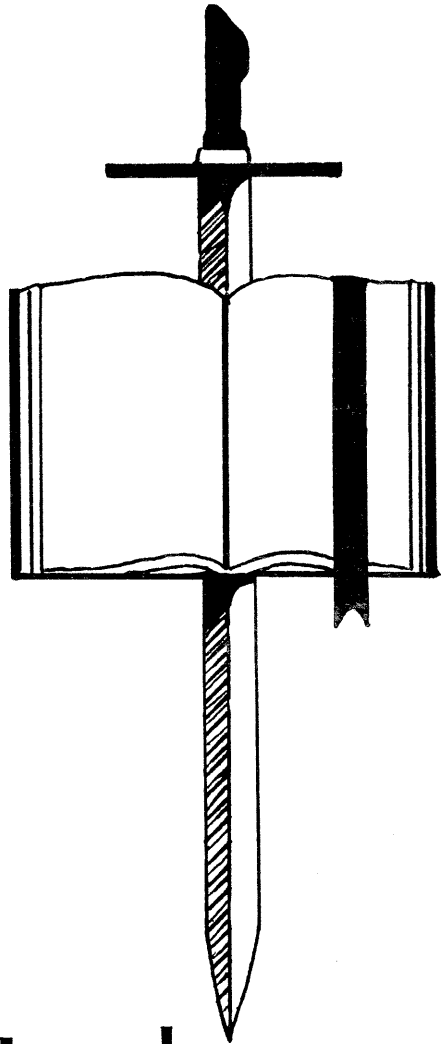


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SEMINARY GRADUATION SERMON

by Wilhelm W. Petersen

June 18, 1989 - Luke 24:46-47

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

* * * * *

In Christ Jesus, dear Fellow-Redeemed and especially you the graduates of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Along the road of your lives the Holy Spirit implanted in your hearts a desire to study for the ministry. You did not have a Damascus road experience, as did Saul of Tarsus, but through your study of the Word and perhaps the influence of Christian parents, or a pastor or teacher, the Holy Spirit worked in your hearts the desire to become a pastor. The seminary has helped you fulfill that desire by providing you with a theological training designed to equip you for this important work, and now the long-awaited day of graduation has arrived.

This is indeed a happy day for you, your families, and the congregations to which you have been assigned. It also gives us at the seminary great joy to recommend you for graduation and a call into the ministry. This graduation service reminds us that the seminary plays a vital role in the life of our synod. Luther emphasized this importance many years ago when he said, "When we are dead and gone,

whence would come our successors if not from the schools? For the sake of the church we must have and maintain schools." It was in that spirit and conviction that our synodical fathers established this seminary some 43 years ago and ever since that time it has been carrying out its important task of training pastors for the ministry.

As you stand ready to assume the pastoral office, our Lord makes it clear in our text what he wants the content of your message to be, namely, "repentance and remission of sins." From his perspective that's where it's all at and on the basis of our text as we gather our thoughts around the theme REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS, let us consider first of all that the Holy Spirit works repentance through the preaching of the Law and secondly that He works forgiveness of sins through the Gospel.

As I was preparing this sermon I received something in the mail that caught my attention and impressed upon me all the more the importance of preaching repentance and remission of sins. It was a periodical entitled EXPLORATIONS, published by The American Institute for the Study of Religious Cooperation and its purpose is to bring Christians and Jews closer together theologically. This particular issue contained an address to seminarians entitled REJOICING IN THE GIFTS. The speaker identified what he perceived to be the greatest gift, namely, "the faith vision that God is one." He then went on to speak about monotheism (the idea that God is one) and concluded by saying, "learn anew what it means that God is not Jewish, or Christian, or Buddhist, or Communist, or any other label we devise; God is God and God is One...respect those with whom you disagree and never abandon your own Jewish or Christian vision of the Integrity of Reality; learn something from others of God's children

on this pitifully shrinking globe. A true monotheizer respects the humanity and the gifts of all peoples." In his message there was nothing about the triune God, Christ, sin and grace, heaven or hell.

This is a far cry from the words of our Savior where he makes it clear what he wants pastors to proclaim, namely, repentance and remission of sins. We learn from Scripture that this is done through the faithful preaching of law and gospel. The apostolic injunction is, "Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Our confessions put it this way, "These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to justify and quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout the Scripture. One part is law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sins. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of grace in Christ." (AP, Art XII, par. 53)

It is through the preaching of the law that the Holy Spirit effects true repentance. Through the law he reveals our sin problem and our inability to solve it by ourselves. The law also reveals God's wrath against sin and works sorrow and terror in our hearts. St. Paul says that the law is to be preached in such a way that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God." (Romans 3:19) Yes, the law puts all of us in our place and shows us that "before his bar all guilty stand," and that we stand condemned in God's sight.

We have examples of pointed law preaching in the Scriptures. On Pentecost Day the apostle Peter preached in such a way that his hearers "were pricked in their hearts," and asked, "Men and

brethren, what shall we do?" The prophet Nathan was very specific when he pointed to David who was guilty of adultery and murder and said, "Thou art the man" so that the King exclaimed, "I have sinned against the Lord." And the Savior turned the searchlight of the law in the heart and life of the woman at the well which revealed her sordid past so that she realized her need for the "water of life."

This same law of God exposes us for what we really are. It opens the book of our lives and lays bare every single thought, word, and deed in our lives. Any cover-up on our part is as ridiculous as it is futile; we only deceive ourselves. Nothing lies hidden before the all-seeing God. It is so true as the hymn says,

"The law is but a mirror bright
That brings the in-bred sin to sight
That lurks within our nature."

The importance of proper law preaching is brought out by Christ who says, "They that be whole need not a physician but they that are sick....I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And our confessions say, "Hearts that do not feel God's wrath spurn consolation." Dr. Koren, one of our synodical fathers, put it this way, "If we preached only concerning forgiveness of sin (righteousness) but not concerning repentance, then that doctrine would neither be understood nor would it bear fruit. For without repentance there is no faith and consequently no justification by faith....and to such souls 'justification by faith' will be only an empty phrase or a soft pillow--oftenest both." No, as long as one does not realize his lost condition he will have no interest in the Savior of sinners. Just as one will not appreciate food unless hungry, water unless thirsty, he will not feel the need for the "bread of life"

and the "water of life." It is only "When sinners see their lost condition, And feel the pressing load of sin, And Jesus cometh on His mission To heal the sin-sick heart within, All grief must flee before His grace, And joy divine will take its place."

But do not confuse law preaching with moralizing and tirading against the evils of the day. That type of preaching will only make hypocrites out of people, causing the hearer to think that because he doesn't do those terrible things that the minister is talking about therefore he is not as bad as others, and may be tempted to pray as did the Pharisee in the temple, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are."

No, the law is spiritual and it gets to the heart of our problem, which is the heart. The Bible describes our sinful heart as being "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" and that it is "out of the heart that proceed evil thoughts, murderers, adulteries, fornications, thefts, envy, etc." Jesus preached pointed law during his ministry when he said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" and "Whosoever looketh after a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." St. Paul confessed, "I had not known lust except the law said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" Who of us can say that we have even come close to measuring up to the demands of God's holy law! And in case we might be tempted to think that we are doing pretty well, then heed what the apostle says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." That should put all of us in our place!

True law preaching - important as it is - is as our

confessions say, a "foreign work" and its purpose is to lead us to Christ's "proper work," which is the proclamation of forgiveness to the penitent sinner. Luther said it so clearly, "Where the law exercises its office alone...there is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul and Judas as St. Paul says, the law slays through sin. Moreover, the Gospel offers consolation and forgiveness in more ways than one, for with God is plenteous redemption." If we only had the ministry of the law, then we would have only sorrow, misery, despair, and condemnation.

But the text clearly says that remission of sin is also to be preached. It tells us, first of all, how this forgiveness has been obtained. "It was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day." The whole purpose of his death and resurrection was to obtain for us sinners the remission of sin. He "was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25) Through his death he paid the full penalty of sin and his resurrection from the grave is God's declaration that he accepted the sacrifice of his Son as full payment for sin and has declared the world forgiven. Yes, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (II Cor. 5:19)

"Remission of sin" is the heart and center of the Gospel and it is to predominate in our preaching. It is the only solution to our problem of sin and death. Through the Word of the Gospel this treasure is brought to us and made our own. Yes, God is "surpassingly rich in his grace" and brings this grace to us in various ways, through the spoken word, Baptism, Lord's Supper, the keys, and mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, as Luther says in the Smalcald Articles.

While the law is to be preached in such a way as "to drive the greatest saint to despair" so the Gospel must be preached so as "to give the greatest sinner hope." Daniel March in his classic description of the Bible says among other things, "It is strict enough to denounce the very shadow and semblance of sin; it is liberal enough to save the chiefest of sinners." Therefore, open the floodgates of the Gospel and don't be vague or merely generalize it. No, personalize it. Say to the penitent as did Jesus, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven." Say to the penitent as did Nathan to a repentant David, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." Like the angel who proclaimed to the frightened shepherds on Bethlehem's plain, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Tell them that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound" that "their iniquity is pardoned and that they have received of the Lord's hand double for all their iniquity."

Send your people home from the worship service with the happy assurance that they have a Saviour from sin. Tell them that where they have failed in their lives, they have a Saviour who led a perfect life in their stead and that this counts as though they had kept that law perfectly.

Don't make the tragic mistake that a preacher made some years ago when he decided to preach two Sunday evening services on that classic law and gospel text Romans 6:23 which says, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The first night he preached on the first part of that text and thundered away with the law. It so happened that a man burdened with guilt came to that service

hoping to find peace for his soul, but he found it not. He did not hear one word of gospel, and consequently was driven to despair and went out and took his own life. When the pastor heard about this he realized what a terrible mistake he had made; he even suffered a nervous breakdown over it. As you go over your sermons make certain that there is clear gospel and that no one goes home without the ringing assurance that his sins are forgiven. Remember what Walther says, "Don't be stingy with the gospel."

Preaching "repentance and remission of sin" through the Law and Gospel is "an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly." (SD, V, par. 1) That kind of preaching will truly benefit God's people and will also bring forth the "fruits of repentance" which will be reflected in a godly life and a life of service to God and our fellow-man. May God bless you as you go forth to proclaim the most important message that fallen sinners can hear. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5b,6)

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR MILLENNIAL VIEWS*

The term millennium in theology signifies a period of one thousand years.¹ A synonymous term is chiliasm.² W. E. Blackstone says, "Millennium (Latin) is the same as Chiliad (Greek), and both mean a thousand years. Both terms stand for the doctrine of a future era of righteous government upon the earth to last a thousand years."³

Millennialism is the belief in the millennium, especially the doctrine that at a time appointed by Him, Christ will reappear on the earth where He, with His saints, will reign for one thousand years or for an indefinitely long period.⁴ Walter Albrecht reports that "according to some [He will reign] even for 365,000 years, since a day with the Lord is as a thousand years."⁵ Millennialists believe that after the reign of one thousand (or more) years the wicked dead will be raised, and the final judgment, with its awards, will take place.⁶ Albrecht declares, "The worst man-made sign supposed to precede the advent of Christ is the coming golden age of the Church, commonly called Chiliasm or Millennialism."⁷

The Augsburg Confession refers to millennial-type doctrines as "certain Jewish opinions."⁸ Millennial ideas are not found in the Old Testament. However, the carnal notion that the

*Dr. Ernest Bartels, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Wahpeton, North Dakota.

Messiah's kingdom would be earthly prevailed among many Jews.⁹ This is reflected in II Esdras, an Old Testament-era apocryphal book. In II Esdras 7: 28 we read, "For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain with him shall rejoice four hundred years."¹⁰ Blackstone reports that

Jewish writers throughout the Talmud hold that the Millennium will be chiefly characterized by the deliverance of the Jews from all their enemies, recovery of Palestine, and the literal reign of the Messiah in unequaled splendor therein.¹¹

He also says:

It was the view most frequently expressed in the Talmud that the Messianic kingdom would last for one thousand years; and this was commonly believed among the Jews. It is easy to discern upon what they founded the doctrine. It was the Sabbath of God's weeks.¹²

The primary Bible portion on which modern-day Millennialism is based is Revelation, chapter 20. The millennial doctrine is a result of faulty exegesis of that Scripture section.¹³ Millennialist Blackstone flatly declares that "the literal reign of Christ with His saints, for a thousand years is plainly stated in the twentieth chapter of Revelation."¹⁴ A. L. Plueger remarks, "The concept first appears in Revelation 20 and has since been interpreted in various ways."¹⁵ According to J. L. Neve, "The millennial doctrine has been built chiefly upon Rev. 20: 2-7, in connection with some other passages of Scripture (I Cor. 15: 25ff; I Thess. 4: 13ff; the visions

of Hezekiah and Daniel)."16 R. C. H. Lenski says:

They seek to find as much Scripture proof as possible.... The gold mine for proof is Revelation, in particular chapter 20 with its 1,000 years repeated six times. The prophets also yield a good deal. Then what is ardently desired is found in a large number of other places in Scripture.¹⁷

What is a proper understanding of the one thousand years mentioned in Revelation, chapter 20? Neve states that

Lutheran interpreters, following Luther himself who pointed to the symbolic meaning of the number 1000 as indicating a completeness, suggest that by 1000 there may simply be meant the time of grace between the beginning of the Church and Christ's last advent.¹⁸

C. H. Little concurs, saying: "The thousand years actually cover the whole New Testament dispensation from the incarnation and enthronement of the Son of God (12: 5) to the final casting of Satan into hell (20: 10)."19 Luther Poellot writes:

All things considered, including, above all, the light which other plain passages of the Bible throw on such figurative language as found in Rev. 20, the most satisfactory explanation of the 1,000 years is that they are figurative and stand for the New Testament age.²⁰

Should a Scripture portion like Revelation, chapter 20, be used as a basic source for a doctrine? Albrecht remarks:

On Rev. 20 the sensible words of Jacobs suffice, "When it is affirmed that it has sufficient Scriptural basis in Rev. 20, 1-6, the answer is that it is not proper to construct a dogma alone from a book concerning whose canonicity there has been such extended dissent, and to make it the standard whereby to interpret the plain language of books whose authority is most thoroughly established; particularly when it is a book which from beginning to end deals in figurative statements."²¹

The following words by James P. Boyce nicely complement the above statement from Jacobs:

If after the best efforts to harmonize this with the other portions of God's Word, it should seem to be irreconcilable with them, the apparent interpretation of this passage should yield to that of others; not so much because it is one only, as compared with a greater number; but because it is found in a book of highly figurative prophecy, in which the literal interpretation is not so justly to be pressed, as in others, which are not of this character, and in which the literal meaning is more apt to be the mind of the Spirit.²²

There are currently three distinct schools of interpretation regarding the millennium: premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. Premillennialists hold that the millennium will begin with the coming of Christ. Postmillennialists teach that Christ will appear visibly and in glory after or at the close of the millennium, as such.²³

While premillennialists disagree widely on details, the most usual sequence of events taught by them is summarized very well in the doctrinal statement of Luther Rice Seminary, which says:

We believe in the literal, visible, personal, premillennial, pre-tribulation return of Jesus Christ. At His return the righteous dead and living will be resurrected to meet Him in the air and will descend with Him after the seven years tribulation period to establish His earthly millennial Kingdom. This millennial period will end with the resurrection and judgment of the unsaved.²⁴

Two types of premillennialism must be distinguished. Historic premillennialism is the kind of premillennialism which has been held by some since the days of the early church.²⁵ Most common today is the millennialism known as dispensational premillennialism. Plueger says that "the dispensational view divides 'the divine plan into dispensations during each of which God deals with the human race on the basis of some specific principle.'"²⁶ This has a profound effect on how, for instance, interpreters handle the Old Testament. G. E. Ladd indicates the difference:

Here is the basic watershed between a dispensational and a nondispensational theology. Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament. It confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled.²⁷

Speaking of dispensational premillennialism, G. L. Murray writes:

A new day has come upon us.... This premillennialism is not the Chiliasm of the early Church, but something which first appeared early in the nineteenth century. It is a premillennialism wedded to dispensationalism.²⁸

Postmillennialists, according to Blackstone, for the most part hold that the preaching of the gospel will result in the conversion of the world and usher in a golden era of righteousness and a government of justice and peace to last for a thousand years, after which the Lord will return for a "general judgment" and introduction of an eternal state.²⁹

Lorraine Boettner says:

The millennium to which the postmillennialist looks forward is... a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is during the Church Age It is to last an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much more than a literal one thousand years.³⁰

Blackstone dates the beginning of postmillennial views in the Church with about the year 1700.³¹ Premillennialist John R. Rice states, "There were no postmillennialists in Bible times."³²

The following description of amillennialism is given in a quotation in Plueger's book "Things To Come For Planet Earth":

Its most general character is that of a

denial of a literal reign of Christ upon the earth. Satan is conceived as bound at the first coming of Christ. The present age between the first and second coming is the fulfillment of the millennium. Its adherents differ as to whether the millennium is being fulfilled on the earth (Augustine) or whether it is being fulfilled by the saints in heaven (Warfield). It may be summed up in the idea that there will be no more millennium than there is now, and that the eternal state immediately follows the second coming of Christ. It is similar to postmillennialism in that Christ comes after what they regard as the millennium.³³

A. A. Hoekema remarks regarding amillennialists:

the term amillennialism is not an accurate description of their view. Professor Jay E. Adams of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia has suggested that the term amillennialism be replaced by the expression realized millennialism.³⁴

Lutherans who are true to the Augsburg Confession are amillennialists. Speaking of Lutherans, the Confession states:

Also they teach that at the Consummation of the World Christ will appear for judgment, and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who think

there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils.

They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.³⁵

The 1540 Variata Edition of the Augsburg Confession gives Scriptural basis for the Lutheran position. This Article in the Variata reads, in part:

We condemn the Anabaptists, who now scatter Jewish opinions and imagine that before the resurrection the godly shall occupy the kingdoms of the world, the wicked being everywhere destroyed or suppressed. For we know that, since the godly ought to obey the magistrates that now are, they must not seize their power from them or overthrow governments by sedition, because Paul enjoineth: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher power" (Rom. 13: 1). We know also that the Church in this life is subject to the cross, and shall not be glorified until after this life; as Paul saith (Rom. 8: 29; I Cor. 15: 49). We must be made like the image of the Son of God. Therefore we utterly condemn and detest the folly and diabolical madness of the Anabaptists.³⁶

Some contend that Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession applies only to extreme Chiliasts. Neve writes, "We must admit that Melanchthon does refer to the Anabaptists of the Reformation time, and we

know how radical their views are."³⁷ But what about modern millennialists? Lenski states, "All present-day chiliastic views are only variations of the 'Jewish opinions' condemned by our fathers."³⁸ Neve says:

While these modern Chiliasts do not follow "Jewish opinions," and are free from the radicalism of the Anabaptists and must be praised for their aim at doing justice to parts of Scripture that have been more or less neglected, yet the admissibility of the agreement of their views with this article of our Confession must depend upon their rejection of the following points: (1) the visible appearance of Christ for a reign of a thousand years before the revelation of Antichrist and judgment day (against Heb. 9: 28; Matt. 25: 31); (2) an outwardly victorious Kingdom of Christ upon earth (against John 18: 36); (3) the expectation, on this side of eternity, of a time when there shall be no struggle with the enemies of Christ, with sin, and when there shall be no cross to bear (against Acts 14: 21; Matt. 16: 24; Luke 18: 8; 17: 26).³⁹

Albrecht remarks that:

The fruit of Chiliasm cannot be wholesome. It must pervert the Christian hope from its citizenship in heaven to a preceding millennium on earth that will bring world peace and rulership of the Christian over the ungodly world.⁴⁰

Francis Pieper says:

Chiliasm's misdirection of the Christian

hope is extremely harmful and dangerous. Where chiliasm is taken seriously, that is, where it controls the heart, it turns heart and mind away from the invisible spiritual glory of the Christian life, which consists in the assurance of the remission of sins and of the future heavenly heritage, and supplants it with the expectations of an outward and mundane greatness.⁴¹

Melanchthon, Neve, Lenski, Albrecht, and Pieper, who are quoted above, are absolutely correct in their assessment of the millennial doctrine. It indeed supplants the true Christian hope. The following quotations from the pen of John R. Rice, a strong proponent of premillennialism, illustrate this. They show how extremely far removed the millennial hope is from the true Christian hope. Rice writes, in part:

The promise that Israel is to possess the land of Canaan forever is yet in the future.⁴²

Christ... is to inherit, with Abraham, the physical land of Canaan... Converted Israel will inherit Palestine with Abraham.⁴³ Christ will have a literal reign on earth... this reign is future ... The promise... is for the future when Christ shall reign over the land of Canaan after His return to earth.⁴⁴

The seeds [sic] of Abraham, including Christ, are to possess and inherit the land of Palestine forever... Where will Heaven be for Abraham? IT MUST INCLUDE PALESTINE ON THIS EARTH! Heaven, for Abraham and his believing descendants...

will include possessions on this earth...
if Heaven for Jews will be on earth,
then Heaven for everybody will be on
earth.⁴⁵

Israel will all be restored to their
land... at the second coming of Christ...
the coming kingdom will follow the re-
gathering of Israel to their own land,
Canaan... God will place Israel perma-
nently in their own land and the David's
Descendant will reign over them on
David's throne.⁴⁶ ...the regathering of
Israel is one great, sudden event at
the second coming of Christ... Following
a great Tribulation on this earth, He
will return visibly and personally to
this earth.⁴⁷ Then He shall send His
angels and regather His elect or chosen
people of Israel... Christ the King will
gather His flock, and establish His
kingdom over them on the mountains of
Israel.⁴⁸

In one day the Lord shall defeat the
armies of the nations of this world, and
then... shall be king over all the earth.⁴⁹
... the throne upon which David sat at
Jerusalem will be re-established and will
endure forever... on this throne at Jeru-
salem will sit the great Son of David,
literally descended from his loins.⁵⁰
The present "world"... will end at the
return of Christ, when present civilization
and governments will be utterly destroyed.
Then Christ will have His kingdom.⁵¹
David's throne and God's throne in heaven
are entirely different thrones.⁵²

His faithful servants that have done well

during this church or gospel age will ... be appointed by Him to rule with Him over many things.⁵³ Christ, when He returns, will appoint faithful Christians to rule with Him, each one according to his faithfulness and ability... Jesus teaches us that when He returns and reigns from the throne of His glory, David's throne, and faithful servants rule over literal cities with Him on this earth, that living enemies who do not consent to His rule will be put to death. How clearly this picture of the battle of Armageddon and the judgment of the living Gentiles [is] pictured in Matthew 25: 31-46.⁵⁴ ... When Jesus comes He will reward over-coming Christians with the right to rule with Him "over the nations."⁵⁵

God has eternal purposes for Jerusalem. It will be "the city of the great King," "the joy of the whole earth," when Christ rules from the throne of David over the whole earth.⁵⁶ The Lord will return from Heaven to reign on the earth. He will bring with Him His saints (Zech. 14: 5) who will have been resurrected and translated before this and caught out to meet Him in the air. He will find Jerusalem compassed with the armies of the Anti-christ and the city itself falling under the onslaught of the armies of the world under the leadership of the wicked Man of Sin (Zech. 14: 1, 2). The Lord will fight against these nations and utterly destroy them on that day (Zech. 14: 3, Rev. 19: 20, 21). The Lord shall stand with His feet upon the Mount of Olives

in that day (Zech. 14: 4), and violent physical changes shall take place.⁵⁷ For a thousand years... Christ will reign in person on the earth before He shall turn the kingdom over to His Father.⁵⁸

In the judgment that will follow on this earth, every disease germ, every thorn and thistle, and every mark and remnant of sin must be utterly destroyed by fire.⁵⁹ As God will make out of the old material a new earth, so God will provide a new Jerusalem... The New Jerusalem is the Father's house of many mansions... This marvelous city, the home of God Himself, will be brought down to earth to be literally another Jerusalem.⁶⁰ ...The New Jerusalem... will be the capitol city of the new earth when it is purged from every taint and stain and mark of sin and disease and death.⁶¹

During the reign of Christ on earth, the curse brought on nature because of sin shall be removed. Wars will be no more, righteousness will reign on the entire planet, and happiness will be universal.⁶²

At the beginning of the kingdom of Christ on earth, Satan will be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit.⁶³

Rice continues this type of thought for another 44 pages in his book "The Coming Kingdom of Christ," but the quotations given above are more than sufficient to show the complete difference between the millennial hope and the true Christian hope.

Pieper rightly says:

Chiliasm is not content with the "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 21), but would have the Kingdom of God come with outward display so that we might say: "Lo, there it is!"⁶⁴

The teachings of the millennialists deprecate such passages of Scripture as, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14: 27), and "These things I have spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33).⁶⁵

The Apostle Paul, in stating what he and all Christians hope as to the future does not refer to a thousand years of peace and rulership on earth, but says, "Our conversation (NIV citizenship - politeuma) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body" (Phil. 3: 20, 21).⁶⁶

In the above quotations from Rice much mention is made about the general conversion of the Jews in connection with the millennium. The millennialists base this primarily on Romans 11: 26, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Pieper correctly remarks:

It is evident... that only they give "all Israel" its full value who, with Luther and the majority of Lutheran exegetes, understand it really to mean all Israel, namely, all spiritual Israel, the whole number of elect among the Jews.⁶⁷

In addition to perverting the Christian hope,

millennialism is anti-Scriptural for two reasons. The millennialists teach a twofold return of Christ, a visible advent to establish the millennium, and a visible coming to judge the world. In Hebrews 9: 28 we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time (ἐκ δευτέρου) without sin unto salvation." Commenting on this passage, Pieper says:

Scripture.....expressly says that after Christ's coming into the flesh for the purpose of bearing the sins of men only His second coming to conduct His own to eternal life is to be expected.⁶⁸

The millennialists also teach two resurrections of the dead. Blackstone writes that "part of the dead will be raised before all are raised."⁶⁹ Thus Rice states regarding the believers:

The Lord will return from Heaven to reign on the earth. He will bring with Him His saints (Zech. 14: 5) who will have been resurrected and translated before this and caught out to meet Him in the air.⁷⁰ ... all the saints living and dead, will be changed and resurrected when Christ calls us into the air to meet Him.... Every saved person then dead will be resurrected, and every saved person then living will be changed in a moment to meet Christ in the air.⁷¹

Blackstone calls the first resurrection "the resurrection of life."⁷² He then says:

But there is also to be a resurrection of judgement... It is the resurrection of the unjust. It is the completion of the dead (νεκρῶν or τῶν νεκρῶν). Hence we

see there is a difference in time as well as in character, in the order of the resurrection; the first being that of the just, and the second that of the unjust; and the difference in time is perfectly in accordance with the account in Rev. 20, where the interval is stated to be the 1000 years of the Millennial kingdom.⁷³

Pieper answers the idea of two resurrections with a clear Scripture passage. He states, "Christ... refers all who believe in Him only to the resurrection on the Last Day."⁷⁴ He then quotes John 6:40, "Everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him may (R.V. should) have everlasting life; and I will raise him up on the last day (τῇ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ)."⁷⁵

Boyce deals with the question of two resurrections by saying that the resurrection at Christ's second coming, "will not be confined to the righteous only, but will include the wicked also."⁷⁶ He then, in part, presents the following discussion:

The New Testament treats sometimes exclusively of the resurrection of the righteous. This is not unnatural; for all hope connected with it is confined to them. So blessed is that hope, that it was fit that it should be frequently held out for their encouragement and comfort. Especially the connection between their resurrection and that of Christ, as the first fruits of them that sleep, tended to lead them into the joys produced by the consciousness of union with Him and their triumph with, and through Him ...The objection to it also arose in connection with Christian hope. Is it not strange that some should have denied it, even among the people of God? ...This doctrine was too

wonderful to believe... It became necessary....that it should be emphasized to the Christian believers of that day... But that this teaching about the resurrection of the righteous was not intended to exclude the resurrection of the wicked is plain enough from other places.⁷⁷

He then quotes John 5: 28, 29; Acts 24: 15, and Revelation 20: 13-15.⁷⁸

Albrecht presents an interesting approach to refuting the errors of the millennialists. He says, "To disprove millennialism nothing more is necessary than to pit the Premillennialists and the Postmillennialists against each other."⁷⁹

He then cites arguments by which Dr. Duffield of Princeton, a premillennialist, disproves post-millennialism:

- 1) Were the doctrine true, it would undoubtedly be prominent in the New Testament, and especially in Apostolical Epistles. The fact is, it is not only not prominent, but so far as we are informed, the advocates of the doctrine do not pretend to find in the Epistles the slightest allusion to it.
- 2) The uniform and abundant teaching of the New Testament as to the conditions of the Church and of the world during the present dispensation -- that is, until the advent -- forbids the expectation of such a millennium, is prominently presented in the New Testament as "the blessed hope" of the Church, and is uniformly referred to as an event, near at hand, even imminent, to be "looked for" with longing expectation.
- 4) The Savior's repeated command to "watch"

for His coming, because we "know not the hour," is inconsistent with the idea of a millennium intervening. 5) The New Testament teaches repeatedly and unequivocally that the advent and the manifestation of the Messianic kingdom are to be synchronous events.⁸⁰

Then he quotes a postmillennialist, Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton, as he, in turn, disproves premillennialism. Hodge writes:

1) It is a Jewish doctrine. The Jews expected that when the Messiah came He would establish a glorious earthly kingdom at Jerusalem; that those who had died in the faith should be raised from the dead to share in the blessings of the Messiah's reign, that all nations and peoples on the face of the whole earth should be subject to them; and that any nation that did not serve them should be destroyed... 2) This theory teaches that believers only are to rise from the dead when Christ comes... 3) This theory teaches that the final judgment will not occur until after the millennium... 4) According to this theory, instead of heaven awaiting the risen saints, they are to be introduced into a mere worldly kingdom... 5) It is inconsistent...that at the resurrection they are to be brought down to a lower state of existence, degraded from heaven to earth... 6) It is a worldly kingdom. Its blessedness is to consist largely in worldly prosperity... Births and deaths are to go on... This theory teaches that after the second advent the distinction between the Jews and Gentiles is to

continue and to be made greater than ever before. The temple at Jerusalem is to be rebuilt; the sacrifices restored; and all the details of the Mosaic ritual...again introduced... This theory teaches the "earth's eternal perpetuity." 7) This theory disparages the Gospel... "The universal prevalence of religion...is to be effected...by a stupendous display of divine wrath upon all the apostate and ungodly... The Gospel has never yet truly converted one nation, one city, one town, or even a single village." ...The Scriptures are to be "superseded" in the millennium... Other revelations are to be made for the salvation of men. 8) Another objection to the pre-millennarian theory is the want of consistency in its advocates and the conflicting conclusions to which they come. They profess to adopt the principle of literal interpretation...they go to the extreme of figurative or spiritual interpretation in explaining the prophecies which refer to the end of the world.⁸¹

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Reference footnotes in the paper are numbered in sequence as they appear. Bibliographical items are numbered alphabetically. (cf. bibliography below.) Thus the bibliographical reference for footnote number one is 9:678. Bibliographical item number 9 is the book Lutheran Cyclopedia edited by Erwin L. Lueker. The number 678 is the book page number.

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| 1. (9:678) | 19. (8:201) |
| 2. (1:28) | 20. (15:256) |
| 3. (3:37) | 21. (1:31) |
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THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

As Lutheran ministers we have our own occupational vocabulary which enables us to encapsulate large, sometimes complicated ideas into a single word or phrase. Words like "justification," "sanctification," and "sacrament" which may produce foggy ideas in the mind of a layman, immediately produce a sharp, clear concept in our own minds. Phrases like "the means of grace" or "the communication of attributes" function in much the same way. We as Lutheran ministers could easily define and explain the complex concepts tied up in such words and phrases.

Two occupational phrases which seem to be bantered around in our circles are somewhat unique... the phrases: "the theology of the cross" and "the theology of glory." Often we as Lutheran ministers hear these phrases and we may even use them from time to time, but when asked to explain what they mean, we seem to react much the same as if we were asked to define the word "life." There seems to be something understood by these phrases that is hard to put into words. We don't teach about the theology of the cross in confirmation class, we probably don't use the phrase in our sermons, we probably never even talked about the phrase in dogmatics class, oh, so many years ago. And yet it seems to be an intrinsic part of our Lutheran vocabulary. So, what is the theology of the cross??

WHERE DOES IT FIT?

I think that maybe one of the reasons we have such a hard time putting our finger on what exactly is meant by the theology of the cross, is because we don't quite know where it fits in the framework

of theology. I would like to suggest in this paper that if we were to categorize the theology of the cross, we would discover that it has to do primarily with hermeneutics, or interpretation of the Bible. More specifically, as Luther defined the theology of the cross, it is concerned primarily with epistemology (how we arrive at knowledge).

I would like to further suggest that the theology of the cross is in fact the basic hermeneutical principle or the basic superstructure upon which all theological knowledge is built. I also believe that in Luther's view there is a basic dogmatical principle without which dogmatics cannot be done properly: that principle is the bondage of the will. Finally, I would also like to suggest that it is impossible to understand the theology of the cross without understanding the bondage of the will and vice versa. The theology of the cross is the hermeneutical counterpart to the bondage of the will. These are the two basic superstructures upon which our understanding of the word of God is built. One, the bondage of the will, has to do with who and what we are and who and what God is (ontology), while the other, the theology of the cross, has to do with how we arrive at spiritual knowledge (epistemology).

TWO QUESTIONS

The importance of Luther's book, THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL, lay in its exposure of the most basic superstructures of theological thought as Luther understood them. In his conclusion to THE BONDAGE AND THE WILL, which was written in response to an attack by Erasmus, Luther stated,

My dear Erasmus...I praise and commend you highly...that unlike all the rest you alone

have attacked the real issue, the essence of the matter in dispute, and have not wearied me with irrelevancies about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like trifles (for trifles they are rather than basic issues), with which almost everyone hitherto has gone hunting without success. You and you alone have seen the question on which everything hinges, and have aimed at the vital spot. LW 33, p. 294

Obviously, Luther held that if a person is to understand the difference between his theology and other theologies, it is ultimately necessary to come to grips with the issues addressed in THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL. There Luther makes it quite clear upon what it is that he believes all theology revolves. He believes there are two things necessary for a Christian to know the answers to. Those two things that it is necessary for a Christian to know he calls the Christian "summa." One half of the Christian "summa," according to Luther, is "to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters pertaining to eternal salvation...on this knowledge of oneself and knowledge of God's glory vitally depend." The other half of the Christian "summa" is "concerned with knowing whether God foreknows anything contingently, and whether we do everything of necessity." LW 33, pp. 35-36.

Put quite simply, Luther believed there are two things that are vital for a Christian to know. One thing is the answer to the question "Who am I, or what am I like spiritually?" Luther's book on THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL is his answer to those two questions. The answer to those two questions is crucial to understanding Luther's theology of the cross.

WHO AM I AND WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Let's take a look at Luther's Christian "summa." One half of the Christian "summa," according to Luther, is "to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters pertaining to eternal salvation." He believes the answer to this question will define who I am and what God is like, as he says, "...on this knowledge of oneself and knowledge of God's glory vitally depend."

Little time need be spent discussing Luther's scriptural understanding of who I am. As confessional Lutherans we are quite aware that Luther and the Confessions clearly express the scriptural doctrine of the total depravity of man. Luther is adept at showing that there is an abundance of scripture passages claiming that I am spiritually dead and left to myself can do nothing but sin.

Luther had been expressing this view of the total depravity of man after 1517. This view, by itself, may not have been so troublesome to the Catholic Church. However, Luther added a twist to his teaching which caused a great degree of discomfort to any thinking man. He asserted that if I can do nothing but sin, if even my very will can do nothing but sin, and if God is omnipotent and has foreknowledge, it follows that as God moves me with his omnipotence, he foreknows with absolute certainty that I can do nothing but sin, and **NECESSARILY SO!** He says in THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL,

When it has been proved that salvation is beyond our powers and devices and depends on God alone...does it not follow that when God is not present and at work in us everything we do is evil and we necessarily do what is of no avail for our salvation?

LW 33, p. 64

God works evil in us, i.e., by means of us,

not through any fault of his, but owing to our own faultiness, since we are by nature evil and he is good; but as he carries us along by his own activity in accordance with the nature of his omnipotence, good as he is himself he cannot help but do evil with an evil instrument, though he makes good use of this evil in accordance with his wisdom for his glory and our salvation. LW 33, p. 178

...there has always remained deeply implanted in the hearts of ignorant and learned alike, whenever they have taken things seriously, the painful awareness that we are under necessity if the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are accepted. Even natural reason herself ...is compelled to admit it by force of her own judgment, even if there were no scripture at all. LW 33, p. 190

Now, that is a powerful statement for Luther to make. Even if there were no scripture at all, reason herself is compelled to admit that we are under necessity, given the very make-up of reality. An understanding of God's omnipotence and foreknowledge, and my sinfulness must lead me to this conclusion.

SOME PROBLEMS

Erasmus was quick to point out that if I accept Luther's position that there is no such thing as free choice, but that we do everything of necessity, I have to face some serious problems when it comes to understanding Who I am and What God is like. Let's take a look at those problems as Erasmus saw them.

1. It appears that Luther's system leads to a contradiction of reality. I seem to make

spiritual choices contingently, not by necessity. Yet, Luther, by asserting that an individual has no free will spiritually, and is in fact completely subject either to the will of God or the will of Satan, implies that what I do spiritually, I do necessarily. A natural perception of things asserts that I do nothing necessarily, and this seems to logically imply that there must be at least some freedom in the human will. So far as Erasmus was concerned, if there is no free will, then it logically follows that I am coerced in my choice. But coercion of the will contradicts experience as we perceive it. Luther understood this problem and said we are confronted with "the problem of how God can foreknow with certainty and yet things happen contingently as far as we are concerned."

2. ..Erasmus also saw a problem with the Law if one accepts Luther's system. Assuming I sin necessarily, why would God give me laws and hold me accountable to them, if it is impossible for me to keep them? Therefore, Erasmus held that since God does give me laws, and holds me accountable to them, it is only logical that I do not sin necessarily, but that it is possible for me to keep the law. As far as Erasmus is concerned, necessity removes my accountability to God.

3. If I sin necessarily, and am in no way responsible for my own salvation, then why are some saved and not others? According to Erasmus, Luther's system makes God out to be no less than a monster who arbitrarily decides to save some and damn others.

LUTHER'S ANSWER

Luther was the first to agree with Erasmus that there is something very offensive about the

system he had constructed, especially since it seems to make everything, including damnation itself, depend totally on the will of God. God appears to be unjust and unprincipled for saving some but not others. Luther says,

Admittedly it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason that God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures, when he is preached as a God of such great mercy and goodness, etc. It has been regarded as unjust, as cruel, as intolerable, to entertain such an idea about God, and this is what has offended so many great men during so many centuries. And who would not be offended? I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depths and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man..." LW 33, p. 190

Even though he understood the offensiveness of his position, Luther still held to it. This is where the theology of the cross comes into focus. But first it is important to continue on with the above quote to show what Luther felt it was that separated his theology from all other theologies.

I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace. That is why there has been such sweating and toiling to excuse the goodness of God and accuse the will of man; and it is here that the distinctions have been invented between

the ordained and absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent, and so forth, though nothing has been achieved by them except that the ignorant have been imposed upon by empty talk and 'contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge'[1 Tim. 6:20]. Nevertheless, there has always remained deeply implanted in the hearts of ignorant and learned alike, whenever they have taken things seriously, the painful awareness that we are under necessity if the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are accepted. Even natural reason herself, who is offended by the necessity and makes the efforts to get rid of it, is compelled to admit it by force of her own judgment, even if there were no scripture at all.
LW 33, p. 190

The point Luther is making is this: Taken at face value, scripture presents some perplexing problems about who I am and what God is like. There are a number of ways for me to address these difficulties, and the way I confront those difficulties is really definitive of the way I do my theology.

Luther was trained in an atmosphere where basically two different ways of doing theology coexisted on not so friendly terms. There was the scholastic way of doing theology and there was the nominalist way of doing theology. Rather than get into the intricacies involved in these different ways of theologizing, I think it is important to realize that in the end, as far as Luther was concerned, the scholastic and nominalist ways of doing theology are substantially the same. The reason I say that is because of something you'll notice in the above quotation from Luther in

THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL. There he talks about the difficulties that arise when we rationally consider God's omnipotence and foreknowledge. Reason tells me that if God is omnipotent and does foreknow with certainty, then I am bound by necessity to do what I do. And what kind of position does this put God into when it comes to my being saved or damned??? Where does the accountability lie??? Luther then postulates that reason rebels against the idea of necessity and the ensuing difficulties and makes efforts to get rid of the dilemma. What is interesting is that Luther mentions two ways that reason tries to get rid of the dilemma because it wants to keep God from seeming un-Godlike. After all, to our minds it seems un-Godlike that by a sheer act of will God would save some and damn others, especially when God is seen as a God of goodness and mercy. Therefore, reason has "invented" some distinctions in order to protect God's goodness and assert that the reason some are saved and not others is not simply due to a sheer act of will on God's part.

You'll notice that Luther presents his readers with two examples of what he is talking about. He says,

This is why there has been such sweating and toiling to excuse the goodness of God and accuse the will of man; and it is here that the distinctions have been invented between the ordained and absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent, and so forth...

LW 33, p. 190

It's important for you to realize that what Luther was doing in that statement was lumping together scholasticism and nominalism and claiming that their way of doing theology is not as far apart

as supposed. In fact, it is in the end identical. Let's look at that for a moment.

1. Nominalism. The nominalists are famous for their distinction between the absolute and ordained will of God. In this one paragraph, Luther cuts through all the philosophical mumbo-jumbo of the nominalists and gets right to the heart and core of what their theology was all about. Anyone who thinks that Luther agreed with the nominalists about the ordained and absolute will of God, need only look at this paragraph to see that Luther was violently opposed to such a distinction. He felt the distinction between the absolute and ordained will of God was simply a rational attempt to get rid of the problem of necessity, and the problem of why some are saved and not others. Let me summarize the issue for you. The nominalists taught that God is sovereign, is subject to nothing, and as such it is his will alone which decides who will be saved. God's will is absolute. The nominalists, however, saw that this led to a very harsh view of God when considering the question "why are some saved and not others" and so they also postulated that God has an ordained will. He has ordained a specific order of salvation. Man is to strive to do what is in him, and then God will give him grace. But you see what this system does. It safeguards the sovereignty of God's will, but at the same time gets rid of the problem of necessity, and claims that God chooses to save or not to save depending upon how I direct my will. The free will is responsible for why some are saved and not others.

2. Scholasticism. Luther felt the same is true of scholasticism. When he mentioned the distinction between the necessity of consequence and consequent, he was referring to a scholastic distinction set forth by Thomas Aquinas, among others.

Listen to what Aquinas says,

It cannot be concluded from God's foreknowledge that our acts are performed out of absolute necessity, which is called necessity of thing consequent, but out of conditioned necessity, which is called necessity of consequence... De. Ver., q.24., a. 1, ad. 13. See McSorely, Luther: Right or Wrong, pp. 149-150

Acquinas goes on to explain that while the proposition, "God foreknows that Peter will be saved" is true, and necessarily true because of our understanding of logic and the linguistic terms involved, he also says that the thing may not be true in reality. In other words, a sentence might be a proper sentence by definition, but just because the sentence is linguistically a true statement, does not mean that it speaks about any truth in reality. I know it's bizarre, but that's what he said. He explains why,

...others have said that God has knowledge of all future things, but all things happen of necessity. Otherwise God's knowledge of them would be liable to error. But this cannot be, for according to this view free will would be lost and it would no longer be necessary to seek counsel; it would also be unjust to give punishments and rewards for merits if all things are done out of necessity. And therefore it must be said that while God knows all futures this does not prevent some things from happening contingently. De. Ver., q. 2, a. 12c. See McSorely, Luther: Right or Wrong. pp. 148-149

The whole point of necessity of consequence and consequent is to maintain God's foreknowledge, but

at the same time answer why some are saved and not others, by maintaining that man has a free will. It is a rational attempt to get rid of the problem of necessity.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

There is one other way to answer all the difficulties which arise when I admit that God is omnipotent, foreknows with certainty, and I am bound to sin. That is what Luther called the theology of the cross.

Luther's really definitive statements on the theology of the cross are found in the Heidelberg Disputation. It is important to understand that this disputation was a number of theological paradoxes which were to be defended from the writings of St. Paul. Nearly all of the paradoxical statements, along with their explanations, deal with the difference between how God views the Law and how human beings view the Law. The theses and explanations state that contrary to the way we want to think, God's Law, while it is good, cannot be used by me to bring me into a state of goodness. In fact it does just the opposite and makes me aware that I am anything but good, and in fact my will is bound only to sin. It is within this context that Luther introduces the theology of the cross. The theses in which he discusses it are:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.
20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.
22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.
23. The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ.
24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner. LW 31, p. 40.

Think about thesis 24 for a moment. "Yet that wisdom (i.e., brought about by the law) is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best (i.e., the Law) in the worst possible manner." As Luther presents it in this thesis, without the theology of the cross, I would use the Law in the worst possible manner. As Lutherans, we of course understand what Luther means by using the Law in the worst possible manner. The chief purpose of the Law is to show me my sin, and in fact make me aware of my bondage of sin. I misuse the Law when I do not use it to show me my sin, and I use the Law to actually win God's approval. And Luther says, if I am not a theologian of the cross, THAT IS HOW I WILL END UP USING THE LAW. I will not understand that my will is bound to sin, and will in essence be ignorant of WHO I AM. If I am ignorant of who I am, I will likewise be ignorant of WHAT GOD IS LIKE.

THE BIG PICTURE

Here is the basic picture. The theology of the cross is THE ONLY THING that makes it possible for me to know who I am and what God is like. It is my way of arriving at spiritual knowledge. It is the basic principle that I use to understand what scripture is saying to me. I believe that in Luther's mind, the theology of the cross is simply the understanding that by nature I am spiritually blind, and cannot understand the things of God...they are foolishness to me. I must take everything God says to me at face value, and not try to add my own understanding to it, even when it presents me with some very difficult problems, since my sinful human reason is incapable of arriving at spiritual truth. The theology of the cross is that simple. It is my way of arriving at spiritual knowledge. All my hermeneutical principles are built upon this simple understanding of how I arrive at spiritual truth.

The problem with the scholastics and nominalists of Luther's day was that they did not understand this basic principle of how I arrive at spiritual truth. They were what Luther called theologians of glory. They felt that God's ways must be rationally obvious.

Please remember, this entire discussion for Luther takes place within the context of the bondage of the will. Only when I understand the bondage of the will, do I really understand WHO I AM AND WHAT GOD IS LIKE. If I do not understand the bondage of the will, I cannot help but misuse Law and Gospel. A proper understanding of Law and Gospel presupposes a common theme and that is the bondage of the will. Until I realize my will is bound, I will try to use the Law to please God. Only when I understand the bondage of the will,

will I understand that my only hope of salvation is in the Gospel. The bondage of the will is the basic superstructure upon which I understand reality...who I am and what God is like. It also shows me that since I am totally sinful, even in my will and reason, it is impossible for me to arrive at spiritual knowledge. I must be a theologian of the cross. The bondage of the will and the theology of the cross cannot be understood apart from each other and are in fact counterparts. One, the bondage of the will, deals with who I am and the other, the theology of the cross, deals with how I arrive at knowledge.

SOME PROBLEMS REVISITED

Earlier we discussed some problems that Erasmus saw with Luther's understanding of the bondage of the will. They are real problems that demand an answer. Using the theology of the cross we can answer them.

1. How can we say things happen necessarily in God's eyes when they appear contingent to us? The answer: God's view of reality is the real view of reality. Our view is tainted by sin and is in fact unrealistic. Not only am I bound to sin, but I am ignorant of that fact by nature. The purpose of the Law is to show me what I am really like. I sin because of what I am like by nature. But it is the only choice I can make on my own. Only by the theology of the cross can I come to this conclusion.
2. Why does God give the Law if it is impossible for me to keep, and worse yet, why does he hold me accountable to it? Answer: The Law is given to show not what I CAN do, but what I OUGHT to do but am unable to do. It drives me to despair of myself and prepares me for the Gospel. Only by the

theology of the cross can I come to this conclusion.

3. If all of us are necessarily bound to sin, then why are some saved and not others?

Answer: I cannot answer that question other than to look at what God's will is for my salvation personally. I find the answer to that in the Gospel alone, where I have the promise that I am saved by the blood and merits of Jesus Christ alone. I need not rely on myself. This is of ultimate comfort to me. Only by the theology of the cross can I come to this conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Luther said a theologian of the cross calls a thing what it actually is...that is, he knows what reality is, who I am and what God is like. He also said the theology of the cross can be proved from St. Paul. I think St. Paul explains Luther's theology of the cross most eloquently in I Corinthians 1:18-2:16, where Paul talks about how we know things spiritually. He says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called,

both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with the demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understand it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

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THE APOSTLE PAUL'S EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM IN HIS MINISTRY

An Exegetical Study of
I Corinthians 9, 18-27

In this first letter of the Apostle Paul to the saints in Corinth he has opportunity to speak at length concerning the matter of Christian liberty--both as it applied to them and to him. As early as the sixth chapter he has expressed the principle of this liberty for himself by saying: "All things are lawful for me, but not everything is beneficial" (6, 2). When in Chapter 8 he shows the Corinthians their Christian liberty in regard to eating meat offered to idols, he nevertheless adds an important word of counsel: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak" (8, 9 - NIV).

That Paul takes to heart his own counsel -- really the counsel of the Lord who led him to write this -- is clearly set forth in the ninth chapter of this first epistle. Having established his own right, as well as the right of other preachers of the Gospel, to receive their earthly support from those to whom they minister the Gospel, he yet exclaims, "But I have not used any of these (rights)" (v. 15).

The International Critical Commentary (henceforth designated ICC) notes that chapter nine is not an independent section defending the writer's claim to be an apostle, but that, because it is inserted in the discussion of eating food offered to idols, it should be understood in connection with that context. Though Christians may eat

such food without fear of their own pollution, they are to recognize that in doing so they may run the risk of doing harm to other Christians. Where such injury is a likely prospect, they should forego their right. And that this forbearance on their part ought not seem hard Paul indicates by showing that "his habitual forbearance is greater than that which he would occasionally claim from them."¹

In the verses immediately preceding our exegetical pericope, Paul has introduced two concepts that have a bearing on our verses. The first is in the term καύχημα (glorying, or reason for glorying) in the textually and exegetically very difficult verse 15, where, however, it seems clear that Paul does not want to be robbed of his reason for glorying. This basis for his glorying is not that he is propagating the Gospel, for he is under compulsion to proclaim it (ἀνάγκη γάρμου ἐπιτίεται), and if he fails to honor that necessity, he will face woes (οὐαί).

The compulsion was that of the commission which the Lord had given him at the time of his conversion near Damascus, when he had announced to Ananias that Paul (at that time still Saul) was to be "a chosen vessel (σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς) to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9, 15), and which He had reiterated through the mediate action of the church at Antioch in separating Paul (as well as Barnabas) for the work to which the Holy Spirit had called him (Acts 13, 2).

The second concept is that of μισθός, in this case payment or reward for his proclamation of the Gospel, which he introduces in verse 17, a verse we therefore include in the exegetical assignment.

17 εἰ γὰρ ἐκὼν τοῦτο πράσσω, μισθὸν ἔχω. εἰ δὲ ἄκων, οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι.

By means of a simple conditional sentence expressing present reality Paul states: FOR IF I CARRY ON THIS ACTIVITY WILLINGLY (ἐκὼν) I HAVE (A) REWARD, BUT IF (I CARRY ON THIS ACTIVITY) UNWILLINGLY, I HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED (WITH A) STEWARDSHIP."² That is, someone else's wisdom and resolve are involved, namely, the will of the Lord, who without consulting Paul laid this assignment on him. The πεπίστευμαι clause results from Paul's recognition that ὁ κύριος πεπίστευκέ μοι οἰκονομίαν. In changing the sentence to the passive either of the two objects of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb and the other object is then retained in its original case. Here the indirect object (μοι) has become the subject and the direct object remains in the accusative case.³

The οἰκονομία that was entrusted to Paul was the proclamation of the Gospel, or the Gospel itself (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). The οἰκονόμος was frequently a slave, a designation Paul did not shun, for one of his favorite designations of himself was δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.⁴ Stewards were slaves who were entrusted with the administration of various interests of the master and his household. The slave had no choice in the matter but simply had to settle for the assignment. In Paul's case his use of the perfect πεπίστευμαι means that the Lord had at a certain time given him this trust which he still has and is discharging as he writes to the Corinthians.

Paul is aware of the fact that even a slave who has been arbitrarily assigned to a great task can expect to be fed and clothed by his master. Even in the midst of the spiritual world in which he lives and works he understands that the laborer

is worthy of his hire (μισθός - Luke 10, 7) and that they who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel (I Cor. 9. 14). This was a right (εξουσία) which Paul could have exercised with equanimity.

But now Paul says that if he carried out his assignment willingly he has a reward. He is surely not concerned with monetary and material rewards, but it is reward enough for him that he does his work willingly. When he now postures himself as an unwilling worker, it is surely to focus on the fact that he cannot escape his divinely appointed commission. What he means is that it is not his will or approval that has gained him the assignment, but the will and decision of God.

18 τίς οὖν μοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ μισθός; ἵνα εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀδάπανον θῆσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, εἰς τὸ μὴ καταχρήσασθαι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ μου ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

WHAT THEN IS MY REWARD? (JUST THIS) THAT WHEN I PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS I SHALL PRESENT THE GOSPEL FREE OF CHARGE, SO THAT I DO NOT FULLY USE MY RIGHT IN CONNECTION WITH THE GOSPEL.

Paul was under compulsion to preach, but he did not have to preach without expectation of being provided with a living. Paul has no doubt about his right (εξουσία) in this instance, but he willingly elected not to exercise it. In fact, is not a non-exercise of rights vital to the concept of rights as Paul expounds it?

When he now asks the question concerning the specific reward (note article - ὁ μισθός) he has in mind, he employs the particle οὖν, an inferential conjunction, simply to relate the question to the foregoing statement -- in particular the second

of the two preceding conditional statements. And the ἵνα that follows merely introduces a substantive or noun clause in the ellipsis: (The reward is this) that I, while proclaiming the Gospel, shall present the Gospel without charge.⁵ Some commentators, such as Heinrich Meyer, struggle to make the ἵνα introduce also here a telic or final clause, but that is unnecessary. The future indicative with ἵνα conveys the idea of continuance.⁶ The circumstantial participle εὐαγγελιζόμενος is best construed as reflecting temporality. Whether one translates θήσω here as "presents" or "makes" seems to be of small consequence in the context. With either translation ἀδάπανον is a predicate modifier of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, and the statement then is that "I shall present the gospel (as an item that is) without charge." Paul's highest reward is to serve without pay. There is an old expression that says: "The water of life is free, but you have to pay for the piping." It is even this piping that Paul wants to offer without cost.

Εἰς with the infinitive, here the articulated infinitive of the deponent verb καταχράομαι, may denote design (purpose) or result. The context lends itself readily to the thought of result, with the aorist tense of the infinitive focusing on the punctiliar aspect of that result. Commentators generally agree that the translation of καταχράομαι as "abuse" is not as accurate as the perfective idea of "using to the full." (Cf. 7, 31). Lenski states that with the negative particle μή it should be translated "not to use at all," thus understanding it as an expression of litotes, "understatement so as to intensify, affirmation expressed by the negative of the contrary."⁸

That Paul accepted support from some of the congregations that he established and served

(cf. Phil. 4) may not overthrow Lenski's claim, since there is no specific record that he sought such support or claimed his ἐξουσία in such instances. Paul considered it an honor to be counted worthy to preach the Gospel, and it was a bonus for him that he could do this work without being a financial liability to his hearers. The dative Τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ is the expected case as the object of χράομαι and its compounds. Grammatically the closing prepositional phrase may modify either the preceding infinitive or its object. Various translations in English present the same option or make a choice, such as the bad choice of the TCNT: "And so make use of the right which it gives me." Luther makes the good choice when he translates; "Dass ich nicht meiner Freiheit missbrauche am Evangelio." When the NIV translates the ἐν phrase "in preaching it," it leans in the right direction but likely expands the thought because of the context of Paul's commission to preach.

19 Ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν
 ἐδούλωσα ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω.

FOR FREE THOUGH I AM FROM ALL, I MADE MYSELF
 A SLAVE TO ALL, THAT I MIGHT WIN THE GREATER NUMBER.

In this verse the Apostle introduces his slavish service to all men. He shows to what extent he has abandoned, or at least suspended, his rights in the interest of the Gospel. His purpose goes far beyond securing glory (καύχημα) or merit pay (μισθός) for himself. His willingness to give up so much in the interest of the Gospel is for the purpose of winning even more souls for the kingdom. The postpositive conjunction γὰρ prepares us for an explanation of the Apostle's posture in his missionary vocation. The present participle ὢν, as a predicate modifier, is here apparently used concessively,⁹ for the apostle is setting up a strong

contrast. The strong contrast is further enhanced by the chiasmic arrangement of the key words in the sentence, ἐλεύθερος-πάντων: πᾶσιν ἐδούλωσα. Paul is about to show more specifically how he waives his rights to serve others and to promise the spread of the Gospel.

Ἐλεύθερος ὢν is reminiscent of his opening question in verse 1: Οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐλεύθερος; it prepares the way for Paul's recitation of other ways in which he foregoes his ἐλευθερία. This freedom is not the political freedom that Paul enjoyed as a bona fide Roman citizen from the free city of Tarsus, but the freedom which he had in Christ. It is above all a liberty of the Gospel. In this blessed freedom Paul "was not bound to any man's arbitrary rule, but went his way independent of the judgment of men, actuated and controlled entirely by the Spirit of Christ that lived in him."¹⁰ This freedom then includes the freedom from an obligation that might have resulted if Paul had accepted remuneration for his preaching.

Some commentators struggle to make πάντων and πᾶσιν neuter (all things),¹¹ which is again linguistically possible. But the context, especially the τοὺς πλειονας and the expressions in the following verses, dictates otherwise, for with τοὺς πλειονας one has to understand the natural ellipsis of ἀνθρώπους or some such noun. The succeeding verses then also direct this voluntary servitude on the part of Paul to various kinds of people.

This passage marks the only use of ἐκ with ἐλεύθερος, an adjective which in several other instances is joined rather with ἀπό. The idea of separation is present in either case, but the use of ἐκ is considered to make that separation more emphatic or complete. In the use of the aorist active ἐδούλωσα, with its object the reflexive

pronoun, Paul becomes both the subject and the object of the enslavement. Though it was his inherent right as an apostle to be free from all people, he subjugated himself to all in a slavish service. That he brought himself under this bondage indicates that Paul did this on his own while in a state of ἐλευθερία.

The paradoxical behavior on the part of the Apostle surely makes us sit up and take notice. It was not the startling effect, however, that Paul sought, but rather the purpose it might serve, namely, ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω. The verb here found in the aorist subjunctive with ἵνα to indicate purpose appears also in such passages as Matthew 18, where the brother is to be gained; in I Peter 3, 1, where unbelieving husbands are to be gained; and in Phil. 2, 8, where Christ is to be gained.¹² Those to be gained are here referred to as τοὺς πλείονας, the articulated masculine accusative plural of the comparative form of the adjective πολὺς. Paul is certainly not saying that he expects to gain the majority of mankind, nor that he expects to gain more converts than any other apostle. But because he has injected his voluntary enslavement to all into the discussion, he is saying that he has hope of gaining more souls for the kingdom in this way than if he had just comfortably settled into his freedom and had exercised his rights in a way not conducive to evangelism. Paul is not thereby setting God's agenda for Him, but his great desire for the salvation of all men leads him to commit himself totally in this task, even at the expense of his rights.

20 Καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὡν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω·

AND I BECAME AS A JEW TO THE JEWS, IN ORDER

THAT I MIGHT GAIN JEWS: TO THOSE SUBJECT TO LAW
(I BECAME) AS (ONE) SUBJECT TO LAW, ALTHOUGH I
MYSELF AM NOT SUBJECT TO LAW.

Immediately after having established the fact of his voluntary enslavement because of the Gospel, he begins to give examples of how this enslavement manifested itself in various circumstances of his ministry. When we understand that Paul is a willing slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can more readily understand why he as a faithful οἰκονόμος willingly becomes a slave to others in order to make gains for his Master, as well as to serve others. Here his actions are in imitation of the Christ of whom Paul writes in II Cor. 8, 9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

The καί at the beginning of verse 20 is to be construed as an exegetical use of that conjunction. What follows is merely further elaboration of the general statement in verse 19 into a series of clauses detailing various ways in which this enslavement manifests itself. Paul very likely does not expect to cover every possible situation, but surely he does cover the field in a broad way.

It is not strange that Paul begins his enumeration with the Jews. Although Paul was called specifically to be an apostle to the Gentile world, the account of his missionary activities, as well as the expression of his own concern, makes clear that he never slighted his own race but sought out the local synagogue in every city into which he entered. The Book of Acts reveals how Paul practiced being a Jew to the Jews. Although clearly freed from the ceremonial law, Paul does not consider it wrong to observe the law when this

is not done for the purpose of earning one's righteousness. Acts 16, 2 relates how Paul was willing to circumcize Timothy when he and Silas took that young man along on a missionary tour. If Acts 18, 18 refers to Paul's, and not Aquila's, being shorn in Cenchreae (the latter is preferable grammatically, but not contextually), he still observed the Jewish rite of vow. Likewise Acts 21, 26 reveals that Paul accepted the advice of the brethren in Jerusalem and joined the four young Jews in a rite of purification for himself as well as for them. Again, Acts 20, 6 indicates that Paul continued to observe the Jewish Passover. Whatever observance of the law Paul was willing to retain, it was an accommodation (not a compromise) to certain circumstances in order that he might gain the Jews for Christ and avoid being a stumbling block to them.¹³ When Paul in Galatians 5 warns his readers against allowing themselves to be circumcized, it was in a circumstance that demanded refusal. Justification was at stake, and therefore Paul says: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (v. 4).

Paul in our passage now switches expressions from "the Jews" to "those under law" because he is apparently speaking of the same group but from a different perspective. Whereas the term "Jew" characterizes his people nationally, "those under law" characterizes them religiously.¹⁴ That Paul in their midst observed their religious scruples served the purpose of not unduly antagonizing them. At the same time he here guards against the Corinthians', both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, misunderstanding him by adding the concessive phrase: μή ὡν αὐτοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον, for they as well as he were free from all ceremonial regulations.

21 Τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος, μὴ ὡν ἄνομος θεοῦ
ἀλλ' ἔννομος Χριστοῦ ἵνα κερδάνω τοὺς ἀνόμους·

TO THOSE WITHOUT LAW (I BECAME) AS ONE WITHOUT LAW, ALTHOUGH I AM NOT WITHOUT GOD'S LAW, BUT I AM INVOLVED WITH CHRIST'S LAW, IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT GAIN THOSE WITHOUT LAW.

Paul undoubtedly opens up a wider field when he declares that among those without law he became as one without law. While in a certain sense there is no one who is without law, we here have an obvious reference in this context to the Gentiles, who had not been given a special legal code to regulate them as had the Jews. Indeed, they, too, had their laws and codes, but not the code of Moses. So Paul is describing the condition of the Gentiles in relation to the Old Testament law. Paul is ἄνομος to the Gentiles, not because he is actually without any law, but because also here he is accommodating himself to those who are not bound by the Mosaic code.

When Paul was dealing with Gentiles, he disregarded Jewish observances in which he at other times engaged. Lenski finds him not living in a lawless and godless fashion among the Gentiles, nor living devoid of divine law, but remaining a Christian among them even as he did among the Jews. Therefore to translate ἄνομος as "lawless" in the sense of disregarding and transgressing law (Cf. Luke 22, 37; Acts 2, 23; I Tim. 1, 9) is quite unsatisfactory. For examples of Paul's deference Origen points to his quoting heathen poets and referring in Athens to the ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. The arguments he employed at Lystra (Acts 14, 15) and before Felix (Acts 24, 25) were arguments that would be appreciated by the Gentiles.

In a parenthetical statement to safeguard his

posture toward the Gentiles in respect of law, he adds a negative and a positive element, "although not being without God's law, but in Christ's law." ἄνομος and ἔννομος with the genitive are somewhat unusual expressions and therefore more difficult to understand grammatically. Robertson lists θεοῦ here as an ablative dependent on the alpha privative of ἄνομος, and simply says of χριστοῦ that it is "a bold use" of the genitive because of the substantive νόμος involved.¹⁵ Lenski "ventures the opinion" that they are both possessive genitives because of the basic word νόμος. The ICC simply understands them to mean "in relation to," even as Lenski really does, and Grosheide translates: "not being without law to God but under law to Christ." Luther buys one of each kind when he translates: "Nicht ohne Gesetz..vor Gott, sondern...in dem Gesetz Christi."

Lenski summarizes the Apostle's relationship to the law in this fashion:

The Jews are under the law outwardly; Paul is not. The Gentiles are inwardly under the law, only outwardly are they free from it; Paul is free both outwardly and inwardly. The Gospel gave him this freedom. But through this freedom from the law the Gospel put Paul within the law. The law, once a relentless master and tyrant, is now through the Gospel a beneficent friend and servant to Paul. Freely, of his own volition, Paul, the Gospel Christian, delights to do the works of the law. As such a man he moves both among Jews and among Gentiles. With perfect liberty he uses ceremonial regulations when among Jews, and with the same perfect liberty discards all such regulations when among Gentiles; he follows

both courses of conduct in order to win as many as possible for the Gospel.

The verb form κερδάνω does not repeat the form of the verb in the foregoing verses. Whereas κερδήσω (following ἵνα in these instances) is the normally expected first aorist subjunctive, κερδάνω, according to both Robertson and Baur-Arndt-Gingrich, represents the subjunctive of an alternative first aorist.

22 ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενῆς ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς κερδήσω· τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τιναὺς σώσω.

I BECAME FOR THE WEAK (AS) A WEAK ONE, IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT GAIN THE WEAK: FOR ALL (PEOPLE) I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS, IN ORDER THAT IN EVERY WAY I MIGHT SAVE SOME.

The first question that surfaces here is whether τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς refers to Christians. The argument raised against this understanding is that the verb κερδαίνω would then not be in place, since Paul would then really not be gaining them. But the same verb is employed in Matthew 18, where it is the ἀδελφός (brother) who is to be gained by a Christian's proper handling of the brother's sin.

By the use of this term ἀσθενῆς Paul probably comes closest to the actual situation in Corinth. (Cf. the problem of eating sacrificial meat, ch. 8) What Paul did was what the stronger members at Corinth were apparently not ready to do. Paul agrees with the strong that they are basically right, but he refrains from insisting on his right because of his interest in saving also the weak. Should Paul or his fellow believers not be willing to become as weak for the weak, these weak might

readily be lost. Hence the avoidance of that loss can be considered a gain (κέρδος). "Every true servant of Christ must learn from the Apostle not to despise any one, nor to permit disgust over foolish weaknesses to enter his heart."¹⁷

In a very effective use of the πᾶσιν-πάντα-πάντως triad Paul summarizes his self-enslavement. The πᾶσιν includes all of the foregoing types as well as any others that might exist. What became a reality for Paul, as expressed in the previous aorists, now is expressed in the perfect γέγονα as a continuing state. He has become and he is all things to all men in order that in every way he may save some. The verb σώσω (aorist subjunctive of σώζω) is a word which heightens and lends finality to the earlier κερδαίνω, and is thus a fitting conclusion to this series, for it clearly reveals what the ultimate purpose was in all of Paul's words and actions. The indefinite τινας indicates that Paul is aware of the fact that he will not always be successful, but even that thought will not deter him from the attempt.

That Paul condescended to the various peculiarities was in appearance a weakness, but it is rather to be understood as an indication of the high moral plane on which God permitted him to live and serve. Lange concludes that it was "an all-sided adaptation of self to others--within the limits of truth, of course, and in those things which were morally indifferent, according to the rule and direction of a love that was intent upon the salvation of souls."¹⁸

23 πάντα δὲ ποιῶ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἵνα συγκοινωνῶς αὐτοῦ γένωμαι.

AND I DO EVERYTHING ON ACCOUNT OF THE GOSPEL,
IN ORDER THAT I MAY BECOME ONE WHO SHARES IT.

A variant reading, adopted by the AV, has τοῦτο here instead of πάντα, but it is so weakly attested that the UBS text does not include it in its critical apparatus. Even if it were to be the better choice, it would not materially change the meaning but would simply state, "All this I do, etc.," referring more specifically to the foregoing matters.

The phrase διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον is most frequently translated in the sense of "for the sake of the Gospel." διὰ with the accusative is usually, however, translated "on account of" or "because of." Such a rendering here would not only place the Gospel in the center of Paul's interest, but also indicate that it is the power in his life and ministry, a ministry which includes what he has just outlined in the previous verses.

Having spoken about his interest and concern for others, he now also includes an interest and concern for himself, that he too be a fellow-sharer or joint-sharer in the blessings and joy of the Gospel. He considers himself, together with his fellow Christians, to be involved in a great race, to the consideration of which he now turns. It is all in accord with his words to the Philippian saints: διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Phil. 3,14).

24 Οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ ἐν σταδίῳ τρέχοντες πάντες μὲν τρέχουσιν, εἰς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβεῖον; οὕτως τρέχετε ἵνα καταλάβητε.

YOU KNOW, DO YOU NOT, THAT THOSE WHO RUN IN A STADIUM ARE ALL RUNNING, BUT THAT (ONLY) ONE RECEIVES THE PRIZE? SO CONTINUE RUNNING THAT YOU MAY OBTAIN (THE PRIZE).

In the closing verses of this chapter Paul

illustrates, by reference to the local athletic contests, his previously enunciated practice of self-denial for the eternal welfare of the people under his care. There were in Greece four chief species of such athletic games; besides the Isthmian games outside Corinth there were also the Pythian (Delphic), the Nemean and the Olympic games. The prize at these events (τὸ βραβεῖον) was merely a wreath or garland that had little intrinsic value, such as pine or olive branches.¹⁹ Paul understood that he was not the only entrant in the race, but that his hearers were also involved. His rhetorical question (οὐκ οἴδατε....) expects an obvious affirmative answer, for the Corinthians were as well aware of -- and probably as interested in -- these games as Minnesotans are in the appearance of their Twins in the World Series of 1987.

Paul's point of comparison in citing the race²⁰ is not merely that these Corinthians are to be participants in it, but that they are to be serious in their efforts. Again the important point is not that only one will gain the coveted prize in any given race, as in the nearby games, but that all are to run with winning in mind (ἵνα καταλάβητε - effective aorist). "The analogy is that the Christian must put forth every effort to be a winner."²¹ This is the same analogy employed by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us (τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῶν ἀγῶνα). Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, The Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12, 1.2). The present tense of the imperative (τρέχετε) may also imply that they are already entrants in such a race and they are so to continue to run with the end in view

of gaining the coveted prize. The οὕτως really establishes the tertium comparationis, either looking backward to the expressed successful competition or merely anticipating the ἵνα καταλάβητε. The play on words between λαμβάνω and καταλαμβάνω is difficult to reproduce in English; the difference is between merely receiving, on the one hand, and securing as one's own possession, on the other.

The derivation of the word βραβεῖον (and the verb βραβεύω - to judge or umpire) is uncertain; it occurs again in Phil. 3, 14, cited above in the Greek in connection with verse 23.

25 πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος πάντα ἐγκρατεῖται,
ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν ἵνα φθαρτὸν στέφανον λάβωσιν
ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄφθαρτον.

EVERYONE WHO CONTENTS IN THE GAMES PRACTICES SELF-CONTROL IN ALL THINGS -- THEY, ON THE ONE HAND, TO GAIN A PERISHABLE CROWN, AND WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, (TO GAIN) AN IMPERISHABLE (CROWN).

Now Paul expands upon the necessary effort involved in such participation. The participle ἀγωνιζόμενος first of all widens the scope of the events in the games, not limiting it to the running (τρέχω and δρόμος) events. And secondly it sets the tone for the expected activity, for it denotes a contest with its labor and striving. Our Lord said: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (ἀγωνίεσθε εἰσελθεῖν ... Luke 13, 25). The thought of possible failure has suggested the foregoing imperative, enhanced now by the great exertion in the word ἀγωνίζομαι. And the verb ἐγκρατεῖται lends even further discipline to the spiritual enterprise. A rare word in verb form in all Greek literature, it is found additionally in the N.T. only in ch. 7, v. 9. Its

adjective form, ἐγκράτης, meaning self-controlled, is much more common (though not in the N.T.), as is the noun ἐγκράτεια, self-control. It involves for the athlete abstinence not only from indulgences that are unlawful in themselves, but also from many things that otherwise are regarded as lawful or harmless. The application in Paul's life as described above is quite obvious. Paul forwent even his rights in the greater interest of his fellowman's welfare. The classic writer Epictetus is often quoted in his description of the severity of the regimen imposed on one who sought to win the prize in the Olympic games. Paul therefore says that everyone who seriously contends is self-controlled in all things. And if there is incentive for those whose prize is a στέφανος φθάρτον - perhaps a mere laurel wreath - how much greater ought be the incentive for one who seeks a non-corrupted or non-corruptible crown? This favorite metaphor of a crown in the New Testament is enhanced by descriptive genitives in several passages: ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος II Timothy 4, 8); τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον (I Peter 5, 4); and τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς (James 1, 12 and Rev. 2, 10). In every instance a crown of victory is meant rather than a royal crown, for which the basic word is διάδημα (Cf. Rev. 12, 3).

26 ἐγὼ τοίνυν οὕτως τρέχω ὡς οὐκ ἀδήλων, οὕτως πυκτεύω ὡς οὐκ ἄερα δέρων. 27 ἀλλὰ ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μή πως ἄλλοις κηρύξας αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι.

I ON MY PART NOW RUN IN THIS WAY AS ONE NOT (RUNNING) AIMLESSLY (BUT WITH A CLEAR GOAL); IN THIS WAY I FIGHT, AS ONE NOT (MERELY) SHADOW-BOXING (or: AS ONE WHO MAKES HIS PUNCHES COUNT); BUT I BRUISE MY BODY AND MAKE IT MY SLAVE IN ORDER

THAT I MAY NOT SOMEHOW, AFTER I HAVE BEEN A
HERALD FOR OTHERS, MYSELF BECOME ONE WHO FAILS
THE TEST.

Instead of continuing with his exhortation to others, he looks to his own participation in the struggle. *τοῦ* in the New Testament is found only in compounds, as here, and Paul also emulates the classical post-positive use. Joined with the adverb *νῦν* it means as much as "I on my part now so run." As he does in the second letter (11, 2), the Apostle here sets himself as an example to the Corinthian Christians. He does not carry on his life in any uncertain way; he keeps his eyes unwaveringly on the goal before him, he makes his punches count, he keeps his mind on the prize awaiting the victorious Christian runner at the tape. In battling with his enemies he recognizes that the sinful nature encased in his own body is in need of subjugation. This is no mere physical battle, on which level Paul might not have fared well, though he showed great resiliency even in all the physical abuse to which he was subjected by both men and the elements. His is a spiritual struggle, to which he calls also those to whom it is his privilege to minister. For that struggle he is equipped with the grace and power of God, and the outcome is not uncertain:

What then shall we say to these things?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
He who did not spare His own Son, but
delivered Him up for us all, how shall
He not with Him also freely give us all
things? Who shall bring a charge against
God's elect? It is God who justifies.
Who is he who condemns? It is Christ
who died, and furthermore is also risen,
who is even at the right hand of God,

who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom. 8, 31-35 & 37)!

IN NOMINE JESU!

END NOTES

1. P. 117 of ICC, I Corinthians.
2. The ICC renders these expressions "by my own choice" and "not of my own choice," a suggestion which may help to place these two in proper perspective to each other.
3. See Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 485; he cites also Galatians 2, 7 as example, where Paul says:
πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.
4. Cf. Romans 1, 1; Gal. 1, 10; Phil. 1, 1, etc.
5. Cf. Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 295.
6. Cf. Heinrich Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, p. 209.
7. J. P. Lange is among those who construe all of v. 18 as a question: "What reward have I

in prospect that induces me to preach gratuitously, so as not to, etc.," for which they find the answer in the next verse.

8. H. W. Smyth, Greek Grammar for Colleges, par. 3032. He adds that litotes is ordinarily the same as meiosis.
9. One might argue the case for a causal use of the participle: "Just because I am free, I am in a position to enslave myself."
10. P. E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the New Testament, Vol. I.
11. See ICC at this point for Origen's peculiar interpretation of the phrase.
12. For κερδαίνω as a missionary term, see Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 40, 1947, pp. 109-120.
13. F. W. Grosheide in the NIC on the N.T. makes a point concerning the use and non-use of the article in the first part of verse 20. His argument is not nullified by the fact that in the latter half of the verse the article is used both times, for here it has to serve as the substantive. But see also verse 20 and τοὺς ἀνόμους.
14. The ICC makes the point that there were some under the Mosaic Law who were not Jews by race, so this term would include all not Gentile.
15. a) See Robertson, A Grammar, pp. 504 and 516.
b) Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament:
Paulus non fuit anomus, nedum antinomus.
16. Westcott-Hort reads it as κερδανῶ and considers it future.

17. P. E. Kretzmann, ibid.
18. Lange also quotes Hodge concerning Paul's concessions.
19. See Albert Barnes on First Corinthians, in loco, for more details.
20. στάδιον was first a measure of distance, ca. 607 feet, and then by association the place where a track of such distance was laid out.
21. See Leon Morris, I Corinthians, Tyndale Bible Commentaries.

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THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE
COMPARED AND CONTRASTED
TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE CONFESSIONS

INTRODUCTION

John Gerhard wrote

Those who are within the Church do not inquire about the authority of Scripture, for this is their starting point. How can they be true disciples of Christ if they pretend to call in question the doctrine of God? How can they be true members of the church? How can they wish to prove that to themselves which they always employ to prove other things? How can they doubt concerning that whose efficacy they have experienced in their own hearts? The Holy Spirit testifies in their hearts that the Spirit is truth, i.e., that the doctrine derived from the Holy Spirit is absolute truth. (page 55, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Since the time Satan asked, "Did God say?" all people, even those within the church, have questioned authority. Those who hold to a quatenus subscription, or who prefer a "Readers Digest" version of the Lutheran Confessions, do not wish to be bound by a selected body of doctrine, much less by God's authority, free to express herself, to be inclusive, and to demonstrate that she is a "caring community."

Timothy Lull writing for the ELCA magazine, "The Lutheran," reflects such concepts with these words

The ELCA Confession of Faith uses an active, present tense verb. It does not say, "This church goes along with all that Lutherans have believed before." It says, "This church confesses." This guards against a lazy Lutheranism, a longing for earlier centuries. Without being overly impressed with our own insight, we need to see that the Holy Spirit stirs the church in our times to make a living, personal confession of faith. We, too, must give an account of the hope that is within us.

What was it that raised the hair on some of the necks of the people in the days of Jesus earthly ministry? The Bible tells us that the people in the days of Jesus were amazed at his teaching because "he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." It was the chief priests and the elders of the people who asked, "By what authority are you doing these things?" "And who gave you this authority?"

It is possible to know the truth and to confess the truth and to hold fast to this authority. As a matter of fact, it is mandatory for a people and church body to do so. Even so, authority is not a friendly word in the church. Perhaps the greater issue is not authority itself, but rather what is binding authority and/or who has the right to exercise authority. Our paper deals with authority on two levels, the one being Scriptural authority and the other confessional authority. These are to be compared and contrasted.

AUTHORITY DEFINED

Exousia suggests the ability to perform an action. Basically it means the right or authority or permission granted by a higher source. Authority must always be exercised in the context of what is fitting and edifying. Bernard Ramm defined authority as

that right of power to command action or compliance, or to determine belief or custom, expecting obedience from those under authority, and in turn giving responsible account for the claim to right or power. (page 8, Authority in the Church)

Many look at authority as a negative thing, that which inhibits. The authority which God gives to his church sets her free (John 8:31-36), not to do as she pleases, but to act responsibly, in keeping with his Word.

While we cannot condone levels of fellowship, we teach and confess levels of authority.

The prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are 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. FCSD (Rule and Norm, 3)

The Confessions are the basis, rule, and norm, indicating how all doctrines should be judged in conformity with the Word of God and errors are to be explained and decided in a Christian way. (FCSD, Rule and Norm, Heading)

This, of course, does not mean that other

good, useful, and pure books, such as interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, refutations of errors, and expositions of doctrinal articles, should be rejected. If they are in accord with the aforementioned pattern of doctrine they are to be accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations. (FCSD, Rule and Norm 10)

We do acknowledge a "three-fold tier" of authority in the church. The Scripture stands alone as absolute truth, the revealed authority of God. This Word of God has a two-fold authority as David Hollaz has said

"(a) Causative authority, by which the Scriptures create and confirm in the mind of man assent to the truths to be believed.
(b) Normative or canonical authority, by which authentic Scripture is distinguished from other writings and versions, and that which is true from that which is false."
(page 55, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.)

The Symbols are an authority because they are drawn from the absolute authority. And finally, other writings, which are in keeping with Scripture and which confess the truth also carry a certain authority. However, in the words of Luther, "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel" (SA, 11, ii 15). And again he said, "Those things which have been delivered to us by God in the Sacred Scriptures must be sharply distinguished from those that have been invented by men in the church, it matters not how eminent they be for saintliness and scholarship." (Page 261, Babylonian Captivity of the Church)

AUTHORITY REJECTED

Our church fathers placed the emphasis on "sola," not on whether or not the Bible was an authority, the infallible authority. The Renaissance movement which focused on learning, inquiry, and inventions, also left its spot, perhaps leprosy, on the church. The mind games of the Enlightenment era compounded the problem. It was said that truth is evasive and all opinions are to be tolerated. No one can know the truth. The bed partners, rationalism and humanism, also worked their destruction having as their authority man. Scientific demonstration along with "I think and I feel" became the sand on which the church rested, and so she began to sink. Pietism, the movement which rebelled against preaching which lacked application, and the movement which reacted against an undisciplined church, demanded life changes at the expense of true preaching. Mingled in with this "authority-wrecking jungle" was emotionalism, the movement which had to feel it for it to be real. Today it is believed by many scholars and theologians that Christian doctrine is achieved through interaction with the cultural milieu. According to them, doctrine is in a constant state of development.

Every "ism" has added to the deterioration and ultimate rejection of truth. Even fundamentalism, so prevalent in the church of today, is a rejection of truth because it stands on an abridged version of the Bible and its teaching. And now, the grand search for self-image, "evangelical humanism," which seems to sound better than humanism or secular humanism because it is wrapped in Christian terminology, works its destruction as it takes the focus from the cross of Jesus Christ to the individual.

Along with this, we live in an era when leaders of the church say that purity of doctrine will never be achieved nor is it necessary. Others cry, "What really matters is my relation to Jesus, not doctrine." Others shout, "I am saved by Christ, not by doctrine." What are we to do in such an age? Let us take to heart and teach the words of God's writer Paul: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15: 4-6

THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD

The book, The Seduction of Christianity records

Unfortunately, to an alarming degree, the Scriptures are no longer looked upon as the full and sufficient guide given by the Holy Spirit for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Two major attitudes have opened the door to error in the church: 1) Experience is taken as self-authenticating, so that the need for biblical authentication is considered to be marginal at best; and/or 2) psychological theories are accepted that provide the authentication of experience and practices which cannot be justified from the Bible. Both of these attitudes are becoming widespread in the church. (page 179)

In order for us to counteract experience and psychological theories as being authoritative, we need to set forth before Kings and the world that the Word of God stands as the authority because it is authorized by God. John Gerhard said

Inasmuch, then, as the Holy Scriptures have God for their author, by whose immediate inspiration the prophets, evangelists, and apostles write, therefore they also possess divine authority, because they are inspired, they are in like manner self-commendatory, winning faith by virtue of their own inherent excellence. (Page 54, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Frequently and through various words, the Scriptures show themselves to be the very Word of God. Passages such as Exodus 7:1, II Samuel 23:1-2, Isaiah 8:11, Jeremiah 1:9-13, I Corinthians 2:13, 14:37, I Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 3:7, and II Peter 1:21 testify to the fact that the Bible is not the word of man, but the very word of God. It is the Lord who speaks through words and sentences and paragraphs.

"Thus says the Lord," is a repeated phrase in the Old Testament. Men were moved by God to write, and people heard the preached Word, and received this word of God from the mouths of men. That word saved them, changed them, and united them as only the Word of God could do.

Our Lutheran Confessions, while not directing themselves to a specific article on inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy, assume such to be the case. As E. H. Klotsche has written

The Scriptures are the sole rule and

standard of Christian truth because they are the Word of God. The Lutheran Confessions do not present any theory of inspiration, but they do presuppose, everywhere, the fact of inspiration, i.e., that the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Augsburg Confession (91) referring to the passage I Tim. 4:1 says "the Holy Ghost forewarns of these things." The Apology calls Scripture passages simply "words of the Holy Ghost," (153). Luther says (Smalc. Art. 497) that the O.T. prophets were holy "since the Holy Ghost spake through them." Doctrines that no reason can understand are "from heaven, revealed through the Gospel" (491; 477). The Apology (101) denominates the Bible as "the manifest Scripture of the Holy Ghost." The F.C. (1075) says that "the Holy Ghost through the mouth of the holy apostle earnestly charged His Church to preserve" the article concerning Christian liberty. (Page 149, Christian Symbolics)

But when all is said and done, it is not for us to prove inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility. Heinrich Schmid has written

But, for the Church and her members, there is no need for proof for the inspiration of Scripture, for her very existence depends upon this faith, and this faith precedes all proofs; without this no article of faith could be based upon the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the proof that the Holy Scriptures are inspired, or, what amounts to the same thing, that they are of divine origin, and consequently possess full authority in matters of faith, is

required only for those who are yet without the Church, or who, if within her pale, are not confirmed in the faith. But it lies in the nature of the case, that no proof can be given to those, which they cannot, in an unbelieving frame of mind, evade; for the only absolutely stringent proof lies in the fact, that the Holy Spirit bears witness in the heart of each individual and thus convinces him of the divinity of the Word of God, by the mighty influence which it exerts upon him; but that this may be the case, it is necessary that the individual do not resist the drawings of the Holy Spirit, and before this takes place the testimony of the Holy Spirit can have no probative power for him. (Pages 51, 52, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Without the authoritative word, we would have no authoritative confession. Peter Brunner, writing in the "Springfielder" said

All talk of commitment to confession is senseless when the Holy Scriptures have been lost as the concrete judge over all proclamation and doctrine. Confession presupposes the Scriptures, that is, the Scriptures as a communicating authority, not merely as a historical factor!.... In the same measure that the Church loses the concrete authority of the Holy Scriptures, she also loses a binding consensus in regard to the content of the Gospel proclamation. (Dec. 1969, p. 4,5,7)

THE AUTHORITATIVE CONFESSIONS

Wilbert H. Rosin wrote

An age that contends not only for freedom but insists on an equal hearing for all ideas cannot understand, much less accept, the concept of a confessional church that draws its statements of belief together in a formal document and seriously subscribes to them. For decades higher education has been touting the philosophical proposition that a primary function of a college or university is to present forcefully and impartially all sides of any issue. To encourage certain values and discourage others is thought to be unnecessarily restrictive, a violation of personal rights, and harmful to the integrity of the individual. (Page 88, A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord.)

Our church fathers confessed so that the children of the reformation and their children might remain free and sure of their salvation. The Gospel was and is at stake. The purposes of our Symbols are

a) that our church clearly and unequivocally confess its faith and its doctrine before the world; b) that it distinguish itself from all heterodox bodies and sects; c) that it possess a united, certain, general form and norm of doctrine for all its teachers, on the basis of which all other writings and teachings can be judged and regulated. (Walther, CTM, April 1947, pp. 244,245)

Our pastors are called upon to commit themselves, unconditionally, to the authority of the Confessions. In so doing, the people whom they serve can be sure that what is preached is based on what God says, and on what the church has believed and confessed.

Wilbert H. Rosin spoke to the benefits of a confessing church body when he said

The Lutheran Christian regards confessional statements as a systematized compilation of Biblical principles of faith, the decisional premises for life, rather than a restrictive straitjacket. The anticonfessional Christian seeks the broadest base for agreement and cannot understand the need for delineating doctrine in clear detail. To him a simple assent that Jesus is Lord (some would say "Savior and Lord") is sufficient. To that the response of the confessional Lutheran is threefold: (1) The Lutheran Confessions are a summary of Biblical doctrine and of official doctrine of the church, more than a mere statement of what is necessary for salvation. (2) Those who preach and teach in the church need more than the minimum if they are to serve responsibly. (3) Simple assent that Jesus is Savior and Lord is not sufficient for the Christian as he confronts the complex problems of life and the need to distinguish justification and sanctification or Law and Gospel. (Page 93, A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord)

The Lutheran Confessions are an authority when it comes to settling controversy and bringing unity to the church. Robert Preus wrote

The Church of the Reformation took Paul's admonition (I Corinthians 1:10) seriously when after Luther's death doctrinal controversies arose and threatened to destroy its unity in the Gospel. The Lutheran churches

recognized that the unity of the Spirit which Paul stressed could only be manifested when there was unanimity "in doctrine and in all its articles and... the right use of the holy sacraments" (FC SD, X, 31). Their program for unity and concord in a troubled church went as follows: "The primary requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn together out of the Word of God" FC SC, Rule and Norm. (Pages 17, 18, Getting into the Theology of Concord)

In keeping with our subject of the authority of the confessions, listen to Kurt Marquart.

To suggest that the symbolical books themselves do not claim a normative, regulative function in the church is to disrepresent them. It is insufficient to cite only the Formula's statement that the confessions are "merely witnesses and expositions, etc," (Epitome, "Rule and Norm," 8). Here the Formula describes the symbolical books in relation to the absolute authority of Holy Scripture. One must go on to quote what the Formula says about the symbolical books in relation to the ongoing teaching in the church. Here the Formula understands symbols as comprising "one unanimous, definite common form of doctrine, jointly and severally confessed by our evangelical churches, according to which, because it has been taken from God's Word, all

other writings are to be judged and regulated as to the extent to which they are to be approved and accepted" (SD, "Rule and Norm," 10). Furthermore the confessions are meant as a "public, definite testimony not only for those living now, but also among our descendants...to what our churches' unanimous position and judgment on the controverted articles is and shall remain" (SD, "Antitheses," 16). To be sure the symbolical books are altogether subject to Holy Scripture -- yet they are normative, with a derived authority, for public teaching in the church. The ruled rule (the symbols) is the concrete implementation of the ruling rule (Holy Scripture). The Formula's heading, "Of the summary Form, Foundation, Rule and Standard..." refers not simply to Scripture in isolation, but to the scriptural truth as confessed in the symbolical books. (Pages 42, 43, No Other Gospel)

John F. Johnson wrestled with the false charge that confessional Lutherans have two equal authorities to which they appeal when he wrote

As to the status of confessional documents in the church, Lutherans seem destined to endure repeated allegations that they permit Confessions to outrank the Holy Scriptures. This charge is explained in part by the positiveness with which the Lutheran church maintains that, if the Bible is understood in the light of the article of justification by faith alone, it is not a book sealed with seven seals which calls for the interpretation of an infallible magisterium, but that it is sui ipsius

interprets for those who read and hear it in the power of the Spirit. In this sense the Bible is clear and intelligible, and therefore there is a confession of the church which does give expression to the true understanding of Scripture. Lutheranism, that is to say, ascribes something to its confessions. They are not inerrant like the Scriptures; they are not judges in the same respect as Scriptures. But the confessions are nevertheless a norma; they are a norma normata. Their authority as judges of the teaching of the pastors in the church is a derived authority, derived from the fact that they are, as the Formula says, "drawn together out of the Word of God" (SD, Rule and Norm, 1). Yet, far from diminishing their authority, this is the very factor that establishes it. Because the norm contained in the Confessions is taken from and agrees with the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, it is a "pattern of doctrine" by which other writings are to be judged and controversies are to be regulated and explained (SD, Rule and Norm, 10). Lutheranism ascribes a correctness to its confession which can be effectively challenged only by a demonstration that Scripture has been falsely interpreted. ("Concordia Journal," November 1980, page 239)

THE AUTHORITIES COMPARED AND CONTRASTED

A concerned Lutheran wrote, "Let's get our priorities straight. It is God's word that is our ultimate authority. Luther's articles can be used to help us understand God's Word, but let us never be guilty of using man's word to teach what God

says." The Bible class member who continues to study the Bible and hears the pastor say, "the Word alone," might be somewhat confused when the same pastor emphasizes a selection of creeds and confessions. Our ELS Doctrine Committee, in a recent paper, said

Now it is indeed true that we should study the fathers to help ourselves better understand the Scripture, but when we reach the point that we are doing exegesis of the church fathers rather than of the Scripture then Confessional Lutheranism is in a sorry state.

David Hollaz contrasts the Scriptures and the Symbols

The Holy Scriptures and Symbolical books differ, because: (1) The Holy Scriptures were communicated by immediate inspiration from God to holy men, led by the Holy Spirit. (2) The Holy Scriptures are worthy of belief on their own account, and, to establish their authority, need no earlier source by which they may be proved. (3) The Holy Scriptures, by virtue of their divine, canonical authority, constitute an infallible rule whereby true doctrines are distinguished from false. (4) The Holy Scriptures adequately contain all that is to be believed and practiced. (Page 100, 101, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Also speaking to this issue is E. H. Klotsche

If the confession is a man's answer to God's Word, the authority of the confession must be relative and limited. The Bible

has a divine and absolute authority; for it is the divine truth, perfect and infallible. The confession is the intellectual apprehension and form adopted for the expression of divine truth. We must therefore distinguish between divine truth as it is in itself, and the peculiarly human apprehension of divine truth; between the substance of a doctrine and its form. The confessions are not judges, as are the Scriptures, but only witnesses of Biblical truth. They are, therefore, not coordinate with, but always subordinate to, the supreme standard of Holy Scripture and their authority depends upon the measure of their agreement with the Scripture. The Bible is the sole rule and norm by which all doctrines must be judged, the norma normans, while the Confessions are a norma normata. (Page 15, Christian Symbolics)

Charles P. Krauth has said

But it is sometimes said, by very good men, as a summary to the whole argument for Confession of Faith, that the very words of Scripture are a better Creed, than any we can substitute for them; better, not only, as of course they are, on the supposition that our words are incorrect, but better even if our words are correct; for the best words are man's words, but its words are the words of the Holy Ghost. But this argument, although it looks specious, is sophistical to the core. The very words of Scripture are not simply a better Rule of Faith than any that can be substituted for them but they are the absolute and only Rule of Faith, for which

nothing can be substituted. But the object of a Creed is not to find out what God teaches, (we go to the Bible for that), but to show what we believe. Hence the moment I set forth even the very words of the Bible as my Creed, the question is no longer what does the Holy Ghost mean by them. You ask a Unitarian, What do you believe about Christ. He replies, "I believe that he is the Son of God." These are the very words of the Bible, but the point is not at all now, what do they mean in the Bible? but what do they mean as a Unitarian creed? In the Rule of Faith, they mean that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity incarnate; in the Unitarian Creed, they mean that there is no Trinity, and that our Lord is a mere man. (Page 183, 184, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology)

CONCLUSION

John F. Johnson said

The problem in the church with contemporary attitudes toward confessional subscription involves the effort to play off the Scriptures and the Confessions against each other. Unfortunately such a desire indicates that some have not grasped their true unity in the Christ of the Gospel. Writing in the Lutheran Forum, Richard Neuhaus has suggested that we outgrow the historic position on confessional subscription. After all, he writes, "a theologian worth his stipend can hardly be constrained by the statements of theologians of the 16th Century." But that misses the point of

confessional subscription entirely. One cannot simply think out of existence the historical circumstances that conditioned the historic Lutheran Confessions. Yet it is not because they are sixteenth-century theologians or even because they are Lutherans that the church finds itself at one with them and unites with them in their confession. To affirm the Augustana because it is the confession of Lutheranism is not justifying faith for our own or any time. Rather, we unite with those confessors because our faith, like theirs, is simply an affirmative response to the claim of divine revelation. Scripture and confession are not two magnitudes which stand outside each other in relation to mutual indifference. On the contrary, Scripture demands confession and it shapes its confession. (Pages 240, 241, "Concordia Journal," November 1980)

QUESTIONS

What does someone mean when he says that he will not use a certain "church program" because it is not confessional?

Is it proper to set forth our exegesis on the basis of the Confessions?

What does a person mean when he says that his sermon was confessional? Does this also mean it was scriptural? Does it mean more or less than this?

Are the confessions infallible?

Is it proper to say that the confessions are inspired?

Is it possible for a church body to uphold the doctrine of Scripture as truth and not have a confession, or confessions?

Can a statement or teaching or program be Scriptural and not confessional?

Can a statement or teaching be Confessional and not Scriptural?

Because Luther and Chemnitz say that the bread which we pray for in the Lord's Prayer is spiritual food, is it right for us, are we compelled, to preach this to our people?

Should we set forth our beliefs on the basis of the Confessions, absent of Scriptural evidence?

If a person refuses discipline, or a church body refuses to discipline, what happens to authority?

-- Rev. Erwin J. Ekhoﬀ,
Pastor of King of Grace
Lutheran Church,
Golden Valley, Minnesota

BOOK REVIEW

Sanctification: Christ in Action, by Harold Senkbeil, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1988, 204 pages, \$8.95.

In a day when Evangelical theology (not to be confused with Ebnagelical Lutheran theology) with its inordinate emphasis on sanctification is so appealing, Pastor Senkbeil has rendered a real service in offering this timely book. He shows how these two theologies differ in their answers to the question: "Where can I find God?" The answer is not to be found in the subjective feelings of the heart or the renewed life of the Christian, as Evangelical theology emphasizes, but in the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments. The author convincingly shows the inseparable connection between justification and sanctification pointing out that the Christian life is a fruit of faith based on the objective truth of the gospel. Sanctification is really Christ in action in the life of the believer.

The book begins with a helpful and informative description of today's Evangelicals and goes on to trace their roots to the New England Calvinists and shows the various theological strains which shape current Evangelicals in their church life in America. A careful analysis of some of their writings and spokesmen (particularly Charles Swindoll) in the light of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions reveals their Reformed colors. The last two chapters contain an eloquent exposition of the doctrine of the means of grace and

advocate a Lutheran initiative to the Evangelical challenge.

The confessional Lutheran will especially appreciate this book and be evermore grateful for his incarnational, sacramental heritage. This is a book that will benefit clergy and laity alike and in this reviewer's opinion it would make an excellent Bible study in our congregations.

-- W. W. Petersen