviction, with deep regret, that the doctrine and practice of the merging churches, the ALC, the LCA, and the AELC, are such that the latter are as such no longer genuine Lutheran churches from a traditional and confessional point of view..." (Convention Workbook, Resolution 3-94) Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, executive secretary of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, has also said "if the position of the ELCA conforms to the practice of the uniting bodies, then, in my opinion it would be impossible to consider 'the new Lutheran church a Lutheran church in accordance with the Scriptures and the Confessions.' It would then be more accurately regarded as of mixed confession or as heterodox." (Christian News, January 26, 1987, p. 20) Are these statements unnecessarily harsh in their judgment of the new Lutheran church, or do they in fact give an accurate assessment of the situation?

The final revision of the proposed Confession of Faith of the ELCA, prepared by the Commission for a New Lutheran Church, reads as follows:

This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

- a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
- b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

This church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church.

This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

This church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the

Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

(Report & Recommendations of the CNLC, August 29, 1986, p. 13)

This statement seems to reflect a basic Lutheran understanding of the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and the authority of Scripture. It also appears to bind the ELCA to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions. There is a certain degree of ambiguity, especially regarding the nature of Scriptural authority and Confessional subscription, but by and large this official confession of faith would seem to place the ELCA squarely within the historic Lutheran tradition.

We must remember, however, that official constitutional language is not the sole factor in determining the orthodoxy of a church body. Henry E. Jacobs, a leading theologian in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, an antecedent body of the present LCA, reminds us that

It is not subscription to Confessions of faith that is desired, so much as to the faith of the Confessions. The unity of the Church does not consist in subscription to the same Confessions, but in the acceptance and teaching of the same doctrines. (Distinctive Doctrines and Usages

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4th edition (1914), p. 100)

Jacobs also writes that

It is not the acceptance of the unaltered Augsburg Confession, but the acceptance of its doctrines, which determined the Lutheran character of a teacher or Church body. A man who has never subscribed the Augsburg Confession, or even never seen it, is a Lutheran, if he teach the doctrines which it maintains. A man who makes his subscription to the Confession an object of especial boast, is no Lutheran, if "by equivocation or mental reservation," or even by excusable misunderstanding, he depart from any of the doctrines therein clearly and professedly taught. (p. 102)

Therefore if we desire to know what the true character of the ELCA will be, we must not be satisfied that its constitution officially "accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel." We must also inquire into what will actually be taught in its seminaries and from its pulpits, and this can only be done by an examination of what is currently being taught in the three merging bodies.

In 1984 the LCA's Fortress Press published a two-volume work entitled Christian Dogmatics. The editors of this semi-official dogmatics are Carl E. Braaten, a professor at the LCA's Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Robert W. Jensen, a professor at the LCA's Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Other contributors are Gerhard O. Forde, ALC, a professor at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota, which is operated jointly by the ALC and the LCA; Philip J. Hefner, LCA, a professor

at the Chicago seminary; Paul P. Sponeheim, ALC, a professor at Luther Northwestern; and Hans Schwarz, then a member of the ALC and a professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, which is also operated jointly by the ALC and the LCA.

Regarding the authority of Scripture in the Lutheran Church, Carl Braaten correctly writes in Volume I of Christian Dogmatics that

The hermeneutics of the orthodox period effected a systematization of the principles of interpretation that Luther applied. The basic premise was the clarity of Scripture; the Bible is not a dark and obscure book that only a few professors can understand. This does not mean that all the passages are clear, only that everything necessary for Christian faith and life is clearly revealed in Scripture. The rule was to clarify obscure passages by clear ones. The idea of the clarity of Scripture did not mean that unregenerate people can grasp the true meaning of Scripture. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit they can understand the words and syntax, but the real saving content of Scripture will elude them until their hearts are tuned into the Spirit. The true interpretation of Scripture is a gift of faith worked by the Holy Spirit. This was finally taken to mean the ability to hold fast to what Scripture says even if it means a break with reason and runs contrary to the evidence of the senses. It may, indeed, require a *sacrificium intellectus*. (p. 71)

Braaten adds, however, that "with the full emergence of biblical criticism in the age of the Enlightenment, the pillars of orthodox hermeneutics were shattered." The biblical critics of this age

"developed an autonomous scientific criticism of the biblical documents. The methods of historical-critical investigation which were applied to all ancient writings were now applied without hesitation to the biblical writings." (p. 71) Braaten explains the significance of this new approach for the study of the Scripture as follows:

The history of the development and refinement of the historical-critical method covers the last two centuries and is very complex, so we can only highlight several of its main features. The first *premise* is that the orthodox doctrine of inspiration has no heuristic validity at all in the scholarly study of the Bible. The investigation must proceed without prejudice concerning the special authority of this book. The biblical writings are products of two thousand years of history and must be examined as are all other literary remains from antiquity. The startling *discovery* was that the ecclesiastical dogmas are not to be found in the Bible, but are products of a later time. In the age of Christendom, the dogmas of the Trinity and of Christ, as formulated in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, were necessary to believe for salvation. Now the biblical critics could apply the Scripture-principle of Protestantism to show that these dogmas cannot be required for faith, since they lack solid biblical support. One of the main incentives in the history of criticism was in fact to achieve freedom for scholarly research from the oppressive authority of the church and its dogmatic controls. If the dogmas could be undermined, no field of research could be declared off-limits. Three areas of research involving the interpretation of Scripture brought the new

criticism into virulent conflict with traditional modes of understanding.

First, there arose the criticism of the Gospels, the main source documents of the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. The overall result of Gospel criticism was shocking to those whose faith was dependent on the utter reliability of every word of Scripture, for the words and deeds of Jesus which the Gospels report were found to be intermingled with and modified by the beliefs of the early church. The question of who Jesus of Nazareth really was and what he accomplished became a matter of research and therefore in principle an open question always subject to continuing investigation. This research affected the christological dogma because it placed in question the traditional assertion of the divinity of Christ and the notion that a person's relation to God is determined by what is believed about Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, the unity of the New Testament was challenged on the grounds that there are different and rival theologies circulating in primitive Christianity. The theology of John is different from the theology of Luke, and Paul's theology is again very different from both. The upshot of this finding was to challenge the idea that the unity of the church could be founded on the unity of doctrine, since in the New Testament itself there is a plurality of theologies. This led to the relativizing of church dogma and the traditional demand for a *consensus doctrinae*.

Third, critics were eager to show that the biblical documents are not unique, but reflect the religious ideas of the environment in which they were written. The teachings of

Jesus were traced back to various strands of Judaism; the Christianity of the Pauline and Johannine congregations was shown to be an expression of the religious syncretism of late antiquity. (pp. 71-72)

Braaten still believes that "the Bible is the unique book of the church because of its original and intrinsic connection with the history of the promises of God and its astonishing climax in the career of Jesus the Christ," and that "the churches that claim the heritage of Luther and the Reformation still affirm the Bible as the Word of God." Braaten is quick to add, however, that "this is not meant in the fundamentalistic sense that everything in the Bible stands directly as the Word of God." Rather, the Bible is the Word of God "because it conveys the message of eschatological salvation." (p. 76)

Braaten clearly demonstrates his departure from the Reformation's Sola Scriptura principle when he writes that

This valuation of the Bible as the Word of God is asserted with greater difficulty today than in Luther's time and with greater awareness of the historical problems involved in biblical interpretation. First of all, the theological task is not so easily limited to the interpretation of the Bible, as it was for Luther. The God whom Scriptures attest is Creator and Lord of all, active in all spheres of life and human experience. Therefore, whatever theology asserts about God on the basis of Scripture must in some way be correlated with what can be learned about God's world in nature and history from other disciplines. (p. 76)

Braaten is also remarkably honest and forthright regarding his beliefs when he writes that

The role of the Bible in constructive theology is radically qualified today by historical consciousness. Luther believed that the literal meaning of Scripture is identical with its historical content; things happened exactly as they were written down. Today it is impossible to assume the literal historicity of all things recorded. What the biblical authors report is not accepted as a literal transcript of the factual course of events. Therefore, critical scholars inquire behind the text and attempt to reconstruct the real history that took place. In christology this has led to endless debates on the relation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of apostolic faith and preaching ...

Modern hermeneutics has expanded in scope and significance to come to grips with the historical problem of the distance between the historical events and written testimonies to those events. The Reformation principle that Scripture alone must interpret Scripture--*Scriptura est suiipsius interpres*--is broadened to mean that the biblical texts can only be interpreted out of their historical contexts. Critical attention to the historical situation has magnified the sense of the distance between biblical and modern times. Its thought world, its symbols and myths, are felt to be utterly different from the modern ways of thinking. Therefore Bultmann's call to demythologize the biblical concepts is an attempt to interpret the biblical message in terms that moderns can understand, without taking offense at the alien modes of thought we encounter in the Bible.

Luther's principle of sticking to the single grammatical historical sense of each portion of Scripture is also applied in modern hermeneutics, but with a different result. Critical attention to what the texts actually say has exploded the notion that one orthodox dogmatics can be mined out of Scripture. There are different theological tendencies and teachings in the various texts. Ecumenically this has led to the practical conclusion that the traditional demand for a complete consensus of doctrine may be wrongheaded, if even the Scriptures fail to contain such a consensus. Perhaps the unity of the church can be realized without the kind of doctrinal uniformity demanded by the sixteenth-century theologians on both the Protestant and Catholic sides. In any case, the interpretation of the texts of Scripture can no longer be dominated by the history of dogma, so that the exegetes are compelled to produce nothing but proofs the dogmaticians require. Biblical theology and dogmatic theology are not reducible to each other. This awareness is a result of taking the historical development seriously. (pp. 76-77)

According to the Formula of Concord, those of us who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions "pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated." (Tappert, pp. 503-04) It is obvious that what Braaten believes and teaches to his seminary students is very different from what the Confessions teach on the nature of Scriptural authority of the church.

And Carl Braaten's approach is by no means

unique among the theologians of the merging churches. Paul Jersild, formerly a professor at the ALC's Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, and presently a professor at the LCA's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, writes in his book Invitation to Faith (published by the ALC's Augsburg Publishing House in 1978) that

Scripture and Tradition must be united with what is commonly called the "testimony of the Spirit," or the personal response of the believer in the act of faith. This is a response that involves the whole self--not least our reason--in the encounter with the Gospel message. Thus scripture, tradition, and personal experience are all involved in the question of authority for Christian faith and theology. (p. 42)

LCA theologian Philip Hefner writes in The Church Emerging (Fortress, 1977) that the LCA acknowledges "a certain authority in modern thought per se." In discussing "this dual authority of doctrine and modern thinking" Hefner admits that "the proper relation of the two is as yet an unresolved problem." (p. 150) The AELC's Richard Koenig writes in a similar vein in the Spring 1981 issue of Dialog. According to Koenig, the merging churches "harbor some unresolved theological problems. First, Lutherans of the AELC, ALC, and LCA seem uncertain about a replacement for the Scriptural principle even if they quote the Bible as if it were yet sole source and norm for all church teaching and practice." (p. 163)

When Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom of the LCA's Minnesota Synod was asked if he would advocate employment of at least a minority of Lutheran theologians who affirm the traditional doctrine

of Scriptural inerrancy in the seminaries and colleges of the new Lutheran church, the bishop responded that he would not support the hiring of such theologians. According to Chilstrom,

It is well and good for our seminary students to be exposed to the fact that there are some who hold this opinion. But it is quite another thing to advocate this view in our seminaries. It would be out of character with any of the churches which are identifying with the new Lutheran church. (letter to Robert Jensen, MD, Feb. 27, 1985, quoted in David R. Barnhart's "The Church's Desperate Need for Revival." (1986, p. 86)

The historical-critical method of biblical interpretation is employed universally in the seminaries of the merging bodies, and with predictable results in the doctrine and practice of those churches.

Carl Braaten has been quoted as approving of German theologian Rudolf Bultmann's call to "demythologize" the Scriptures. ALC theologian Gerhard Forde gives us a more indepth look at Bultmann's influence on the theologians of the merging churches. He writes in the Winter 1978 issue of Dialog that the "Bultmann bell" "tolled for many of us the death-knell of the old ways and still threatens to drown us out when we try to say something that is supposed to be 'relevant' to the 'modern world.'" Forde also writes:

He took us away from our cherished ways of thinking in things theological. He woke us from our "dogmatic slumbers." He made us aware of what we have learned to call, rather glibly, "the problem of communications." Many of us had already gone through the trauma of being weaned from the world views about verbal inerrancy

and were only beginning to stammer the new language of Heilsgeschichte, "revelation in history," "truth as encounter," and all that. It was bad enough to be told the "facts" we had learned in Sunday School could no longer be supported by an inerrant scripture and needed new warrant by finding their place in the scheme of Heilsgeschichte. But suddenly to be told that the "facts" themselves were suspect or maybe even irrelevant because they were couched in an outmoded language was the straw that almost broke the camel's back--and indeed did for many, as contemporary theology bears eloquent witness.

Bultmann was a shock treatment for a theology already showing signs of rigor mortis. For many of us Heilsgeschichte was at best a half-way house--good, but not a place one could stay entirely or for long. Bultmann made that clear--though many have yet to learn that lesson. And for those who could take the shock and stay to listen, Bultmann taught many valuable things. He did tell us something about what communicating the gospel means." (p. 28)

Carl Braaten has also been quoted as referring to the "endless debates on the relation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of apostolic faith and preaching" which have come about because of the historical-critical method of Scriptural interpretation. In other words, historical-criticism makes it difficult to know how much of the New Testament's message about Jesus of Nazareth is historically accurate and how much of it is a pious embellishment added by the early church. According to Braaten, the nineteenth-century German scholar David Friedrich Strauss

shocked the Christian world with his *Life of Jesus*, in which he broke through the supernaturalism on the right and the rationalistic naturalism on the left and projected the mythological hypothesis. The New Testament can be interpreted only in terms of its mythical character. The point is not to argue whether the miracles happened or how they could be explained in natural terms, but to see that myth was the language of religion of that time. It is the nature of myth to speak of the otherworldly in terms of this world; therefore it is pointless to ask whether the myths convey historical facts. (CD I, p. 73)

Hence Braaten can write in Christian Dogmatics that

The history and phenomenology of religions have called our attention to the mythic character of the incarnation. The notion of the preexistent Son of God becoming a human being in the womb of a virgin and then returning to his heavenly home is bound up with a mythological picture of the world that clashes with our modern scientific world view. (I, p. 527)

Braaten also concludes that

The main statements of the Apostles' Creed are so bound up with its mythological form that to get rid of the myth would destroy the creed in toto. Can modern people still be expected to accept the creed, with its mythological elements? We know that in the scientific picture of the world, the categories "above" and "below" do not make sense. Therefore the story of the descent of the Son of God to earth and his ascent into heaven cannot be taken literally. The question

is whether the meaning of the myth of the incarnation can be saved without taking it literally, yet without getting rid of its mythic structure. Can it be interpreted in a way that both grasps the essence of the Christian message and does not misplace the scandal of the gospel?...

The story of Christ in the Gospels is a mixture of historical events and mythological symbols. The purpose of the myth is to interpret the significance of the events. Today we must search the myth for the existential meaning of the events, and not take the myth at face value. We must ask about the existential significance of the myth of the preexistent Christ and of his cross and resurrection. To accept these as objective descriptions of a supernatural realm of happenings is to miss the point of the myth; to relate the apostolic kerygma to human existence...

Myth and its symbols are indispensable to express the reality of God in the person of Jesus. Myth is an appropriate form of language for expressing the events and meanings of God's revelation in history. (pp. 528-29)

Regarding the supposed "virgin birth" of Christ, Braaten believes that

The primary interest of dogmatics is to interpret the virgin birth as a symbol and not as a freakish intervention in the course of nature....

It is possible to hold to the virgin birth as a biological fact and miss its point. It is also possible to make the same point without reference to the virgin birth, as the writings of Paul and John prove by not

mentioning it. It is important, then, not to let the story get bogged down in biology, but to read it as a symbol witnessing to the truth of the kerygma....

Why then should human fatherhood be eliminated in the work of salvation? If we grasp the original intention of the story to witness to the real humanity of Jesus, we must not allow a shift in the situation from ancient times to the present to play a trick on us, which it would do if we were to use the story apologetically to prove the divinity of Christ or to explain the sinlessness of Jesus. The story has become increasingly ambiguous because our natural tendency is to take it to mean the opposite of what it originally intended. (pp. 546-47)

LCA theologian Paul Jersild, in his book Invitation to Faith, asks the question,

What do Christians mean today when they confess (in the words of the Nicene Creed) that Jesus Christ "came down from heaven... and was made man"? When we no longer understand the universe to consist of heaven "up above," the earth in the middle, and an "underworld" beneath us, it is at least difficult and more likely impossible for Christians to take this language literally. (p. 99)

Jersild also asks,

But what does it mean to speak of Jesus as "divine"? Does not this word also call for some interpretation? Theologians today are concerned to interpret the divinity of Jesus in a manner which avoids turning him into a bizarre, mythological creature who contains both a divine nature and a human

nature.... Is it not more effective, then, to speak of the divine in terms of humanity that arrives at its realization, or fulfilled humanity? Not only is this language more satisfying, but it expresses as well the conviction that a realized humanity is the goal of God's uniting himself with us. (p. 100)

According to Jersild, Jesus

did have a messianic understanding of his mission, but we can assume that he arrived at this understanding in the course of his development as a person. To take his humanity seriously is to recognize a development in messianic consciousness, born out of struggle and gradually unfolding as Jesus reflected on the cross. Also in regard to his knowledge of the world, we can no longer assume with theologians of the middle ages that Jesus had a supernatural grasp of all knowledge, whether past, present, or future. This claim was based on the notion that Jesus possessed complete perfection because of his divine nature. To take his humanity seriously, however, is to abandon this kind of speculative reasoning. It is to recognize not only the process of growth and development but also that Jesus was conditioned by the cultural milieu in which he lived.

What implications does our understanding of Jesus' uniqueness carry for the church's teaching concerning his sinlessness? Since the middle ages it has been maintained that not only was Jesus without sin; it was impossible that he could have sinned. In the nineteenth century Protestant theologians raised the question whether Jesus' temptation was not meaningless and a sham

if it was impossible for him to sin. It is of course understandable that Christians have ascribed sinlessness to Christ in view of their understanding of his work as Savior and his unity with God the Father. However, it is hardly possible to verify whether Jesus ever had an impure or selfish thought, and this is not the context in which the matter should be discussed. (pp. 101-02)

ALC theologian Gerhard Forde writes in Volume II of Christian Dogmatics that

Jesus himself, though he might have and quite possibly did reckon with a violent death at the hands of his adversaries, seems not to have understood or interpreted his own death as a sacrifice for others or ransom for sin. Such interpretation apparently came as the result of later reflection. Even in their final redaction the synoptic Gospels contain little direct or explicit interpretation of Jesus' work. Mark 10:45 has Jesus say that the Son of Man came to give his life "as a ransom for many," and the accounts of the Last Supper speak of Jesus' blood as his "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24) and "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Such passages, in their present form at least, are usually regarded as having come not from Jesus himself but from later interpretative traditions. The same is true of the instances where Jesus predicts his own death and resurrection, such as Mark 8:31ff and 9:31, and parallels in the other Synoptics. They are interpretations attributed to Jesus after the fact. But aside from such scanty references, the

Synoptics even in their final form afford little explicit interpretation of Jesus' work. (pp. 12-13)

The resurrection of Christ as a real, historical event is also called into question if not outrightly denied by historical-critical theologians. Paul Jersild writes in Invitation to Faith:

We do not really know what a resurrection is because it is a unique event unlike anything that we know. We can imagine a dead body suddenly awaking and getting up, but the Gospels do not give us any descriptions of this kind. If we picture the resurrection in this way, we must realize that such a picture is a metaphor or an analogy used to convey what we think the resurrection involved. What is actually described for us is what happened to the disciples: they were confronted by the living, transformed Jesus. This means that the resurrection as an event that happened to Jesus is something the disciples inferred from their being confronted by him. The resurrection as something that happened to Jesus in which he was "raised from the dead" remains a mystery to us, something beyond our reach. Thus the question, "Was the resurrection a historical event?" (or "Did the resurrection really happen?") proves to be a very complicated question. The important thing is that Jesus really appeared to the disciples; here is the beginning of the resurrection faith. (pp. 89-90)

Jersild also states that

Paul understands Jesus' resurrection as no return to a former state, but as an

eschatological act of God, i.e., an act which for a moment pulls the veil from the future and gives us a glimpse of what life will be beyond death. This transformed Jesus did not reenter the company of the disciples as if he had never died. He appeared as one who no longer belonged to this age. From Paul's viewpoint, one could well describe the experience of the disciples as visions, just as he himself had had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. (p. 89)

LCA theologian Robert Jenson writes in the Winter 1980 issue of Dialog that

The resurrection was not a resuscitation;... Whether, e.g., "Jesus is risen" must claim that the tomb was emptied, that he is now in a collection of cells in organic continuity with a material mass once buried, depends on how we understand "body," and this in turn on how we understand time and space. It is therefore a matter of the problem next on our agenda, and not an immediate component of the gospel-claim. Doubtless there are also things in fact claimed by "Jesus is risen" that we nevertheless would not have to claim to predicate "is risen" of him, even supposing a negative decision on the question just posed. The emptiness of the tomb is one such. These are not my present concern.

...serious assertion of the resurrection is now so uncommon. Our mental map of time and space includes no region that could contain Jesus' present body. And so, whatever orthodox formulas we may repeat, our actual preaching and teaching proceeds as if there were no present body of Jesus:

the conception that operates in the thinking of "liberals" and "conservatives" alike is of Jesus' continuing "spiritual" or historical influence. I.e., by any responsible rendering of "...is risen," the whole modern church proceeds as if Jesus were not--and will so proceed until a post-Copernican way of locating Jesus' body is proposed and becomes ecumenically influential.

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, Jenson also writes in Volume I of Christian Dogmatics that "the Trinity is simply the Father and the man Jesus and their Spirit as the Spirit of the believing community." (p. 155) In the LCA's Catechetics for Today curriculum, published by Parish Life Press in 1980, Carl Uehling writes on the second coming of Christ as follows:

When you know that Jesus is truly your friend, and you believe in him as your Lord, then for you he has come to this world a second time. The first time was when he lived in Palestine. The second time is when he lives in your heart.
("Today's Grace, Tomorrow's Hope," p. 7)

The preceding excerpts clearly demonstrate the state of outright apostasy into which many theologians of the merging churches have fallen. And this apostasy has born fruit in the hearts and minds of pastors and laypeople as well. In a 1981 survey of clergy and laity in the LCA, it was discovered that only 72 percent of the laity and 63 percent of the clergy could say: "I know God exists and I have no doubts about it." Regarding the Bible, 72 percent of the laity and 95 percent of the clergy said they believe it is "the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally." Eighteen percent of the laity said they felt the Bible to be "the actual word

of God and is to be taken literally, word for word," while only two percent of the clergy were able to say this. (Christian News Encyclopedia, Volume II, p. 1193)

Dr. John R. Stephenson, a convert to confessional Lutheranism from the Anglican Church, served as an instructor for the 1982-83 school year at the ALC's Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, before joining the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. He writes:

What, then, was wrong with the prevalent theology of Concordia, Moorhead? Mention of the use of the historical-critical method would not do justice to what was going on at the college during my time there. Rather, we must say that the great majority of the religion professors, along with the two chaplains, were in full reaction against historic Christianity and classical Lutheranism. There was no clear confession of the Godhead of Jesus, of his virginal conception and bodily resurrection, and of the atonement wrought through his once-for-all self-offering on the cross....

Most distressing of all was the fact that so many students coming to the college were basically devout and pious Christians. It strikes me in retrospect that 60-70% of the students had a basically believing frame of mind.... And how many of those students have fallen away from Christ through the teaching of the religion department! Just think of devout Lutheran parents paying good money to have their children weaned away from the faith of their fathers: (Christian News, Sept. 2, 1985, p. 10)

John Pless, now an LCMS pastor, recounts similar experiences while a student at Trinity Lutheran

Seminary (ALC/LCA). Pless writes:

I am a product of the "ALC System" (Four years of undergraduate work at Texas Lutheran College and four years of seminary training at Trinity Seminary in Columbus.) In all honesty, I could never encourage a young man to attend an ALC seminary. Even though I graduated highest in my class at Trinity, I feel the preparation was inadequate and based on faulty assumptions as to the essential teaching of the Gospel. While I attended Trinity, the following remarks would also apply to the other ALC schools in Dubuque and St. Paul since the ALC Board for Theological Education determines the course of study which is the same at all ALC seminaries.

At the ALC seminaries there is very little emphasis on "the basics" of biblical languages, in-depth Bible Study, and Lutheran doctrine. A total of one day was given to the study of the Formula of Concord. The only item students were required to read in a course on Luther was Roland Bainton's Here I Stand. We never even studied the pastoral epistles of the New Testament in spite of the fact that these letters are the primary books of the New Testament which deal with ministry (we were told that they were not written by Paul and were not very important). We had more important things to learn: Clown ministry, pastor's finances, social action, group dynamics, etc.

More important for your consideration is the heretical theological principles governing theological education in the ALC....
(CN, April 29, 1985, p. 2)

The issue of intercommunion between the merging bodies and the Episcopal, Reformed, and Presbyterian Churches has been a matter of much discussion of late. The ALC and AELC adopted resolutions at their 1986 conventions calling for "occasional joint services of the Lord's Supper" and the "sharing of pastors" between Lutheran and Reformed/Presbyterian churches. The LCA convention adopted a similar resolution calling for the LCA and the Reformed/Presbyterian churches to "provide jointly for occasional services of the Lord's Supper where appropriate and desirable." An agreement on "Interim Eucharistic Sharing" has been in effect between the merging churches and the Episcopal Church since 1982. The issue of joint communion with non-Lutheran churches becomes much more clear when we see it in its historical-critical context. At the time of the Reformation the debate was over the meaning of the words "This is my body," uttered by Christ at the Last Supper. Now, however, because of wholehearted acceptance of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation in most of mainstream Christendom, it is usually doubted that Jesus even said any such thing on the night in which he was betrayed. Hence why remain divided on the meaning of the word "is" if Jesus probably never even said it in the first place?! This is the underlying factor that has allowed for the present-day convergence of many of the main-line churches, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, in several areas of ecumenical endeavor, namely, the historical-critical scepticism of all things theological which these churches share.

We originally asked whether or not the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be truly "Lutheran" as that term would be defined on the basis of the Symbolical Books of our church. In the judgment of this essayist the answer is an

unequivocal no! This is not to say that the ELCA will not perpetuate many aspects of its Lutheran heritage, or that there will not be a sizable number of pious and faithful laypeople remaining within its structure who are not aware of what has happened to their church. Indeed there are no doubt many pastors in the merging bodies who do not agree with the more radical pronouncements of the seminary professors who instructed them, and there may be some, especially among the older pastors, who have never accepted the historical-critical theology espoused by the current theological leadership in any form. Yet when we honestly evaluate the beliefs of the leading theologians, and of the majority of pastors who have been trained by them, we must regretfully conclude that the ELCA, as an institution, will stand for institutionalized apostasy, not only from traditional Lutheranism, but from classic Christianity in general. The ELCA as an institution will not deserve the loyalty of the true Lutherans who may remain in it, and the ELCA as an institution will not deserve any outside recognition as a legitimate heir to the Lutheran Reformation.

-- David Jay Webber

ROMANS 7:14-25 and PARADOX

In his article "Preaching the Imprint of Paradox" (Concordia Journal, September, 1985, Vol. II, p. 175), Stephen Reagles has discussed the concept of the "paradox" as it could be utilized by preachers both in studying and in proclaiming Scriptural truth. Since that article represents the thinking which served as the stimulus for the present assignment, it is worthwhile to draw a few key thoughts from it, allowing that article to provide at least a brief framework of ideas on which to build.

Reagles points out that the idea of paradox and the recognition that reality can often be described only in paradoxical terms is becoming a commonplace in a wide variety of discipline: business, physics, photography, poetry, foreign policy, etc. Reagles cites the literary critic Cleanth Brooks, for example, who wrote, "(Many) of the important things which the poet has to say have to be said by means of paradox." To that citation it might be added that Brooks calls poetry the "language of paradox" --paradox being its chief distinction as poetic language, and he notes that it is just by means of this paradoxical use of language that poetry is able to be precise in ways and about areas of life that scientific language cannot be. What Brooks says can easily be illustrated in the Shakespearean corpus, where so often it is precisely the oxymoronic and paradoxical quality of the language and themes of the bard's drama that makes it seem so accurate a description of life.

Reagles also discusses the use of paradox in Scripture and the recognition of such paradox on the part of Luther and the Confessions. He writes concerning Scripture:

That God's 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).

Reagles gives a plethora of examples of "thematic oppositions" or paradoxes to be found in Scripture:

...the Lord who is both compassionate and forgiving, yet the God who "does not leave the guilty unpunished,...An apostles life 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 (I Cor. 1,2), the last first and the first last (Matt. 20:16), the dying live and the living die (2 Cor. 5, 6)... Christ (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.

From confessional theology are cited the examples of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, Law and Gospel, and the Christian as simul iustus et peccator.

Concerning these many examples it should be

observed that they are not all "paradoxical" in the same way. The description of the apostle's life in II Cor. 6, for example, is paradoxical in a rhetorical, poetic way, as is the paradox that in Christ the poor are rich (Luke 16); that is, the rhetorical opposition between these polarities can be neutralized and the truth that is conveyed by the paradoxical expression can be conceptualized. On the other hand, the paradox of the doctrine of the Trinity is easily seen to be of another kind. That three coequal and divine persons subsist in one and the same divine essence or Godhead is not a logical contradiction in the strict sense. But it certainly transcends anything which we can conceptualize with the aid of experience and reason. It represents an ontological reality which we cannot fully apprehend except by looking at first one half, then the other of the paradoxical formula (much like the little Cracker Jack picture prizes which show two different pictures, depending on the angle by which one looks at them. When one looks straight at them, they do not show any clear picture at all).

Reagles' article is concerned with paradox both as a heuristic method for studying Scripture and as a structuring device; he suggests, among other things, that the concept of paradox has significance because it accurately presents Scriptural truth and because it provides an effective way of communicating that truth in a way which promotes understanding and retention.

With these ideas as a background, this paper will present a brief exegetical treatment of Romans 7:14-25, following the lead of some standard Lutheran commentators. The focus assigned to this paper will, perhaps, make allowable a somewhat shorter treatment of some of the linguistic matters in the text. Since the commentators reach a general consensus on the major thrust of the

passage, and since the central paradox of the passage can be found in that consensus, some points of language can be left for another time. J. P. Koehler has said:

(O)pinions will always vary on (minor exegetical) points. There is no harm in this, for it affects only external linguistic matters. These frequently cannot be decided with absolute certainty because the speaker or the writer himself did not think of the several possible meanings and therefore did not use a more precise expression simply because it is not at all important. What Paul wishes to say to us through the Holy Spirit in any case remains the same and is understood correctly by every reader, even if the latter does not understand the fine linguistic distinctions. (The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957, p. 17).

The purpose of this exegetical treatment will be to determine what paradox is revealed to us in this passage of Scripture and the nature of that paradox. It will also be of interest to see how this passage is used in the Lutheran Confessions and, finally, to discuss a few ways in which the paradox presented in the passage can be "solved," but at the cost of the truth.

Franzmann entitles this entire section "Paul's Experience with the Law as a Christian." The opening words of verse 14, with their reference to the Law of God are a bridge between what Paul has been saying and this section. The Law actually becomes the means by which sin increases in me (vs. 8, 9) and effects my death (vs. 10, 11). The problem is not with the Law, but with me, a point which Paul now explains.

Sold Under Sin

14 οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. 15 ὁ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω· οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ' ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ. 16 εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός. 17 νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία.

- 14 - For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

The Law is πνευματικός, spiritual. It bears the nature of its origin, the God who is θεῶν πνεῦμα; it is "holy and righteous and good," and it demands a clean spirit, not just outward discipline. But I am σάρκινος -- of flesh. The ending υνος "denotes the material of which human nature is composed" (Franzmann). Trench notes that the term is less pejorative than σαρκικός and is even used positively in II Cor. 3:3 ("you are a letter of Christ, ... (written) on tablets of hearts of flesh"). The real contrast is established by the next phrase -- "sold under sin." Franzmann asserts that it is significant that Paul does not say that he is a slave of sin, as he does of the unregenerate state, but rather that he is "sold under sin." But πικράσκω means "to sell as a slave," and it seems a bit difficult to differentiate between a slave and one who has been "sold as a slave."

- 15 - For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

Paul says that he does not "know" or "understand" what he does. He does not mean, of course,

that he is not conscious of what he does or that it is an unexplainable mystery ("unerklärliches Räthsel"--Stoekhardt). γινώσκειν here conveys the "peculiarly strong and personal meaning which involves a communion between the will and heart of the knower and the thing or person known" (Franzmann) as in Matt. 7:23, "I never knew you."

There does not seem to be any significant difference in meaning among the synonyms κατεργάζομαι, πράσσειν and ποιεῖν. Trench says that ποιεῖν brings out more the object and end of the act, whereas πράσσειν emphasizes the process by which the object is attained; the ideas of continuing action and repetition are inherent in πράσσειν but not in ποιεῖν. Trench connects this subtle difference to what he discerns as a tendency to use ποιεῖν in a good sense but πράσσειν in an evil sense (verse 19 of this section is adduced as evidence) because evil actions do not really produce anything; evil is really a deception. But this distinction cannot have any major bearing in this passage, since the verbs are used in the opposite way here in verse 15.

Stoekhardt points to the more important point, "Der Gegensatz zwischen Tun und Wollen kommt in den gehauften synonymis κατεργάζομαι, πράσσειν, ποιεῖν einerseits, οὐ γινώσκειν, οὐ θέλειν, μισεῖν andererseits recht stark und scharf zum Ausdruck." On the other hand, the verbs οὐ γινώσκειν, οὐ θέλειν, μισεῖν surely point out the foreignness, the complete alienness of sin to the new man. On the other hand, Paul is here not at all denying personal agency and responsibility--guilt--in the performance of evil. The subject of the verbs is "I," the writer Paul. But Paul writes as Paul the Christian, as new man, burdened by the fact that in this life he is "of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." As Stoekhardt points out, sin would not be sin if it were not a matter of the

will. But Paul as new man finds that "er muss sich einem fremden Willen fügen." The outlines of the paradox given in this passage, therefore, are already presented in these opening verses.

16 - But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good.

Bruce writes, "Paul has within him an independent witness, the voice of conscience, which, by condemning his failure to keep the law, bears testimony to the law as being 'holy, just, and good.'" But also unbelievers have the voice of conscience. Rather, it seems best to take σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ as virtually synonymous with θέλειν ἀγαθόν (v. 19) and συνήδομαι τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 22); the will of the Christian as Christian is totally at one with the will of God and the Law which expresses that will.

17 - So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

Stoekhardt takes νουν δε οὐκέτι as a logical and not temporal expression. Lenski says that νουν is not logical but "must be taken together with δέ as introducing the other plain fact that must be noted," and he takes οὐκέτι in a temporal sense referring to the time before Paul's conversion. Either way, the important thing would seem to be that now Paul extends his description of the inner struggle he experiences; it is not simply a clash between his will and the outward acts; it is a clash between his "I" (As he writes according to the new man) and the sin which dwells in him. Note how Stoekhardt struggles with the paradoxical thoughts in this section:

Nicht sein Ich ist der eigentlich Missetäter, sondern die Sünde. Freilich wohnt die Sünde

in mir, liegt nicht außerhalb des ἐγώ, ich habe die Sünde in mir, ich bin es, der da sündigt, kein Anderer. Aber es ist nicht mein eigentliches Ich, das die Sünde vollbringt. Mein eigentliches Ich steht im Gegensatz zu der Sünde.

Stoekhardt tries to preserve the primacy of the regenerated "I" without giving up responsibility for sin. "I" and no other, but not my "real I."

"I" and Indwelling Sin"

18 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλει παράκειταιί μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ². 19 οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω. 20 εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω [ἐγὼ] τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοί ἀμαρτία.

18 - For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

The γὰρ and the thoughts that follow cause most commentators to group these verses (18-20) together as a unit; Paul picks up on his last phrase and explains "the sin which dwells in me." Paul's description of his flesh (σάρξ, "im ethischen Sinn, die Verderbte Natur") coincides fully with all that he says of the flesh of unregenerate man. And, while it is true that ἐν ἐμοί is qualified by the phrase ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, the reverse is also true. The phrase, "that is, in my flesh," should not be taken to mean, "I didn't really mean 'in me.'" The paradoxical quality should not be taken out of Paul's language by minimizing the

connection between him -- his essential self -- and the sin which indwells him. It seems to me that something like this is at least in part happening in the following Lutheran commentary:

Paul's personality itself is not divided, there are no two opposing ἐγὼ in him, which would be unthinkable. Even when in common parlance we speak of a better self in some person, we do not mean that two actual selves exist in him. This duality in Paul is the presence of an extraneous power in him beside his own ἐγὼ, "the sin dwelling in me," i.e., the sin-power mentioned so often before. This dwells in Paul, it does not possess and control him entirely, it is only lodged in him. It still maintains itself in him but is not really a part of him, it is a foreign element that has not been dislodged and expelled...

In the regenerate the spirit and not the flesh dominates the will, but not perfectly, not wholly. It is the spirit that wills the good and that hates any sin. But the remnant of the old flesh that is still present ever and again interferes with the will, and it is this that makes the Christian sin in one way or in another to his own grief and dismay. (Lenski)

There are several interesting aspects to Lenski's wordings here. He seems to consider both ἐγὼ and "the will" as necessarily homogeneous and monolithic; it is "unthinkable" to have division of the ἐγὼ, Paul's "personality" cannot be divided. It is not entirely clear what he includes in the term ἐγὼ or "personality." But clearly, both concerning "the will" and ἐγὼ Lenski takes a kind of substantive approach; just as a person has only one brain or one heart, so one can have only one

"will." Sin can infect this will (for the Christian, dominated by the spirit), can "lodge in it," but there cannot be two wills. But does this really do justice to Paul's language? As was pointed out earlier, when Paul, speaking according to the new man, says that he does evil, it must necessarily be "willed" activity to be sin.

Lenski also considers it important that Paul says in verse 19 ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω rather than using the word πονηρόν: Regenerated Paul predicates of his flesh only that it makes him do what is bad, good-for-nothing morally and spiritually and thus opposed to the excellent law....He does not predicate "what is wicked," viciously opposed to the good law....The latter would mean that the flesh had again gained complete control.

It should be added, however, that the flesh of the Christian, in so far as it concerns the activity of willing or desiring, is no better than the flesh of unbelievers; and as it concerns the outward act, also many unbelievers attain some outward discipline and control through law-motivation. Perhaps to carry out and enact πονηρόν would indicate that one is not a Christian, but to refrain from carrying it out does not mean that one is.

Verses 19 and 20 repeat the thoughts of 15-17. "I am no longer the one doing them, but sin which dwells in me."

Also auch diese Folgerung bringt der Apostel zum zweiten Mal zum Ausdruck und gibt damit den Christen nachdrücklich zu bedenken, daß in dem Conflict zwischen dem ἐγὼ πνευματικός und dem ἐγὼ σαρκικός das erstere vorwiegt und vorherrscht, dass das erneute Ich das eigentliche Ich des Christen ist. (Stoekhardt)

There is a sense in which this thought (expressed also by Lenski) is correct and important. It would be inconceivable to have Paul, for example, isolate and speak according to his "old man," viewing objectively and being burdened by "the good that dwells in (him)," That would be, in Iago's words, a true "divinity of hell." Notice that, unlike Lenski, Stoeckhardt is comfortable speaking about two ἐγώ's.

The Battle of the Laws

21 *Εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται·*
 22 *συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον,* 23 *βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν³ τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.*

21 - I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

τὸν νόμον is taken by some commentators to mean "the law of God," while others (and most versions) understand ὁ νόμος here in the general sense of "rule" or "principle." Stoeckhardt gives the latter interpretation and adds that the inferential particle ἄρα introduces the new point εὐρίσκω τὸν νόμον as the direct object of τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοί: "I find, then, for me as willing the law in order to perform the excellent, that for me the base is present." I have in my seminary notes on this passage the comment, "Madson calls Lenski here 'strange and unnatural.'" Franzmann also takes τὸν νόμον to refer to the Law of God:

A very literal translation of his words would read: 'So then, I find the Law;

when I desire to do what is good, what is evil lies ready to my hand.' It seems best to take the Law in the usual sense. One can then reproduce the apostle's meaning thus: 'This is what my experience with the Law comes to; when I desire to do the good which it enjoins, the evil which the Law forbids lies always ready to my hand.' The verse, then, serves to recall the main theme of the section, the necessity of liberation from the Law...

There does not seem to be any major substantive difference in these approaches to Paul's words.

22 - For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.

"(T)he inner man" is an expression Paul uses elsewhere to designate the "new man," the Christian insofar as he is Christian (Eph. 3:16, II Cor. 4:16 ὁ ἔσωθεν ἄνθρωπος). The expression συνήδομαι -- to delight in -- connects to σύμφημι in verse 16 and to τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοῦ ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν in verse 21, carrying the description of the nature of the new man even further. The new man delights in, is totally in agreement with and wills the same as the Law of God.

23 - But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law which is in my members.

This verse affords a little bit of difficulty. Stoeckhardt and others understand the ἕτερον νόμον which is "in my members" to be the same as ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας which likewise is "in my members." ὁ νοῦς here is considered to be synonymous to ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ νόμος τοῦ νοῦς μου is the

same as ὁ νοῦς. Franzmann offers a more complex interpretation:

There are four forces: The Law of God, the other law, the law of the mind, the law of sin in the members. Two of them are major forces: The Law of God, in which Paul delights, and the other law, which wages a war of conquest in Paul's members. This other law is, it would seem, that power of sin which came into the world with Adam's sin and seeks continually to extend, or to reestablish, its reign. Each of the major forces has its own ally within Paul, fifth-column forces, as it were. The law of the mind is the ally of the Law of God; it is the "I" that calls the Law good, the "inner man" who delights in the Law. The law of sin in the members is the ally of the other law; this is the power of sin which lives in man and strives to commit him to the other law, which is in opposition to the Law of God.

Again, there is no major substantive change that results from the different approach. Lenski points to the importance of the tense of the participles:

From "the sin" in the role of (king) we have been liberated through Christ (6:17-23); hence this law, this expression of the will of "the sin," can do no more than "engage in campaigning against us and engage in making us war-captives," --these are only present participles which state what goes on and not what is actually accomplished. It is important to note these are not aorist participles.

Again the effect of Lenski's wording here is to

mitigate the role of sin as Paul speaks of it.

24 ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς
με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; 25 χάρις
δὲ τῷ θεῷ⁴ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. ἄρα
οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῖ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ, τῇ δὲ
σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας.

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Paul cries out for deliverance; the sin dwelling in him is so burdensome, such a painful trial. It here becomes clear that the sharp distinction which he has drawn between his "I" and "indwelling sin" is not an attempt to excuse his sinning. Many of the commentators take τούτου with σώματος rather than with θανάτου -- "this body of death" rather than "the body of this death." Paul answers his own question; "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Christian finds full deliverance in Christ. In Him is forgiveness, full and free, for the guilt of the sin which still burdens. In Him and His Gospel of forgiveness is strength for the "inner man" who loves God's Law. And finally, it is Christ who will make that deliverance complete on the last day, when all believers will enter heaven free at last of the sin which is yet in our members.

The final sentence, translated quite literally by the NASB, restates the paradox in such a way that the "I" of Paul is participating in both the service of God's Law and the service of the law of sin. But Paul maintains the distinction which has operated throughout this section--"with my

mind," "with my flesh."

It seems to me that Paul presents here a paradox to us which is not merely rhetorical or poetic. Although no actual logical contradiction is really involved, his words yet present to us an apparent contradiction, a two-faceted statement about the Christian which we cannot quite mesh together in one glance. I will and do good. I will and do evil. Both facets of the statement reach beyond our apprehension by reason or observation. The sinfulness of our old man is the same as that of which Jeremiah says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (17:9), and of which Luther says, "This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures" (SA III. I., 3). On the other hand, the goodness of the new man is that which is described in Psalm 1; it agrees with and delights in the Law of God, wills to do good (actually does good, as Christ reminds us in His words about judgment Day), but is hidden from our eyes, not fully observable, appearing as mixed with sin.

It is interesting to compare the language of certain Lutheran commentaries with the language of Paul.

Ein gläubigen Christ, ein Wiedergeborener ist der Sünde gestorben, ist innerlich los und frei von der Sünde. Er lasst auch die Sünde nicht in seinem sterblichen Leib, er meidet Schande und Laster, das Sündigen ist bei ihm nicht habitus. Gleichwohl bekennt er und seufzt darüber, dass er das thut, was er nicht will, vielmehr hasst und verabscheut. Er sündigt noch täglich reichlich. Aus seinem natürlichen Herzen

steigen noch fort und fort arge Gedanken auf, unreine Begierden. Und eben auch diese actus und motus interni gehören zum Thun des Bösen.

One feels at times that full force is not being given here to Paul's language, to "I do, I practice evil," "sold under sin," and "I serve the law of sin with flesh." I have taken this example from Stoeckhardt, but the rhetorical gesture is discernible also in others. It involves, it seems to me, an attempt at consonance between the two poles. (In Stoeckhardt's and Lenski's case it involves an attempt to make what Paul says in 7:14-25 agree with what he says in 6:15-23.) But it should be added that this gesture takes place in the midst of a discourse which also emphasizes the extremes of which Paul speaks and admits that they must remain paradoxical. (This is especially true of Stoeckhardt.) Finally, Lutheran theology says with Luther:

If sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present, for St. John says, "No one born of God commits sin; he cannot sin." Yet it is also true, as the same St. John writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (SA III, Art. III, 45)

Both extremes are true. As far as I can see, this is the general pattern in the Book of Concord of treating the paradox of Romans 7:14-25. Both facets are held to, both extremes are held out side by side. For example, in SD II concerning Free Will, Paul's words from this passage are used to describe how bad the will of the unregenerate, unconverted man is. In the same article, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is described:

But after a man is converted, and thereby

enlightened, and his will is renewed, then he wills that which is good, in so far as he is reborn or a new man, and he delights in the law of God according to his inmost self (Rom. 7:22). And immediately he does good, as much and as long as the Holy Spirit motivates him, as St. Paul says, "For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God." This impulse of the Holy Spirit is no coercion or compulsion because the converted man spontaneously does that which is good, as David says, "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host." Nevertheless, the words of St. Paul apply also to the regenerated, "For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.

Again, "So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7:22, 23, 25). And again, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would" (Gal. 5:17). (SD II. 63ff).

Again, both sides of the Pauline paradox are laid side by side. The one is true, nevertheless (implying the tension involved) also the other is true.

The most common method of diffusing the paradox of this passage in Scripture has been to consider Paul as speaking of his state before conversion. Stoeckhardt lists as those who follow this interpretation: the Greek fathers, Augustine up to the time of the controversy with Pelagius, most Roman Catholic exegetes, Socinians, and Arminians.

The Lutheran Church and the Calvinists have understood the passage to be descriptive of the regenerate Paul's struggle. It is interesting to note that there is at least some correspondence between these two groupings of interpretation and what Herman Sasse says about the development of a theology of the Cross in Christendom, a development which Sasse ties directly to an adequate understanding of sin as Scripture describes it. In defending the Lutheran position, commentators point to Paul's change to the present tense, and some point out that such a description of his present experience fits perfectly where it is. But of most importance are the statements which Paul makes about the inner "I"--willing the good, agreeing with and delighting in the Law of God, serving the Law of God. These things simply cannot be said of the unregenerate.

-- Professor Daniel Metzger

CORRECTIONS: Lutheran Synod Quarterly
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Page 58, line 20:

one. It takes the power of God to do that, and that power is in the treasure, the very power of God Himself, the power of God unto salvation. Thus, through the treasure, as it is dispensed, God Himself by His power in the treasure converts

[the underscored words were omitted from the printed copy]

Page 64, line 12:

This year marks the 176th anniversary, not 175th.

Also, in the heading which precedes the last paragraph, the last word should be PREDOMINANCE, not Performance.

Page 74, paragraph 20, last half of the paragraph
should read:

"They therefore often readily identified justification with regeneration. Theologians of the Enlightenment, meanwhile, generating - or at least reflecting - the new age movement, found little need for either regeneration or justification."