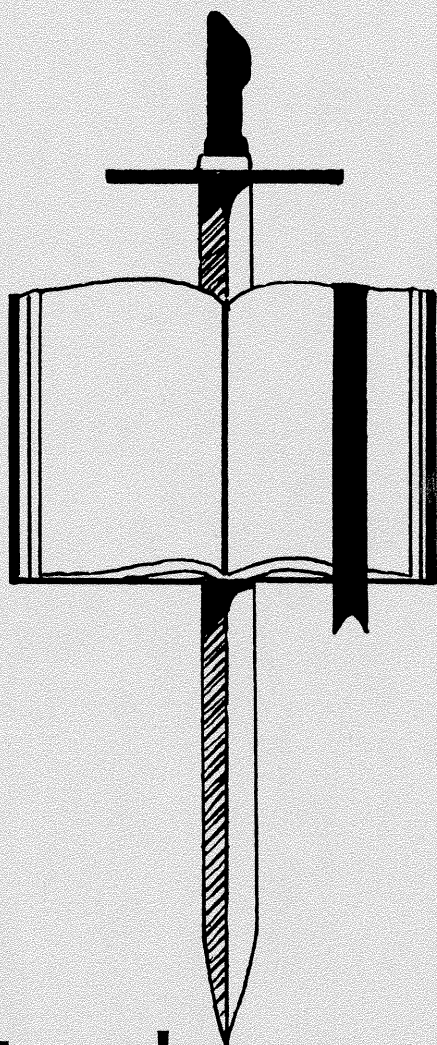


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FOREWORD

This issue of the Quarterly begins with a funeral sermon by Pastor Paul Petersen, delivered at a memorial service for Pastor Hugo Handberg at King of Grace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota, on March 29, 1990. Pastor Handberg graduated from Bethany Lutheran Seminary in the spring of 1952 and served several parishes in our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. He died as a result of a head injury on March 21st at the age of 64 years, one month, and six days. Blessed be his memory!

The exegesis of Ezra 9:1-19, known as Ezra's Prayer of Repentance, by Pastor Huhnerkoch, reminds us that the preaching of repentance is always in order, whether it be in times of peace and prosperity or in times of difficulty and adversity.

Pastor emeritus Bruce Adams of Australia reminds us that July 30th of this year marks the 450th anniversary of the martyrdom of three esteemed English Lutherans -- Robert Barnes, Thomas Garret, and William Jerome. Barnes is the best known of the three since he was a personal friend of Martin Luther and was even a guest in Luther's home. Upon hearing of his death Luther referred to him as "a holy martyr" who had been called upon by God "to shed his blood for His dear Son's sake."

The article on The Current Crisis of American Lutheranism: Can We Remain Lutheran? was delivered by the editor at a Lutheran free conference at Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on April 16, 1989.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its reorganization in 1993. Pastor George Orvick, president of the ELS, presents a brief history of the first nine years of its reorganization. This issue contains a summary of the first six years and the next issue of the Quarterly will present the following three years.

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Funeral Sermon for Pastor Hugo Handberg,
held at King of Grace Church, Golden Valley, MN
March 29, 1990, by the Rev. Paul Petersen,
Madison, Wisconsin.

Text: Romans 1:16

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, we thank you for the power of the Gospel in the life of our departed brother. We praise you for the powerful Gospel that your servant faithfully preached to others. Comfort us in our sorrow with the sure hope of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our text for the occasion of the funeral of Pastor Handberg is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Romans in Chapter 1, verse 16. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Dear mourners: Harriet, children and grandchildren, family members, relatives, fellow pastors, and friends of Pastor Hugo Handberg.

Hugo and I met for the first time at Grace Lutheran Church in Denver, Colorado. It was during World War II, now over 45 years ago. We were both in military service, serving in the Army Air Corps and stationed at Lowry Field in Denver. Here we were, two Norwegian Synod soldiers, who had found their way to a German Lutheran Church for worship on a Sunday morning. The people of this church welcomed us in their midst and invited us to a Walther League meeting in the evening, which both of us attended. We lost contact with each other when one of us was transferred to another air base.

The next time we met was on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College. We had both decided to enter the ministry, so there we were together again, this time as students preparing ourselves for entrance into our Seminary. We sat in the Seminary classes together for the next three years. We graduated together and were ordained shortly thereafter. We remained friends and brother pastors over the past 38 years. During our long association, I learned to admire Hugo for his many sterling qualities. I consider it an honor to be asked to preach the sermon for his funeral service.

Hugo had a genuine interest in people--children, young people, and elderly alike. You could call him a pastor's pastor as evidenced by the respect of his peers. More than one young pastor was on the receiving end of his thoughtful counsel.

Some of you gathered here today were privileged to have Hugo as your pastor. You will remember him, I'm sure, as a faithful pastor, a good preacher, and a kind friend.

The text I have chosen today is a fitting one. On the basis of these words I'd like to speak on:

God's Power in The Life of Pastor Hugo Handberg

It was God's power that created saving faith in his heart and which sustained him in that faith throughout his life. The writer of our text was the great apostle St. Paul. You know the story of his life, before and after. Paul had been a Pharisee of the strictest order. You could call Saul of Tarsus enemy number one of the Church of Christ. A religious fanatic, he devoted his life to persecuting Christians and destroying the Church of Christ. But all this changed in a dramatic way one day

when he was on his way to Damascus. He was converted to faith in Jesus Christ. A great change took place in his heart and life. This scoffer, denier, and blasphemer of Christ became the chief spokesman and defender of the Christian faith and a great apostle to the Gentile world. He did an "about face," now going everywhere, proclaiming "the love of Him who had called him out of darkness into His marvelous light." I Peter 2:9

Such was the power of God in the life of St. Paul. Small wonder that he would exclaim "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Romans 1:16

The power of God was evident in Hugo's life--the power that brought him to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Godly parents brought him to the Lord in Holy Baptism in early infancy, wherein God said to him, "I will be your heavenly Father and you will be my children. I will wash away all your sins. I will always love you. I will always forgive you. I will never leave you. I will make a covenant with you: though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10

Christian parents saw that he was instructed in the meaning of this covenant with God. He was instructed and confirmed by the sainted Pastor Hans Theiste at old Fairview Church. I have a strong hunch that his pastor spotted this bright, serious-minded and devout young man and perhaps one day took him aside and said, "Hugo, you should think about becoming a pastor."

At any rate, Hugo became a Pastor. It was the

Gospel, God's power to salvation, that Hugo faithfully proclaimed during his entire ministry. The folks at Mayville, North Dakota; Mt. Olive; and Parkland will remember him as a solid Law/Gospel preacher. He was a literary man who knew how to use words and had a gift of speaking clearly and zeroing in on the points he wanted to make.

In Hugo's view, preaching of the Law consisted of more than general statements such as, "we are all sinners; we all come short," but specifically in pointing out sins in the home, in the marriage, in the workplace, and in the business world. He had a way of taking off the masks, stripping away all pretense, and exposing all sham. He correctly diagnosed the terminal illness of the soul that afflicts us all. But after preaching the law so "that every mouth was stopped and all stood guilty before God," Hugo did not leave his hearers in despair, but in a marvelous way filled their hearts with their Savior's love. He took his hearers to the cross where Jesus absorbed God's anger against sin for us, assumed our guilt for us and suffered the punishment we rightly deserved, as He died in His holiness for the greatest of sinners and totally erased our sins from God's memory forever. Such preaching of the Gospel brought great comfort and peace to his hearers.

Pastor Handberg was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. He believed it. He faithfully proclaimed it. Due to the holy life of his Savior, who lived a perfect life covering all the tracks of our sinful life, and the atoning death of our Savior, Hugo is now enjoying the eternal rest that awaits all believers of the Lord and the bliss and glory of eternal life in heaven. His faith has been turned to sight.

Hugo's passing will bring a big void in your heart

and life, Harriet, and in the hearts and lives of you family members, as well as to us in our Synod, his friends, and colleagues. We are sad. We mourn his death. Humanly speaking, we are never quite ready to say good-bye, but we do not question God's timing or wisdom. We say with the Psalmist "my times are in your hands." Psalm 31:15.

As we await the glorious day of resurrection and the joyful reunion of the children of God, may it be with true faith in our one and only consolation, our only hope, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

May God keep you all in His Word, in steadfast faith to the end and may He bless unto us the memory of this, his grateful servant.

Amen.

EXEGESIS OF EZRA 9:1-15 EZRA'S PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

After a period of peace and prosperity, a nation may grow spiritually fat and sassy and values may slowly erode to a point where hardly anything seems shocking anymore. In such a climate preachers are tempted to quit calling for repentance, because they feel a sense of uselessness, hopelessness, and even confusion. The deeper the spiritual plunge, the greater the confidence among the dulled masses that everything is going to be okay and the more a call to repentance falls on deaf ears. Jeremiah lived at such a time.

A different spiritual climate comes after a period of deprivation when people have been whittled down to basics and have an appreciation of a few simple blessings and basic values. The challenge to preachers during this time is to lift God's people out of their despair while standing guard with the law of God in hand, to prevent the people from putting on spiritual weight again. Preachers may live under the illusion at such a time that nothing will happen which will require a special call to repentance. Ezra lived at such a time.

In his 1518 Explanation of the 95 Theses, Luther wrote of these two scenarios:

I believe that a man who has sinned trusts with the greatest difficulty in the mercy of God, so the sin which lies heavily upon him as a burden forces him to despair and he is prone to think much more about the

wrath than the mercy of God. On the other hand, before he has sinned he is prone to think much more about mercy than wrath. Man does everything the wrong way. He is afraid when he should not be afraid, but hopeful, that is, after he has sinned. Before he has sinned he is confident, when he should not be confident, but afraid.¹

In the waning years of Israel's greatness, just before the Babylonian captivity, confidence ran rampant among Judah's godless "righteous," spiritually fat masses. They preferred to believe that things had gotten as bad as they were going to get, and that peace was on the horizon. They liked to hear preachers preach peace.

In a climate like that it was not surprising that people were not standing in long lines waiting to get the true prophet's job. Jeremiah often wished he had not gotten it. It was a thankless task to preach the unwelcome message of impending doom to a spiritually overweight people. He felt friendless and sometimes very depressed. Yet God gave him the strength to keep preaching for the benefit of the repentant few for whom there was some real good news. "Yet even in those days," declares the Lord, "I will not destroy you completely" (Jeremiah 5:18). "This is what the Lord says, 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my precious promise to bring you back to this place'" (Jer. 29:10).

Of course God's Word proved true. The land was stripped from Judah's hands. In the 70 intervening years of captivity the lean circumstances and the hand of God carved away the spiritual fat. During this new lean climate for God's people, Ezra was born.

He was called to serve as a priest among the exiled faithful. He was held in high regard by the Persian royalty as well. He watched God's hand at work in moving Cyrus to issue a decree that the temple be rebuilt and that Jews return to their land to rebuild it (538 B.C.). He watched from Babylon and recorded the drama of work which sputtered for twenty-two years because of the treachery of the people of Palestine who stirred up trouble for the returned exiles under Artaxerxes.

Actual progress of the returned community... cannot have been auspicious, as may be seen from conditions of land and people depicted in the prophecies of Haggai and Zachariah. Rehabilitation required more than a royal decree; it required even more than material support for the religious enterprise. The very first contingent must have met with serious opposition on the part of the Samaritans who had gradually taken over the territory around Jerusalem.²

So Ezra watched as Haggai moved the stagnant people to restart the temple building and he saw the outcome of the marvelous decree of Darius that commanded the surrounding peoples not only not to hinder the work, but to advance the work with their own gifts, even to the extent of providing for the support of the temple workers. Finally, after nearly 80 years (458 B.C.), Ezra received orders from King Artaxerxes to also go to the restored land with articles of silver and gold for the temple and even more people to rebuild the city.

When Ezra came to Jerusalem he found a spiritual climate among the returned exiles much different from the attitude encountered by the

prophets before the captivity. Though there had been opposition to the work of God from the outside, there was not spiritual erosion from the inside by a people chasing after idols and destroying the work of God.

But that suddenly changed. Bad news was brought to Ezra that some Israelites, in disobedience to the law of God, had married daughters of the surrounding nations and that to top it off, even priests and Levites, the spiritual leaders of restored Judah, had "led the way in this unfaithfulness." What devastation hit the prophet! He must have thought, "Oh no, not again! Has this people again begun to turn away from God to idols?"

Not an insane man, but a devastated man, tore his inner garment and priestly outer garment as a sign of his heartfelt grief and affliction, and pulled hair from his head and beard, as a sign of his violent anger and moral indignation, and sat down appalled. The message was clear. Everything had been so right and now everything had become so wrong. What follows is the prayer of repentance which we are about to study.

EZRA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ezra followed 2 Chronicles in the Scripture for a reason. He was God's historian who finished the narration of events whose beginnings were recorded in Chronicles. But, whereas Chronicles traced the downfall of the nation, Ezra picked up the history at the bottom and began the story of rebirth.

Since both Ezra and Nehemiah were considered historians first, they were not grouped among the post-exilic prophets. Yet they certainly exercised the prophetic office as they declared God's Word. And they documented the events of those years.

The original decrees of Cyrus and Darius were preserved in the Aramaic (4:8-6:18; 7:12-16). The personal memoirs, temple records, and registers of names of those who returned from exile were related in Hebrew.

In the Hebrew and in the Greek of the Septuagint, Ezra and Nehemiah were combined in one book entitled Ezra. St. Jerome first separated the two in the Latin Vulgate of 400 A.D.

Ezra and Nehemiah were used by God for different purposes in Judah. When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem after Ezra, his concern was for rebuilding the city wall and establishing governing order among the returned people. Ezra, an expert in the law of God, was concerned with restoring and revitalizing the worship life of the people in accord with God's Word.

With that purpose as well as his office as priest in mind, it is a small wonder that a new return to an old sin so devastated him.

EZRA'S PRAYER OF REPENTANCE (THE PRAYER WITHOUT A REQUEST)

- I. We, priest and people, admit our common guilt (vv. 5-6).
- II. We have a history of guilt and just punishment (v. 7).
- III. We have experienced God's grace in spite of our great sins (vv. 8-9).
- IV. We have incredibly and knowingly sinned again (vv. 10-14).
- V. We can only confess, but confess we do (v. 15).

I.

We, priest and people, admit our common guilt.

(vv. 5-6)

9:5 וּבְמִנְחַת הָעֶרֶב קָמְתִי מִתְעִנּוּתִי וּבְקָרְעֵי בְגָדֵי וּמְעִילֵי וְאַבְרָעָה עַל-
בְּרָכֵי וְאַפְרָשָׁה כַּפֵּי אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי:

Translation: *When the evening sacrifice time came, I stood up from my act of humiliation and with my inner garment and outer coat still torn, I fell down on my knees and spread out my hands to Jehovah, my God.*

At twilight each day under Jewish ceremonial law God's people brought the evening sacrifice to the temple. This offering was identical to the morning sacrifice consisting of a lamb and grain offering and was to emphasize that the sun was setting on a day of service dedicated to God (Exodus 29:38-42). Incense-burning accompanied the sacrifice each morning and evening to symbolize that daily conversation with the Lord could take place where God and His people were at peace and on speaking terms. David commented on this day-ending quiet time with the Lord by writing: "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2). Ernst Wendland also commented on it:

How clearly this morning and evening service should have served to impress upon them this constant, daily rededication to the Lord! The Lord was not only to be remembered in time of special need, or at special occasions, His presence among them was never-failing, just as their service to him was a daily expression of their devotion to him.³

But there was something wrecking the daily devotion as the hour of evening sacrifice approached

this day, and with unmistakable clarity, Ezra's body language made that plain. He ripped his clothes to demonstrate the awful grief he was experiencing. He tore out his hair and beard to display God's and his intense anger over sin. He could not lift up his hands in joy, but fell to the ground and spread his hands in grief, in absolute shame. His conduct "drew attention of many of the Jews, who gathered around him, some for mere curiosity, but others to share in his grief."⁴

To a Western mind, this description of Ezra's grief seems greatly overdrawn, but it serves to underline the serious nature of sin and the horror with which it is viewed by the true child of God. Ezra here stood as a representative of God's law to the people, and it is quite appropriate that he should demonstrate his abhorrence for such general disobedience on their part.⁵

Ezra's body language was indeed not uncommon. His grief-stricken display was in the visual language of the common people, who had seen it in Jewish life and in biblical accounts. Jacob and Joshua had torn their clothes because of deep grief (Gen. 37:34); Josh 7:6). Falling to the knees was the common posture of respect and humility before God. Even kings, Solomon for example, approached God that way (1 Kings 8:54). Everyone around Ezra knew that something very serious had occurred and that humble conversation with God was about to take place.

As shocking as Ezra's demeanor was for the people standing around, more shocking would have been the absence of any display of grief. His visible grief showed, "Here is a man who cares what happens to this land and this people. Here

is a man who knows that what is happening here does not make God happy."

Visible demeanor is still an important part of the Christian ministry and the Christian's life. So often how we act has already preached the message before we say a word. Unfortunately, sometimes it's the opposite message from the one we intended, or perhaps more sadly it is the real message which no number of words can reverse. If wrong messages are being sent by body language, acting lessons will not help. What will help is to step on the scale of God's law every day to remind ourselves how much sin weighs, and then to experience anew how great it feels to have that load lifted off by Christ. By doing this regularly, we will express shock and joy in all the right places.

Ezra's unrehearsed shock was in just the right places. His confessional prayer naturally followed this display of total dejection.

9:6 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֱלֹהֵי בְשׁוֹתַי וְנִכְלָמְתִּי לְהַרְיִם אֱלֹהֵי פָנַי אֲלֵיךָ כִּי
עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ רַבּוּ לְמַעַלְהָ רִ"אשׁ וְאֲשַׁמְתָּנוּ גְדֻלַּה עַד לַשָּׁמַיִם:

Translation: *And I said, "Oh my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to you, because our crookedness goes over our heads and our guilt has become great enough to reach to the heavens."*

Ezra possessed humble faith. He expressed that faith when, in spite of the devastating circumstances under which he approached God, he said "my God." He spoke as a child to a father, just as we still pray "our father" and confess in those words our confidence that "God would tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father and we are His true children."

Although Ezra approached God as His Father, he came as a child admitting that he had done horrible things, hardly daring to speak. Others had sinned, not he. Yet it is very clear that Ezra did not fall down in self-righteous humility, lamenting how terrible it was that a certain misguided element of the nation had gone astray and spoiled things for the rest. Rather he sat down in personal contrition and in the true spirit of the priest who represented the people before God, he took full responsibility for sins he did not commit himself and bore them before God as the priest. He confessed "our" sin, not "their" sin.

The sin he was confessing was especially "crooked" and deep because of its timing and severity. It was committed by people who had seen the errors of the past and the consequences earned, and therefore had great responsibility to change and do what was right. Even before the captivity the people of Judah had had plenty of evidence to the north in Israel which pleaded that they should undergo a change of heart. God had said through Jeremiah, "'Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,' declares the Lord. The Lord said to me, 'Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah'" (Jeremiah 3:9-11). If Judah should have known not to keep erring before the exile, certainly she should really have known better not to keep sinning in post-Babylon times.

So, Ezra was not making a mountain of shame out of a molehill of sin, when he used those picturesque Hebrew expressions which stack together numerous prepositions: "Our depravity has become much to above our heads; and "our guilt has become

great until to the heavens." His confession was what the repentant sinner's true evaluation of his sin must always be. He confessed with a spirit echoed also by Paul, who was not exaggerating when he declared himself "chief of sinners." Sin piles up more terribly than garbage in landfills. It abounds to the point that no one can know what to do with it. Guilt piles up with sin, not just the feeling of being guilty, but the actual fact of being guilty. Unless both are atoned for, there is nothing but damnation waiting.

II.

We have a history of guilt and just punishment (v.7)

מִיָּמֵינוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ

9:7 בְּאִשְׁמָה וְדָלָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וּבְעֹנֵוֹתֵינוּ נָתַנוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מְלָכֵינוּ
 קְהֵלֵינוּ בְּיַד אֲמֹלֵי הָאָרְצוֹת בְּחָרֶב בְּשָׁבִי וּבְבָזָה וּבְכַשְׁת
 פָּנִים כַּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

Translation: *From the days of our fathers until this day we possess great guilt. And because of our iniquity we, our kings, and our priests have been in the hand of the kings of the lands -- in sword, in captivity, in spoil (booty), in shamed faces -- just like this day.*

Again Ezra emphasized that this was not the first time that this nation stood guilty before God. It had a history of guilt. If we focus particularly on the failure to eliminate the heathen from the land, we can trace the problem way back to life after Joshua, when the tribes failed to drive the Canaanites completely out of the land and God had to say, "They will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you" (Judges 2:3).

How true God's words were! It was all downhill

from there. For nearly a thousand years the people tested God's patience. There were punishments along the way and there was repentance. But God's people constantly became more and more crass in their love affair with the prostitute gods, until finally they received the exact consequences foretold through the pre-exile prophets. "This is what the Lord says, 'Those destined for death, (go) to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity....Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder, without charge, because of all your sins throughout your country'" (Jeremiah 15:2,13).

We should note here that though the remnant of Judah was back in Jerusalem rebuilding, Ezra confessed that they were still "this day" subject to kings of other lands. This was exactly accurate. God had brought them back but they remained vassals of Persia until the fall of the Persian empire in 331 B.C. Even thereafter they suffered foreign intervention at the hands of Syria, Egypt, Greece, and finally of Rome.

Ezra's confession of corporate guilt and merited punishment was beautifully simple, yet profoundly a product of God's Spirit at work within him, for there had been many in Judah during those last days before captivity who could not draw the simple conclusion that their sin was the reason for their grief. So God had told Jeremiah, "When you tell these people all this and they ask you, 'Why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?' then say to them, '...you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers'" (Jeremiah 16:10-12). The human heart is incredibly blind to the facts. It needs to be enlightened concerning its own darkness.

The "mere instant" (בְּמַעַט-רִגְעָא) of God's undeserved love certainly referred to the relatively short time from the decree of Cyrus to the time Ezra was speaking, about 80 years. But perhaps the phrase was also used as it was in Isaiah 26:20 to highlight God's saving power coming along at just the right moment, "Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by."

The last phrase of this verse, "life in our servitude," certainly paints a picture of less than total freedom. Life in Judah were not as free and wonderful as it had been under Joshua, or Samuel, or David, or even Josiah. The king of Persia had not granted total freedom. The temple was built, but only at the cost of a quarter century of hassle. The rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall was still to come and would only be completed under Nehemiah with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. There were mixed emotions on the day the temple foundation was relaid in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:11-13), because some remembered its former beauty and wept while others saw the new beginning and rejoiced. The condition was aptly described as "life in our servitude."

Yet there were reasons for rejoicing. Almost anyone in Judah could see that some freedom was a great improvement over none, just as citizens of eastern bloc countries are rejoicing over freedoms which are still scant by comparison to freedoms offered in our Bill of Rights and yet are greatly appreciated when compared to the alternative. Some in Judah, who like Ezra were moved to repentance, realized additionally that any flicker of life and freedom was undeserved and that the captivity in Babylon had been only a particle of the punishment really deserved. But, those truly blessed in Jerusalem came to know with Ezra that

the great reason for rejoicing was gospel motivated, for God had kept his promises. The blessings which Ezra enumerated here were exactly what God had said he would do.

God had said He would spare a remnant and Ezra saw and confessed that such is exactly what God accomplished "in leaving to us a remnant." This is a phrase which employed two of three Hebrew words present in the vast majority of the prophetic announcements about that remnant. "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance (פְּלִיטָה), as the Lord has said, among the remnant (שְׁרִיר) whom the Lord calls" (Joel 2:32). "And the remnant (שְׂאֵר) who have escaped (פְּלִיטָה) of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (2 Kings 19:30; see also Isaiah 37:31-32). "But I will gather the remnant (שְׂאֵרִית) of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase" (Jeremiah 23:3). By whatever name it was known, that remnant was more than just that group of people enumerated in Ezra 2 which returned under Cyrus' decree. It was God's chosen people of the covenant who believed God's promises and whose faith was "credited to them as righteousness." The remnant which God spared was His church and continues to be His church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. In the darkest hour its light shines. People of God find reason to rejoice in this remnant which God saved according to His promise.

God also had said he would give a "tent peg," and Ezra witnessed and confessed that a "firm place (tent peg) in his sanctuary" was exactly what God had given them. A tent peg was a critical

item in Israel and Judah, which didn't always hold down tents. One peg nailed Barak's temple to the floor compliments of Jael (Judges 4:22). Some pegs, driven into a wall, were used to hang up utensils. There were pegs designed especially for assembling the tabernacle and hanging its utensils (Exodus 39:40). A clearly messianic prophecy in Isaiah spoke of the peg in that way. "The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house" (Isaiah 22:23-24). Luther went one step further in explaining the peg of Isaiah 22:

I shall redeem for myself a certain few who will be my tent peg. On them I shall hang the many beautiful vessels and ornaments of my house as we read in Isaiah 22:23-24, that is, many faithful people will cling to those priests and heralds of mine whom I have chosen. These men will see to it that many are converted to the gospel, that my house may have greater splendor, equipment, decoration. In this way Paul is an outstanding peg in Christ's church. From him many great vessels were suspended--Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and others. Peter was another such peg.⁶

Ezra rejoiced in the safeness of the physical temple which had been rebuilt, but particularly in the security found in trusting the promise of the coming Messiah. We too rejoice that we have a secure peg, Christ, on which we can hang our lives, and that His certain word given as "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" lives on even today as a solid place on which to build.

In addition to promising a remnant and a "tent peg," God had promised light for His people and Ezra beheld and confessed that "God gives light to our eyes." Certainly he was thinking of spiritual light generated by the rekindling of the messianic hope, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:6). "Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (Isaiah 60:1). Ezra rejoiced in the spiritual light of God's revelation and would have confessed with Luther, "The Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel and enlightened me with His gifts." So too we confess still today that when we come to see God's love in the person of the Messiah, we see all we need to see and can rejoice as Ezra did.

Finally, God had promised life to a dying and dead people and Ezra saw and rejoiced that God had given them "a little preservation of life," as He had promised in the image of the valley of the dry bones living again (Ezekiel 37), and through Isaiah, saying, "Thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isaiah 57:15). So we still rejoice with Ezra that our spirits have been revived, and that we possess new life in Christ. For once we were "dead in trespasses and sins, but have been made alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).

Ezra rejoiced that God's undeserved favor had been received in these four tangible ways -- a small spared group, a new firm hold in the sanctuary, enlightenment in spiritual darkness, and a reviving for the dead. What good news! Not only had God not given them more of what they deserved, but He had poured out His undeserved blessings on

them. We can see God's favor toward us in similar terms. God will always have his flock of chosen ones in this world, small though it may be. To his chosen He has given a firm "peg," Christ, from which to hang, a place in his kingdom. He enlightens us also with His Word and lets us know things which can only be learned by revelation and known by faith. He gives us rebirth and carries our burdens through life, inviting us to come to him for rest.

Since we sinful human creatures tend not to remember what we should, only what we should not, it is so important to review daily the undeserved mercies of God, lest we either become totally ungrateful or fail to recall the kinds of messes into which our sins have gotten us, and the kinds of messes from which our God has lovingly delivered us.

9:9

כִּי־עַבְדִּים אָנַחְנוּ וּבַעֲבָדְתָנוּ לֹא עֲזָבָנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁעָלֵינוּ
 חֶסֶד לְפָנָיו מִלְכֵי פָרַס לְתַתְּלָנוּ מִחַיָּה לְרוּמָם אֶת־בֵּית
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּלְקַעֲמִיד עַת־חֲרָבְתָיו וּלְתַתְּלָנוּ גֹדֶר בֵּיהוּדָה
 וּבִירוּשָׁלַם:

Translation: *For we are slaves, yet in our slavery our God has not divorced us, but has extended to us his proof of faithful love right in front of the King of Persia by giving us a revival, by raising up the house of our God, by repairing its desolation, and by giving us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.*

This continuing confession about the existing condition of Judah again underscored that the slavery was not technically over. "For we are slaves." But that did not mean that there was little in which to find joy. After all, God had not divorced them, as he well might have done,

since in their earlier years of idolatry they had essentially divorced him and run with their prostitute goddesses. Instead God had remained faithful and demonstrated his רָחֵם .

In the previous verse Ezra had emphasized how God's faithfulness to His promises had been demonstrated in giving them promised spiritual gifts. In this verse Ezra emphasized the openly visible proof of God's faithfulness displayed right in front of the Persian kings. The temple was rebuilt. Its desolation was repaired (its holy furnishings were replaced), for the Persian kings had seen to it that the utensils removed from the temple were returned. And placed around the land was a wall of protection, not a reference to the physical wall around Jerusalem which was not rebuilt until Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, but a political wall, a wall formed of decrees which ordered the surrounding peoples to assist God's people in the process of rebuilding.

What a clear Scriptural example this is of how God can move kings and governments to do His bidding. Not only did Cyrus open the way for God's people to go back and build the temple, he even commanded the citizens around Jerusalem to help the work with their gold and silver (Ezra 1:4). And Darius even commanded that the colonial taxes collected be put toward the building of the house of God (Ezra 6:8).

Never should the people of God be blind to or think lightly of the benefits God sometimes makes available through sympathetic governments. Freedom of religion, unsolicited tax breaks for clergy, laws which allow matching funds, and deductions for donations are just some examples of legitimate ways God has employed secular authority for the good of His work in our land. We must praise God

for these avenues, and see them, while they last, as a display of God's "faithful love" (חֶסֶד).

IV.

We have incredibly and knowingly sinned again
(vv. 10-14)

9:10 וְעַתָּה מִה־נֹאמַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ אַחֲרֵי־זֹאת כִּי עָזַבְנוּ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:

Translation: *And now what shall we say after all this? "We forsook Your commandments."*

There is a very important word which occurs in this verse and the previous one and connects the two -- עִזַּב. The sense of this connection is this: "Lord, you didn't forsake (עָזַבְנוּ) us after everything that happened. But now after everything that has happened, we forsook (עָזַבְנוּ) Your commandments."

This verse expressed the crisis which called for the prayer of repentance. It described the unbelievably spiritually blind and hard nature of the human creatures, even when severe lessons in hardship should have sharpened his spiritual sensitivity and an abundant outpouring of God's love should have made serving God a delight. It becomes clear that there is no amount of selfless love which will automatically bring forth gratitude within the one who receives it. Consequently, there are parents who spend a lifetime loving and sacrificing for their children only to watch their children hate them and despise them in return. Think how much more terrible it is for God to watch His children turn from Him in hatred after He has given them so much (אַחֲרֵי־זֹאת) to correct them and to revive them. We might expect God to say "enough," as He once did and destroyed this world with water.

Was it any wonder that Ezra displayed the grief and anger He did?

9:11,12

אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָ בְּיַד עֲבָדֶיךָ הַנְּבִיאִים לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם בָּאִים לְרִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ נֹדֶה הִיא בְּנֹדַת עַמֵּי הָאָרְצוֹת
בְּתוֹעֲבֹתֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר מִלְּאוֹת מִפֶּה אֱלֹהֵי בְּטֻמְאוֹתָם: וְעַתָּה
בְּנוֹתֵיכֶם אֶל-תִּתְּנֵנוּ לְבָנֵיהֶם וּבְנֹתֵיהֶם אֶל-תִּשְׁאוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם
וְלֹא-תִדְרְשׁוּ שְׁלָמָם וְטוֹבָתָם עַד-עוֹלָם לְמַעַן תִּחְזְקוּ
וְאִכְלֹתֶם אֶת-טוֹב הָאָרֶץ וְהוֹרִשְׁתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶם עַד-עוֹלָם:

Translation: *The command we forsook is the command which you commanded by the hand of your servants the prophets: "The land you are entering to possess is an impure land where the peoples' filth and their abominations and dirtiness fill it from one end to the other. So you must not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons. You must never seek their peace nor their fortune. This is so that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and cause your children to possess it forever.*

The command here referred to is assembled from various parts of the Scripture. The bulk of it is Deuteronomy 7:2,3, "You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son." That the land was defiled is stated in Leviticus 18:24, 25. Deuteronomy 23:6 had said, "You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever." Deuteronomy 4:38 had promised the land as an inheritance. Thus Ezra's summary of these divine injunctions captured the spirit of a very simple desire which God had for his people, namely that they remain pure. To do this the people first had to be aware that the godless inhabitants of Canaan had religious and

moral practices which were absolutely filthy (literally menstrual excretion), because they were not of God.

The fact that this command was summarized from several areas of the Scripture emphasized that no one had the slightest excuse for not knowing it. Nor could anyone conclude that living by God's command was too confining, for it was a command with a promise of happiness and unending well-being.

Since God, of course, knew what His command was, Ezra did not clarify the issue for God's benefit, but for those who stood guilty of a terrible violation of God's law and were in great need of responding in true repentance.

"In the beginning God divided the light from the darkness, and it has been the business of the devil ever since to seek to link the twain together."⁷

9:13 וְאַחֲרַי בְּלִי-חַבָּא עָלֵינוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂינֵנוּ הָרָעִים וּבְאַשְׁמֹתֵנוּ
הַגְּדֹלָה כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חֲשַׁבְתָּ לְמִטָּה נִקְעוֹנֵנוּ וְנִתְתַּתָּה לָנוּ
פְּלִיטָה בְּזֹאת:

Translation: *And after all that has happened to us because of our evil deeds and our great guilt, -- for our God punished us much less than our transgressions deserved and even gave us an escape, such as the one we now enjoy ---...*

Just in case someone had not been hearing too well, Ezra once again stated for the record that God had historically been merciful with Judah. Even though they had gone into exile for their sin, far less was suffered than what their sin deserved. Since "the wages of sin is death,"

nothing except eternal separation from God and his goodness could have squared the account.

Not only had "God refrained to from less than their sins" (הִשְׁכַּח לְמִטָּה מִעֲוֹנוֹנוּ), he had even given them escape. Every child of God must come to appreciate that God spares us doubly from our sins. On the one hand He takes away the wrath deserved and on the other hand gives eternal life.

My translation has reflected the suggestion of Keil-Delitzsch that the thought begun in 13a and interrupted by a parenthetical expression, is concluded with the question in verse 14.

9:14

הַנְּשׁוּבִים לְהִפָּר מִצִּוְוֹתֶיךָ וּלְהִתְחַתֵּן בְּעַמֵּי
הַתְּעִבּוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הֲלוֹא תִּאֲרָף-בְּנוֹ עַד-כִּלְהָ לְאִין שְׂאֵרֹת
וּבְלִיטָה:

Translation: *...shall we go back to breaking your commandments and unite ourselves in marital union with these peoples' abominations? Will you not be so angry with us that you bring us to an end, so that there is no remnant, no escape?*

When should God's mercy run out? How many chances should anyone have to repent and be saved? Answer -- none! We deserve no chance to be saved in the first place. As the celestial potter, God has determined to offer a sacrifice for sin and an undeserved chance to be saved. When that chance to be saved is trampled underfoot, how many more chances is God obliged to offer? Answer -- none! Certainly those who deserved no chance at first, deserve the second chance even less. "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment...." (Hebrew 10:26-27).

There is to be found among the people of God as a fruit of repentance and faith the desire to say no to sin, to amend sinful ways, and to say "yes" to God. Complacency or a sense of favored treatment, or perhaps the notion that God may have changed His expectations, can only be disastrous -- a living dangerously close to falling over the edge and not finding God's mercy the next time.

V.

We can only confess, but confess we must do (v. 15).

9:15 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל צְדִיק אַתָּה בְּיַשְׁאֲרֵנוּ
כְּלִיטָה בְּחַיִּים הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הִנֵּנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאִשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ כִּי אֵין לָעֲמֹד
לְפָנֶיךָ עַל-זֹאת:

Translation: *Lord, God of Israel, you are righteous, for we are still left escaped as it is this day. Behold, we are before you in our guiltiness, for there is no standing before you because of this.*

There were two confessions made in the closing of this prayer, as there have been two confessions all along. The first was a confession of faith which proclaimed, "God, you are true to your promises. You are a keeper of Your Word. Our presence here as people who have been set free is proof positive."

The second confession was a confession of sin which might be summarized like this: "God, we were not true to You and are not true to you. We have only our guilt. We have no right to come before you to stand in your presence or demand anything of you."

Noticeably lacking from the prayer was a request.

"Ezra had not even the heart to plead, as Moses had, that God's name would suffer in such a case. His was naked confession, without excuses, without the pressure of so much as a request."⁸ Yet there was a hidden request, unexpressed, simply that God be just.

CONCLUSION

Ezra experienced what Jeremiah and other pre-exile prophets often did not. The people repented and took action to put away their foreign wives.

We do not know what would have happened if Ezra had not reacted so swiftly and firmly to the sin he observed. We can guess that the cancer would have kept spreading and soon the fresh springtime of a reborn nation would have become permanently smoggy.

From smog to springtime and then from springtime to smog seems to be the course of nations. Preaching repentance and faith during either scenario is not particularly easy and may not always be especially rewarding. But great comfort can be derived from knowing that as nations ebb and flow, and times become tough and then good and then tough again, God's Word remains wonderfully the same and so does God. Ezra's prayer reaffirmed that and counted on it.

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THE PROPHET EZRA

THE KING CYRUS DECREE - 536 B.C.

1. The decree (1:1-4)
Let willing Jews return and rebuild the temple.
2. The effect (1:5-3:13)
 - a. Immediate (1:5-2:70): People and materials arrive
 - b. After 7 months (3:1-6): The altar rebuilt
 - c. After 14 months (3:7-13): The temple foundation laid
3. The events leading to the next decree (4:1-17):
When the Jews refuse Samaritans a part in the rebuilding, the people frustrated the rebuilding and letter sent to Persia.

THE ARTAXERXES DECREE

1. The decree (4:17-22)
Because a search of history reveals Jews to be troublemakers, stop the building at once.
2. The effect (4:23-24) The work stopped
3. The events leading to the next decree (5:1-17)
The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding to resume. Report sent to Darius.

THE DARIUS DECREE

1. The decree (6:1-12)
The Cyrus Decree was relocated. Don't hinder the work. In fact you must support it financially. Any violator will be impaled on his own beam.
2. The effect (6:13-22)
 - a. Immediate: Completion and dedication of the temple
 - b. Later: Celebration of the Passover on its prescribed date

THE ARTAXERXES DECREE

1. The decree (7:11-26)
Authorized the return of Ezra and others to Jerusalem
Authorized all subjects to help furnish the temple
2. The effect (7:1-10; 7:27-8:36)
Ezra and others return. They kept an exact accounting of the gifts for the temple and delivered them.

THE INTERMARRIAGE PROBLEM

1. Told to Ezra (9:1-2)
2. Lamented and prayed about by Ezra (9:3-15)
3. Sin confessed by all the people (10:1-6)
4. Proclamation to assemble in Jerusalem (10:7-8)
5. The assembly agrees to confess the sin and separate from the foreign wives. The procedure was established. (10:9-15)
6. The problem dealt with in orderly fashion (10:16-44)

"THOSE MARTYRS STAND A PRIESTLY BAND
GOD'S THRONE FOREVER NEAR"

"This Doctor...has been so graciously called upon by God to shed his blood, for His dear Son's sake, and to become a holy martyr"
(Dr. Martin Luther)

The twentieth century will be remembered as a period of time when more Christians have died for the Faith than in any other era. In Russia alone it is estimated that fifty million Christians perished during the marxist dictatorships. In prophetic words, Georgi Vins, a pastor and poet penned in 1965:

"No! These Church matters will not die!
No more than Christ's word will die
Than the living word will die
Which brings us salvation."¹

July marks the 450th anniversary of the cruel sufferings and death of three esteemed English Lutherans, Robert Barnes, doctor and confessor; Thomas Garret, curate of All Hallows, Honey Lane and doctor; and William Jerome, vicar of Stepney. On 30 July, 1540, these three confessors, along with three Roman Catholic priests, Thomas Abel, Richard Fetherston, and Edward Powell, bound on hurdles, died by burning at Smithfield by order of King Henry VIII. It might be questioned as to why these courageous martyrs should be singled out for mention when millions of Chinese, Russian, Armenian, German, and African Christians have endured death itself, rather than deny Christ. Even in Australia anti-Christian forces are showing less tolerance of the theology of the cross

than previous records reveal. Why pick out three Englishmen?

To read the Scriptures, especially the Honour Roll recorded in Hebrews 11:1-40, plus the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXI,² is to realize that Lutheran Christians never sit lightly on history. The fathers of Lutheranism in Australia are still remembered with love and affection. Just as the Lutheran Liturgical Calendar bids believers to give honour to the Apostles and Evangelists of old (presently so neglected), so the words of Hebrews 13:7 beckon us: "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follows, considering the outcome of their conduct (NKJV). As the death of Dr. Robert Barnes filled Luther with such joy tinged with grief, we shall seek to understand The Setting, The Scene, and The Sequel to this significant event.

THE SETTING

The setting for the short-lived, yet considerable influence of catholic and evangelical Lutheranism in the sixteenth century is Tudor England. Referring to English Lutherans and the attraction of Lutheranism to those in search of positive belief, Professor A. G. Dickens is convinced that the doctrines of Luther "lacked nothing in freshness and vitality for many of our best Tudor minds."³

While King Henry VIII is popularly remembered for his six wives, as a monarch he possessed a strong will, an incisive mind, a comprehension of theological concerns, a remarkable zest for life and leadership, bordering on megalomania.

Two issues pertinent to this article included his final repudiation of the papacy and papal authority within England. Following the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern and Western Churches, the Popes had been anxious to exert papal power from Rome over the whole of Western Christendom. In 1531 Henry VIII was recognized as Supreme Head of the Church in England. Though the English king remained a "catholic" by conviction, on the 5th of September, 1538, he gave his Royal permission for the Bible to be on display and read in the churches of England, in the English language. The translation was largely the work of William Tyndale, who before his strangulation prayed to God: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes" (1536).

Critics of the Reformation in England have often charged that it was an exchange of the Tiara of Rome for the Crown of a secular king. This amounts to a fabrication of the truth. Within England a strong remnant of Bible-believing Christians had survived within a church which had largely lost the Gospel of Christ. Among these faithful believers there were those who had access to Luther's writings through the German Steelyard. Many tributaries began to wash into a central stream of religious thought and the prayer for a reformation of the catholic church in England. They yearned to hear the Word of God. The Treatise of Patrick Hamilton, the Scottish Lutheran reformer, filtered through to England and into English minds. As in Germany most bishops resisted Luther.

Efforts by Cardinal Wolsey and the bishops to prevent reform, and the scheming of the English king to sway between the Schmalkaldic League of Lutheran princes, yet clinging to ties with

princes and prelates unfavourable to church reform, failed to silence the Lutheran confessors, especially Dr. Robert Barnes. Both Tyndale's Bible and Luther's writings laid a foundation in England for a faith, doctrine, worship, and piety which no fires of persecution from church and state could eradicate. According to Dr. H. Sasse: "The rediscovery of the Scriptural truth concerning the justification of the sinner by grace alone, through faith alone, is nothing less than the rediscovery of the Gospel. For, if this truth is forgotten, the Gospel must be interpreted as a system of morals or as a theory of religious metaphysics."⁴ Gradually, yet surely, scholars and people in Tudor England started to react favourably to this vital truth.

THE SCENE

Through direct contact with Wittenberg and the Anglo-Lutheran conferences, the scene turned from one of pessimism to that of optimism. Both the Wittenberg Articles (1536) and the Thirteen Articles (1538) nourished the Scriptural doctrines of the Augsburg Confession in England. Pre-eminent among the Lutheran confessors in England was Dr. Robert Barnes who had been forced to flee England during the threats of Cardinal Wolsey. For three years he ministered in Germany and studied at Wittenberg, 1528-1531. He was a frequent guest in Luther's home.

On return to England he became a chaplain to Henry VIII and a freelance preacher throughout England from 1537-1539. Barnes grew in renown for his knowledge and proclamation of the Scriptures. Bishop Latimer wrote of his friend that "Surely he is alone in handling a piece of Scripture, and setting forth of Christ he hath no

fellow." Barnes yearned for an English Lutheran reformation. The supplication to Henry VIII proved to be the first comprehensive expression and attestation of the Biblical teachings of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, within the realm of England.

In her absorbing book, "Latimer," Clara H. Stuart describes a scene in Worcester Cathedral where Barnes preached the Word of God's grace in Christ: "The cathedral came into sight, towering majestically above the surrounding buildings. Prior Holbeach welcomed them. The monks were in their places in the choir, hidden by the stone screen that separated choir and nave. The nave was crowded. Barnes held the attention of the crowd from the first word. His voice made the arches and high vaulting ring. The message from the Word of God poured forth with earnestness and seemed to touch every heart. An awe-filled silence hung over the place as the service ended."⁵ Barnes made an impressive figure in his Augustinian habit. Quick witted, he was heartened to have the opportunity of proclaiming the message of the Cross. Numbered among his friends were Bishop Latimer, Miles Coverdale (who was his student in Cambridge), Rev. William Jerome, and Dr. Thomas Garret whose "illegal" activities included selling Tyndale's New Testament and some of Luther's writings. Whilst at Oxford he formed a Lutheran "cell" among the students. Garret served as chaplain to Bishop Hugh Latimer.

Though such men of God were hopeful that negotiations between the Wittenberg reformers and English scholars during the reign of Henry VIII would mould a oneness of faith and confession, their hopes remained unrealized. The execution of Queen Anne Boleyn on the morning of May 19, 1536, had ecclesiastical as well as political repercussions.

Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester hardened in his attitude towards Barnes and his colleagues. A significant section of the English population was becoming infected with the teachings of Luther. A. G. Dickens named Thomas Garret and Robert Barnes as "those pillars of English Lutheranism."⁶ A crisis was inevitable in church and state. Thus, a decision was reached by the king to rid himself of Barnes and England of an evangelical catholic strand of confessional Lutheranism. According to James R. Lowell:

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood,
for the good or evil side."

In May 1540, acting on a specific report of a special council, Henry had the three Lutheran leaders arrested and sent to the Tower of London.

THE SEQUEL

The sequel to the incarceration was far-reaching. On July 30, 1540, Robert Barnes, Thomas Garret, and William Jerome suffered and died by fire at Smithfield. Before his death Barnes bravely testified to evangelical Christianity as confessed in the Apostles' Creed. As death approached he is reported to have said to one of his friends: "Cheer up brother, today we shall be in glory."⁷

Henry's reason for this grave act of murder and contempt for the Word of God was largely political.

The martyrdom of these three leaders of the Anglo-Lutheran Reformation left a void in the leadership of those who favoured the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1555 the untimely killing of

the Rev. John Rogers, another Anglo-Lutheran, during the reign of Mary I numbed Lutheran initiatives, until the erection of Trinity Lutheran Church during the reign of Charles II.

When Elizabeth I was crowned Queen of England at Westminster in 1559, the religious life of England had become a strange admixture of Catholicism, Calvinism, Zwinglianism, and the rising force of Puritanism. Elizabeth aimed at a policy of diversity within uniformity, which became a mark of Anglicanism. The Act of Supremacy in 1559 empowered the Sovereign to be the Governor of the Church of England, while the Act of Uniformity by Parliament imposed the use of a new Prayer Book upon a largely Protestant population subject to the Crown.

The three confessors could not have visualized the emergence of a congregation in 1672 in the heart of London, or imagined the growth of the Lutheran Church in England during the reign of Queen Victoria. In some respects the Tractarian movement within the Church of England sought a return to the historic faith, especially in the person of Dr. Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), who cherished the inspired Scriptures and the Real Presence in the doctrine of the altar. He became regius professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford. The small Evangelical Lutheran Church of England attracts people today from varying national backgrounds, holding fast to the Confessions. The Conference of that church is called "The Barnes Conference."

If faithful Bible-centred Lutherans in Australia could learn more of this heritage of faith in common with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, they would cease to encourage an image of being some import from the Continent of Europe

in the Australian mind and perception. It remains the firm conviction of this writer that the evangelical catholicity of Dr. Martin Luther must serve to fortify Lutherans facing the present militant secularism. May the faith, courage, writings, and tenacity of those who died on July 30, 1540, be given due recognition within Biblical and Confessional Lutheran churches!

-- Bruce Wilmot Adams
Pastor Emeritus

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THE CURRENT CRISIS IN AMERICAN LUTHERANISM: CAN WE REMAIN LUTHERAN?

Gotthilf Doehler, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany, delivered a paper to a pastoral conference in 1973 in which he defended the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell over against the liberal intrusion that "he went to the realm of the dead." In his introduction he had this to say about Biblical authority: "The Holy Scriptures have been abandoned as God's errorless Word in the territorial churches" and that "false teachers have more and more been placed in positions of authority on the faculties of theology and church administration." In defense of the Biblical doctrine of Christ's descent into hell he went on to say, "Holy Scripture itself for some time has been in the process of being dismantled piece by piece" the result being that "we are confronted with a decisive dissolution of church dogma."

What Doehler said in 1973 characterizes the situation in much of American Lutheranism today. Over the years there has been a steady erosion of Biblical authority with the result that Biblical doctrines are questioned and/or denied. Is the Bible God's verbally inspired and inerrant Word, as Scripture itself teaches, or does it merely contain the Word of God and that it is up to the trained theologian to determine what is God's Word and what is not?

A common view of American Lutheranism today is that the Bible is inspired as God's authoritative message in spiritual matters, but that in historical and scientific matters we must recognize the

human fallible element and therefore deal with the possibility of errors. The controversy, then, over Biblical authority centers around a split between inspiration and inerrancy. That word "inerrancy" has been bandied about in our day, the idea being that inerrancy is not to be applied to the text of Scripture but rather to the truth which it seeks to convey. The new Lutheran church chose not to use the word inerrancy in its constitution. Its Task Force on Theology explained why:

"the words inerrant and infallible can be understood in ways that lead to interpretations of the Scriptures that are contrary to what the Scriptures are...they may lead people to think that if there is one proven error in the Bible, however minor, its whole teaching is subject to doubt. Therefore, we recommend that the words inerrant and infallible not be included."

This is quite a departure from the Minneapolis Theses of 1925 which has a strong statement on Scripture. It says, "The synods signatory to these Articles of Agreement accept without exception all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole, and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life." (Document of Lutheran Unity in America, R. C. Wolf, p. 146)

A religious news writer for the Minneapolis Star and Tribune commenting on the debate that took place over Scriptural inerrancy wrote: "The proposed 'confession of faith' for the new church was hammered out earlier and revised in accord with suggestions from the grass roots. Some conservative evangelicals had sought to have the

Scriptures described as inerrant (without error), but lost out."

We quoted what Gotthilf Doehler said about dismantling the Bible piece by piece, the result being that "we are here confronted with a decisive dissolution of church dogma." We are witnessing this in American Lutheranism. In most Lutheran seminaries a textbook on Christian Doctrine by Braaten and Jenson is used which does just this. We submit some samplings:

On Scripture: Today it is impossible to assume the literal historicity of all things recorded. What the biblical authors report is not accepted as a literal transcript of the factual course of events. Therefore, critical scholars inquire behind the text and attempt to reconstruct the real history that took place. (Vol. I, pp. 76-77)

On Genesis: It is now almost universally held among theologians that the stories and concepts we have of Adam and Eve in paradise are legends and myths. The idea of humans living in a blessed primeval stage before the fall is looked on as poetical speculation, not history. It is sometimes argued that faithfulness requires our belief in a primeval condition of blessedness. Such an argument confuses faithfulness with the imposition of a mythical speculation on a modern historical outlook on human life. To hold to the primeval condition in Eden as a matter of history would be an intellectual impossibility and to misunderstand faith. (Vol. 1, p. 238)

On Incarnation: The history and phenomenology of religions have called our attention to the mythic character of the incarnation. The

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

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

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

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

It is possible to hold to the virgin birth as a biological fact and miss its point. It is also possible to make the same point without reference to the virgin birth, as the writings of Paul and John prove by not mentioning it. It is important, then, not to let the story get bogged down in biology, but to read it as

a symbol witnessing to the truth of the kerygma.... (pp. 546-47)

On Christ's Death: Jesus himself, though he might have and quite possibly did reckon with a violent death at the hands of his adversaries, seems not to have understood or interpreted his own death as a sacrifice for others or ransom for sin. (II, p. 12)

On the Trinity: The trinity is simply the Father and the man Jesus and their Spirit as the Spirit of the believing community. (p. 155)

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

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

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

In order to understand this radical departure from historic Lutheranism we need to understand that lurking behind this departure is the use of the Historical Critical Method of Interpretation. This method approaches the Bible with the pre-supposition that it is like any other book, that its writers are fallible, that there are errors in it, and that it is up to the trained theologian to determine what is truth and what is error. For example, practitioners of this method regard the Gospels as stories that circulated in the early New Testament community which may or may not be factual, and that it is up to the trained scholar to decide. That kind of interpretation undermines Biblical authority making it difficult to determine between true and false doctrine. It is really an assault on the source of doctrine. Instead of clearly stating "this we believe, teach, and confess" adherents of this view go their own way doctrinally, and consequently anything goes. The end result is that we have no final determinate of truth.

INFORMED INFLUENCE

Included in the current crisis in American Lutheranism is, in my opinion, Reformed influence on Lutheran theology. Lutheran theology is rooted

and grounded in the doctrine of the means of grace, namely that the benefits of Christ's redemptive work are brought to us through the Word and Sacraments and are made our own. A two-fold power resides in the means of grace, namely the vis dativa and the vis operative, the former a giving or conferring power and the latter an operative power actually working the faith to accept what God offers.

Reformed theology does not really have a doctrine of the means of grace. It looks upon the gospel as an offer of grace rather than an application of grace and that it (the Gospel) has no power of itself but the power is in one's decision or commitment he makes. This is a gross commingling of justification and sanctification. Commitment is not a part of the essence of faith itself; it is rather a result or fruit of faith which belongs in the sphere of sanctification.

Reformed books are flooding the book markets and Lutheran people are buying them and in many cases swallowing Reformed doctrine hook, line, and sinker. As a result there are many Lutheran sheep dressed in Reformed theology. Lutherans have been napping while the Reformed have been reaping and exerting a strong influence.

A new book Sanctification: Christ in Action by Harold Senkbeil is now on the Lutheran market, which clearly shows how the theology of today's Evangelicals and Evangelical Lutheran theology differ in their approach to theology. It explains how the two theologies answer the question: "Where in the world is God?" Reformed theology answers that He is to be found in the subjective feelings of the heart whereas Lutheran theology answers that He is to be found in the means of grace. The author convincingly shows the inseparable

connection between justification and sanctification, pointing out that the Christian life is the fruit of faith based on the objective truth of the gospel. This is a book that will benefit clergy and laity alike. It is high time that Lutherans be alerted to the pitfalls of Reformed theology.

CAN WE REMAIN LUTHERAN?

Only if "we pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged." (SD, Rule and Norm, Tappert, p. 503) That's the subscription our Lutheran fathers made to the Bible and we their descendants should do no less.

The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (adopted in 1932) reflects the spirit of our fathers in these words.

We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21)....Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical and other secular matters, John 10:35. We furthermore teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be

taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged.

And along with our commitment to the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, there must be a quia subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. We accept the confessions because they are a clear interpretation of the Scriptures. A quatenus subscription will not do.

Church Fellowship

We can remain Lutheran if we accompany our subscription to the Bible and Confessions with a firm position on Church fellowship, that is, insist on doctrinal unity and practice fellowship on the basis of full agreement in doctrine and practice. A strong position on Scripture and church fellowship go hand in hand; they are interlocking. A firm subscription to Scripture without a firm position on church fellowship can lead to a demise of the Sola Scriptura principle. We need to clearly distinguish between true and false doctrine and maintain doctrinal discipline when necessary. No church can remain confessional if it does not make this distinction and admonish errorists and remove them if they persist in their error. God means what he says in passages such as Romans 16:7 and Titus 3:10 and Matthew 7:15. As we confess the truth we must also expose error.

Our Lutheran fathers have left us an example in the way they dealt with controversies of their day. They did not vacillate or waffle when it came to exposing false doctrine. We read in SD, Rule and Norm: "These controversies are not, as some may think, mere misunderstandings or contentions about words, with one part talking past

the other, so that the strife reflects a mere semantic problem of little or no consequence. On the contrary, these controversies deal with weighty and important matters, and they are of such a nature that the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended." (SD, Rule and Norm, Tappert p. 503)

Over against the Sacramentarians and Schwärmer of his day who denied the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament Luther said, "Whoever, I say, will not believe this, will please let me alone and expect no fellowship from me. This is final." (Tappert p. 575) You recall what Luther also says about those who demonstrate that whoever regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true and certain cannot remain in the same stall with those who teach or adhere to false doctrine. In his lectures in Galatians in 1535, Luther had this to say on his commentary on Gal. 5:9 ("a little heaven leaveneth the whole lump") in his response to the sectarians:

In philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching. Therefore, doctrine and life should be distinguished as sharply as possible. Doctrine belongs to God, not to us; and we are called only as its ministers. Therefore we cannot give up or change one dot of it (Matt. 5:18)On this score we cannot yield even a hairbreadth. For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided; that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition. On the other hand, life is like a physical point. Therefore it can always be divided and can always yield something.... Therefore doctrine must be one eternal and

round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect....

Hence this passage must also be considered carefully in opposition to the argument by which they accuse us of offending against love and thus doing great harm to the churches. We are surely prepared to observe peace and love with all men, provided that they leave the doctrine of faith perfect and sound for us. If we cannot obtain this, it is useless for them to demand love from us. A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield--love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc.! Therefore when they minimize this issue in such a dishonest way, they give ample evidence of how highly they regard the majesty of the Word. If they believed it is the Word of God, they would not play around with it this way (LW 27, 36f).

And the Brief Statement also reflects the spirit of the fathers in this regard when it says, "Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian church, I Pet. 4:11; John 8:31,32; I Tim. 6:3,4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church fellowship only with orthodox church bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9,10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.

On the 300th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, Claus Harms, who revived confessional Lutheranism in his day, decided to reissue Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and also write ninety-five of his own. Citation of several of the theses will give us an idea of their content and also of their considerable effect on the country, and I believe are relevant to the current crisis in American Lutheranism.

Thesis 1: When our Master and Lord Jesus Christ says, "Repent," he wills that men shall be conformed to his doctrine, but he does not conform to the doctrine of men, as is now done, in accordance with the altered spirit of the times. (II Tim. 4:3)

Thesis 27: According to the old faith, God created man; according to the new faith, man creates God, and when he has finished with him he says, Aha!

Thesis 32: The so-called religion of reason is without reason, or without religion, or without both.

Thesis 43: When reason touches religion it casts the pearls aside, and plays with the empty shells, the empty words.

Thesis 78: If at the Colloquy of Marburg, 1529, the body and blood of Christ was in the bread and wine, it is still so in 1817.

The March issue of Affirm has a stimulating article on TAKE HEED TO THE DOCTRINE in which the author points out what indifference to doctrine can do. He writes,

If we are ignorant of or indifferent to true

doctrine, if we just don't really care to spend any energy refuting the false doctrine, we deserve what we get as a result. Here are some examples: A Jane Schaberg can write, in a "feminist" interpretation of Christ's birth, "The illegitimacy of Jesus makes more precise the claim that Mary represents the oppressed who have been liberated...The illegitimate conception turns out to be grace, not disgrace..." The "Jesus Seminar," a body of so-called "scholars," has now determined that the Lord's Prayer isn't the Lord's but just a construction of the early church. Jesus never really said those words! "So what," you say, "those things have nothing to do with me. I'm a Lutheran." Well, my friend, since you need more examples: a Lutheran pastor in Milwaukee asked his congregation for permission to perform homosexual wedding ceremonies.

How we need to heed the words of the apostle: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (I Tim. 4:16)

LAW AND GOSPEL

Finally, we can remain Lutheran if we continue to emphasize the importance of properly dividing law and gospel in our preaching and teaching. Dr. Walther observed that "the birth of the Reformer dates from the moment when Luther understood this distinction." No one since the time of the apostle Paul better understood the difference between law and gospel than Luther.

The risen Savior gave the command "that repentance

and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." (Luke 24:26) And 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," (2 Tim. 2:15) Our confessions sum up the importance of Law and gospel preaching in these words, "We believe and confess that these two doctrines must be urged constantly in the church of God until the end of the world, but with due distinction." (SD Art. V, Tappert p. 562) If the proper distinction between these two doctrines is not maintained, the results are disastrous for the Christian; the Gospel is made into a new law, the merits of Christ are obscured, and troubled consciences are robbed of the comfort of the Gospel promises.

Real law and gospel preaching is becoming more of a rarity in our day. Instead of law preaching we hear much moralizing and tirading against the evils of the day, which only fuels the opinio legis in a person and make hypocrites out of people. The law is spiritual and it must be preached in such a way that "every mouth is stopped and all the world becomes guilty before God" as Paul says. Dr. Koren, a theologian of the old Norwegian Synod, emphasized the importance of law preaching in these words: "If we preached only concerning the forgiveness of sin 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 not justification by faith." And Luther says somewhere that if you were to go up to a heathen and tell him that his sins were forgiven, without first showing him his need, he would stare at you like a cow stares at a new born door; he wouldn't know what you were talking about.

However, law preaching, important as it is, is as our confessions say "a foreign work" and its purpose is to lead to Christ's "proper work" which is the preaching of the good news of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ. The hymn says it well,

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.

(Hymnal 65, v. 1)

The gospel is the only solution to man's problem of sin and therefore we cannot emphasize enough the importance of preaching the gospel, the good news of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ. I shall never forget what my homiletics professor emphasized: "No one must ever leave your service without the ringing assurance that he/she has a Savior from sin." While the law must be preached in all of its sharpness and severity, the gospel must always predominate. Walther said is well: "So preach the law that it drives the greatest saint to despair; so preach the gospel that it gives the greatest sinner hope." True law and gospel preaching must always be a priority for a Lutheran pastor.

In conclusion, we can remain Lutheran only if we firmly adhere to the Bible as God's verbally inspired and inerrant word, our only source of doctrine, and the foundation of our faith. Along with that subscription we must also have a firm position on church fellowship, not only in word but also in practice, and that we emphasize the importance of properly distinguishing between the law and the gospel. Then God will be glorified and His people edified!

-- Wilhelm W. Petersen

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
FROM 1918 - 1927

It was June 8, 1917, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the end of the old Norwegian Synod was at hand. A majority of the church body had voted to merge with the old United Church and had thus sold their spiritual heritage for the establishment of one large Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. A minority group was opposed to the merger but was not willing to suffer the loss of the old, familiar surroundings. They went along with the merger intent upon proclaiming the unconditioned gospel in a compromised situation. A third little remnant gathered in the Aberdeen Hotel in St. Paul. This group was utterly insignificant in numbers but was determined to hold fast to their precious heritage of salvation by grace alone.

The members of the Norwegian Synod were preparing for their grand march down the street to be united with the other church body. The ceremonies that took place on June 9-10, 1917, have been called "the greatest church demonstration ever held by Norwegians anywhere in the world." During all of these preparations the little group issued the following declaration:

1. We cannot for conscience sake join the new church body on the present basis.
2. We continue to stand on the old confession and organization, which we as Christians have the liberty to defend and under which we may work from now on as heretofore.
(Grace for Grace, p. 116)

The Rev. John A. Moldstad described in the Lutheran

Sentinel 25 years later what that little group was doing on the weekend that the merger took place.

On Sunday afternoon, while the great union jubilee was being held in the St. Paul Auditorium, we gathered with the Fairview Congregation in a small building in Minneapolis for services. The pastor, the Rev. Christian Anderson, conducted the service, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. J. A. Moldstad. It was the First Sunday after Trinity (June 10, 1917), and the gospel text for the day was Luke 19-31.

We were free, we were unafraid, and we were happy. We felt that the Lord was with us and that His grace was abundant.

Our meeting was continued Monday forenoon and afternoon. Both doctrinal and practical questions were discussed. It was a small beginning and without temporal means, but God's blessings have been showered upon us. One with God is always a majority.

May we remain faithful stewards to the end of time!

God help us for Jesus' sake! (Lutheran Sentinel, April 27, 1943.)

The little group elected officers and arranged for the publication of a church paper. Pastor Bjug Harstad, Parkland, Washington, was elected president; Pastor John A. Moldstad, Chicago, vice president; Pastor C. N. Petersen, Minneapolis, secretary; Pastor O. T. Lee, Northwood, Iowa, treasurer. The church paper was to be called the Luthersk Tidende. The first issue appeared on July 16, 1917. In addition to setting forth the reasons for not going into the merger, the paper also made the following announcement:

To the readers: This, then, is Luthersk Tidende, as it was stipulated by the meeting of the minority in St. Paul, Minnesota, June 9, 1917. If a sufficient number of subscribers is obtained the paper will be published twice a month with eight or sixteen pages in each issue. In case of failure to get the necessary support, the paper will be published as a pamphlet whenever sufficient funds are on hand. The price of subscription will, in any event, be one dollar a year.

The paper made the modest announcement on April 1, 1918:

Pastors and member congregations who desire to continue in the old doctrine and practice of the Norwegian Synod will, God willing, hold their annual meeting in the Lime Creek Congregation, Pastor Henry Ingebritson's charge, June 14 and following days. (I, 18, p. 144)¹

If we look at the "Beretning" or the report of that first convention held in 1918, we read the following information:

The synod meeting was held in Lime Creek Church, Pastor H. Ingebritson's call, from the 14th to the 19th of June, 1918, beginning with an opening sermon by President B. Harstad.

Because of a newly proclaimed ordinance, that only the English language should be used at public meetings in Iowa, all of these sermons and doctrinal discussions were held in a large tent set up in Minnesota, one mile from the church.

Rev. Harstad chose as his text for the opening

sermon Genesis 12:1-4, where the Lord gives his blessing and promise to Abraham. He began with the following words:

Under exceedingly strange circumstances we greet one another here today having always before gathered under a well-defined and well-understood apostolically free church organization; we today meet as scattered sheep without any formal system of government.

We have, dear friends, gathered here by the liberty which we enjoy in Christ Jesus. We are, as it were, clustering around the old building site which is storm swept and waste. A destructive hurricane has swept away the dear old mansion, even taking with it most of them that dwelt there. Discouraged, looking around, we discover only the bare ground with wreckage and dangerous crossroads. Yet let us not be too much alarmed nor discouraged. Worse things have repeatedly happened to the church before this, without its being destroyed. Let us remember and follow these words of Jeremiah the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16)²

The convention was attended by eleven pastors of the Norwegian Synod plus 185 lay people, men and women. Four pastors from the Missouri Synod also attended the first convention.

The convention set forth the following resolutions:

1. We, members present, of the synod for the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, ministers, delegates of congregations

and members of congregations join together for the purpose of continuing the work of the synod on the old basis and according to the old principles.

We therefore move for adoption by the congregations:

2. The name of this organization shall be the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.
3. The only source and rule for faith and doctrine is the Word of God as revealed in the Canonical Books of the Old and New Concord.
4. The Norwegian Synod adopts as its confession all the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord.
5. We elect a committee of three to propose the necessary changes in the old constitution of the synod. The committee report shall be published as soon as possible, in order that congregations so wishing can consider and adopt it. Committee report to be presented for final adoption at the next meeting of the synod.³

The convention reelected the officers chosen the year before in St. Paul with the exception that Pastor A. J. Torgeson was elected treasurer, since the Rev. O. T. Lee had died in the spring of 1918. The name of the church paper was lengthened to Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende.

Two essays were delivered. Pastor L. P. Jensen delivered one on "The Spiritual State of Man Before Quickening or Regeneration," and Pastor B. Harstad the other on "The Teaching of Scripture Concerning the Unity of the Spirit and the Warning Against Unionism.

Thus the Evangelical Lutheran Synod came into being in June 1918. It was nothing spectacular but a start had been made, and that, for the moment, was the important thing. In the years to come other pastors and congregations would play a more active role in the work of the ELS. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven" (Ecc. 3:1) and this little group gathered at Lime Creek, near Lake Mills, Iowa, in 1918, met the needs of that particular hour. All due honor for it! If these few pastors and people had not held fast in 1917, and had not moved firmly in 1918 to organize anew, humanly speaking there likely would not have been a reorganized Norwegian Synod to which others could come at a later date.⁴

The convention decided to publish an annual report and a "Folkekalender," or a "People's Calendar." The Publication's Committee was to look for an English Hymnal. It was reported that three pastors had died during 1917-1918. A Missouri Synod pastor by the name of Rev. H. Steger of Fairbanks, Iowa, was present and preached one of the convention sermons on the Parable of the Mustard Seed, (Matt. 13:31-32). He pointed out how from the little mustard seed there grows a tree with many branches. So it is in the kingdom of heaven that from small beginnings there can be great results.

It is interesting to note that the convention addressed a message to the President of the United States assuring him of their hearty support and prayerful supplication to Almighty God that the President might have the courage and wisdom to prosecute the war to a successful end and a righteous peace.

THE SECOND ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD
OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The 1919 convention of the Norwegian Synod was held at Our Savior's Congregation in Albert Lea, Minnesota, Emil Hanson, pastor. It met from the 29th of May until the 4th of June. This convention was attended by ten pastors with voting rights and twenty-seven laymen with the right to vote. The opening sermon was preached by Pastor G. A. Gullixson on the basis of Exodus 14:15. The theme of his sermon was "Go Forward." He spoke of the Children of Israel standing at the Red Sea. Everything seemed to be against them. In front of them was the sea, mountains on either side, and Pharaoh with his mighty host behind them. In the midst of these difficulties when everything seemed hopeless, the Lord spoke to Moses and said to the Children of Israel, "Go forward." Thus also Gullixson's message to the synod was the same as that given to Moses. "Go Forward! Forward in faith. Forward in love. Forward in God's grace and providence." He brought the sermon to a close with a stirring exhortation, "Therefore shall our decisions at this meeting be that we give our heavenly Saviour the strong answer: With you will we go forward; with you and in the power of your grace will we work in faith and love. For you will we offer our whole lives. Upon the power of your grace and the leading of your Holy Spirit will we stand. Amen."⁵

President Bjug Harstad also set forth the goals of the synod in his president's message.

What is our chief task? Not to gather great numbers or build a large synod but that we each one for himself in his own circle or call and circumstances is eagerly zealous for the one thing needful, to advance God's glory and our own salvation and the salvation of

others by using, appropriating and obeying God's Word, that we may get eyes to see the wisdom and power from on high to fight the good fight of faith against all sin. This does not only apply to pastors and professors but to every Christian man or woman, young and old. We have all been called and in baptism made pastors, prophets, and kings before God. As such we must all with zeal faithfully use God's Word and prayer in our homes and congregations in accordance with the instructions of the Word and in that way advance in faith, hope and love to God and man. To which also belongs that we use the the brotherly reminder of correction of sins in accordance with God's Word. (Matt. 18: 15-18) This same brotherly reminder, we pastors, where we can, exercise toward each other without respect of persons.⁶

Also in his message he gives an excellent plea for the use of Christian schools for the children.

A fine greeting was sent to the synod from Dr. Theodore Graebner of the Missouri Synod. The opening devotion on May 10 was conducted by Rev. J. Hendricks. This was followed by short patriotic speeches by J. H. Boye, Rev. H. A. Preus, E. B. Ellingson, and Pastor G. A. Gullixson. The convention then recessed in order to give the members an opportunity to celebrate the day. The session closed with the singing of "America."

Other actions taken by the convention included the appointment of a Christian Day School Committee. A fund was also established for the purpose of helping congregations establish Christian Day Schools. It was to be administered by the School Committee. The synod also established a Norwegian Professorship at the Missouri Synod's college in

St. Paul, Minnesota. Here the young men of the synod who wanted to prepare for the ministry would be directed for study and others who wanted a higher education.

Another important action of the convention was the establishment of a Church Extension Fund. This fund was to be under the direction of a committee of three members. It was also directed to collect money and "Liberty Bonds" for the fund. The synod also decided to apply for membership in the Synodical Conference and to choose a representative to the next meeting.

An important resolution of this convention was the establishment of Home and Foreign Mission Committees. This demonstrated from the very beginning that the synod was interested in doing the work of spreading the gospel. Elected to the Home Mission Committee were Pastors H. Ingebritson and Christian Anderson and layman Ole Tvetden. Pastor George O. Lillegard and Pastor L. S. Guttebo as well as Mr. G. H. Kiland were elected to the Foreign Mission Committee. Elected to the School Committee for Christian Day Schools were Pastor Bjug Harstad, Pastor H. Ingebritson, and Mr. E. B. Ellingson. To the Church Extension Committee were elected Pastor J. A. Moldstad, Pastor Holden M. Olsen, and Mr. Nick Nielson.

The new constitution was presented for adoption.

An essay on "The Scriptural Principle" was given by Pastor M. A. Bleken.

On Synod Sunday, June 1, the sermon was preached by the Rev. Paul Brammer, a Missouri Synod pastor from St. Ansgar, Iowa. He preached on the subject of "The God-Pleasing Unity of Christians" based upon Eph. 4:3-6. A choral union concert was held also

on that Sunday and an address was given by the Rev. Holden M. Olsen. He closed his address with these words: "By the enemies of Luther and his followers it was said: 'They sing as well as preach their errors into the hearts.' Let it be said by friends and foes alike, to the everlasting glory of our church, that we Lutherans still sing and by the grace of God always will sing as well as preach the saving truths of God's word into the hearts of men!"⁷

THE THIRD ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church held its third annual convention in Fairview Lutheran Church, the Rev. Christian Anderson's charge, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 4-10, 1920.

Rev. M. K. Bleken preached the opening sermon on the text Matt. 11:28-30.⁸ At this convention six congregations were received into membership. There were twenty pastors present with voting rights, also thirty-eight laymen. In his report to the convention Pres. Bjug Harstad gave strong warning about being filled with the desire to have all of the outward benefits and recognition that the large church body had. We quote from his president's report:

Because of the circumstances under which we labor, we miss so many today with whom we were wont to assemble in former years. This fact oppresses our hearts and fills us with sadness and regret; for we are certainly made to feel the lack of all those things, which today are considered so necessary for the successful accomplishment of any great task. We are only a handful, lacking in prestige and in

the advantages of being honored by many. We have no property, nor do we receive any consideration from the world. On the contrary, we are continually made to feel that the hands of all are turned against us, and that our hands are turned against them. Before we are aware of it, thoughts and questions steal upon us, of how we may become stronger in numbers and in the estimation of men, and how we may avoid all controversies.

My dear friends, this is a serious matter. Is it the flesh or is it the spirit that fosters such ideas? Every one needs to make up his mind clearly on this question. If we are negligent in this respect, we may easily be caught in secret snares. When we must admit that we are by nature just as vain and sensitive as other human beings, that we enjoy to live at ease, and that we value as highly as others the company of good friends, influence and a good reputation among men, then it is to be feared that it is the old Adam who suggests such thoughts as these, in order to draw our hearts from the Lord. Right here we must be on our guard, watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. This applies not only to us as pastors, but to all fellow believers as well. Even more than Moses, do we require the assistance of our brethren to stand by our side and support our arms. Exod. 17:12.⁹

Pres. Harstad also warned against going to court in case of loss of property. He wrote:

If churches are closed against us and distribution of property by arbitration is denied us, let us rather lose all than file a complaint in court. Let it go. Or shall we, besides losing our part of the property, spend precious

time and money on a court case, that very likely will only bring new disappointment?

He concluded his report with this exhortation:

Now this is a hard thing, to remain steadfast still and confess that God is gracious and a savior against the world, against falsehood and fraud. Very well! Let it be as hard and painful as it will, the trust must be confessed, if we would fare well. May God grant us His grace.

A doctrinal paper was presented on the subject of "Differences and Correspondence Between the Law and the Gospel." Also included in the presentation was a warning against the unionism of the National Lutheran Council.

The standing committees gave their reports. Amongst some of their reports is included the following information:

The Committee on Parochial Schools. "The synod is much pleased to learn that Our Saviour's Church at Albert Lea, Minnesota, has resolved to establish a parochial school, and it encourages other congregations to do likewise.

Committee for Higher Institutions of Learning. The committee reported that it had met with the Board of Electors for Concordia College, St. Paul, and as a result of the meeting a professorship was established with the understanding that the Norwegian Synod appoints this professor, and that he be a member of the faculty, and that he be paid the same salary as the other professors. The Norwegian students were granted the same privileges as students of the Missouri Synod.

Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker was called by our synod to this position and he accepted the call. This arrangement has been a marked success. The work has been carried on in harmony.... Through the school year, eleven of our boys attended the college.

Report of the Committee on Publications. This committee reported that it took the necessary steps to establish the book company, "The Lutheran Synod Book Company," Minneapolis.

This committee also reported that the number of subscribers to "Luthersk Tidende and Sentinel" has been increased by about 560.

The Committee on Finances expressed Gratitude to God for granting willing hearts to the people to support the works of the synod. The treasurer's report showed that donations for the year totaled \$4,605.96.

The synod acted upon many recommendations of the boards. Under the subject of missions the synod expressed its thanks to God for the blessed work done on the home mission field; it approved an increase of missionary salary to \$1200 a year; it elected a Sub-Committee on Home Missions for the west coast and it approved the suggestion made by the Committee on Foreign Missions to cooperate with the Missouri Synod on the foreign mission field. It also approved of the committee's advice to elect a member on the Board of Foreign Missions of the Missouri Synod.

The synod approved the establishment of a Church Extension Fund for the purpose of assisting needy congregations of the synod to erect church buildings, or to procure other church property.

The synod resolved to establish a fund for the parochial school and this was based upon a donation of \$1000 given by Mrs. T. Larson of Parkland, Washington.

Miscellaneous matters. The synod urged its members to beware of the worldly mindedness and liberalism which meets us everywhere and it warns every member against partaking in such movements as "The National Lutheran Council," or the "Inter-church World Movement," and the like. It also requests its members to assist in the work of the needy in Europe through the "American Lutheran Board of World Relief."

The Articles of Incorporation of the Norwegian Synod were unanimously adopted by the convention on the tenth day of June, 1920. The Articles of Incorporation are contained in the Synod Report.

The officers of the synod are at this time: President B. Harstad; Vice President, J. A. Moldstad; Secretary, L. P. Jensen; Treasurer, A. J. Torgerson. The pastors of the synod are as follows: H. Aaenstad, Box 152, Garretson, S. Dak.; Chr. Anderson, 916 31st Ave. N., Minneapolis, Minn.; M. K. Bleken, Lawler, Iowa; J. Blakkan, Cour d'Alene, Idaho; O. M. Gullerud, Route 1, Princeton, Minn.; Lauritz Guttebo, Deerfield, Wis.; G. A. Gullixson, 2219 North Ave., Chicago, Ill.; Emil Hanson, Scarville, Iowa; B. Harstad, Parkland, Wash.; John Hendricks, 1101 4th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.; H. Ingebritson, Route 1, Lake Mills, Iowa; L. P. Jensen, 502 N. 5th Street, Mankato, Minn.; J. Johansen, 204 Jay Street, Fresno, Calif.; Geo. O. Lillegard, Chicago, Ill.; C. A. Moldstad, 66 Orchard Street, Jamaica Place, Mass.; J. A. Moldstad, 1535 North Keeler Ave., Chicago, Ill.; G. Emil Moller, Kelliher, Minn.; G. P. Nesseth, Clearbrook, Minn.; Holden M. Olsen, 114 S. Butler Street, Madison, Wis.;

O. L. Overn, 1222 S. Anthony Ave., St. Paul, Minn.;
C. N. Peterson, 2648 Emerson Ave. N., Minneapolis,
Minn.; H. A. Preus, 5916 Rice Street, Chicago, Ill.;
Stephen Sande, Story City, Iowa; J. J. Strand,
Route 3, St. Peter, Minn.; J. E. Thoen, Oklee,
Minn.; J. A. Thorsen, 315 West 15th Street, Minne-
apolis, Minn.; A. J. Torgerson, Northwood, Iowa;
P. A. Widvey, Wheeler, Wis.; M. Fr. Wiese, Cambridge,
Wis.; and S. C. Ylvisaker, 1317 Dayton Ave., St.
Paul, Minn.¹⁰

THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD OF THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The fourth annual convention of the Norwegian Synod was held at Western Koshkonong, Wisconsin, from the 4-10 of August in the year 1921. The pastor of the congregation was L. S. Guttebo. The Rev. M. F. Wiese preached the opening service and Rev. Emil Hanson conducted the liturgy.

Essays at the convention were given as follows: "On the Doctrine of the Church," by Rev. Christian Anderson; an essay on "Christian Day Schools," by Rev. A. J. Torgerson; an essay on "Unionism," by Pastor M. K. Bleken; and "Partaking in Other Men's Sins," by Pastor P. A. Widvey.

The standing committees reported as follows: The School Committee rejoiced over the fact that there were now five Christian Day Schools in the synod located at Parkland, Albert Lea, Lime Creek, Somber, and Bethany. The Home Missions Committee reported that they had received requests from many small congregations for help. It was, however, difficult to fulfill all their requests. It was reported that there were two traveling missionaries, Pastor John Hendricks and Pastor J. E. Thoen. They reported that in many places new congregations were

being organized. The synod decided to support the Negro Mission of the Synodical Conference as well as the Missouri Synod India Mission and foreign missions in other lands. Rev. George O. Lillegard was called as missionary to China.

Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker, the synod's professor at Concordia College in St. Paul, gave a report on the work at the college. He made an appeal for gifts for the school. Dr. Martin Luther College offered to take our students and arrangements were to be made.

Elections were held and the results were as follows: Rev. G. A. Gullixson, president; Rev. Christian Anderson, vice president; Rev. L. P. Jensen, secretary; and Rev. A. J. Torgerson, treasurer.

A fraternal greeting was received from Dr. Theodore Graebner which reads as follows:

"To the Norwegian Synod assembled at Deerfield, Wis.

Dear Brethren: I am addressing these lines to Rev. Guttebo as a greeting to the convention which will assemble in his parish August 4. My thoughts will be with you on this and the following days, and my prayers will be for an edifying, profitable, and happy meeting. Your opportunities are great and they will assume even larger proportions in the future. All signs of the present day point in that direction. May God give you wisdom and courage to make use of them in every enlarged measure! We of the Missouri Synod are happy in our association with you. Nor do I believe that the days of grace are past for Norwegian Lutheranism. I confidently look forward to a strong soundly Lutheran Norwegian Church in America, because I believe

in the power of testimony to the Truth. God has moved backward the tide of history in the past, where His messengers brought their testimony with self-denying devotion; He can do it again. Stand pat on the ancient bed-rock of Truth and you must succeed and grow. And may God richly bless your deliberations! Cordially and fraternally yours, Theodore Graebner.¹¹

THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD OF THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The fifth annual meeting of the synod was held at Madison, Wisconsin, from July 25 to the 1st of August, 1922. It met at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church which was served by Rev. Holden M. Olson. The opening sermon was preached by Pastor Bjug Harstad on the text Josh. 1:6-9. Seventeen pastors eligible to vote were present at the convention and thirty-seven laymen. Nine pastors who were permanent members but without voting rights were also present. Five congregations were received into membership. Doctrinal papers were presented as follows: "The Right Free Church Principles for Church Government," by Pastor John Hendricks; A set of theses on "How Shall Our Church Work be Done in Order Effectually to Show that it is not Enough to be a Member of a Local Church, but that we Must Also be Living Branches on the True Vine Jesus Christ," by Pastor Bjug Harstad; and "The Bible and Evolution," by Rev. J. E. Thoen.

The Committee for Home Missions reported that the two traveling missionaries were overwhelmed with work. Many congregations desire to be served. The committee reported, "Under our circumstances, since there are synod people scattered here and there and many, many places who desire to be served

by us, home mission work becomes one of the most important branches of our work. Hence we seek your prayers and gifts."

The Committee for Foreign Missions reported that Pastor C. U. Faye had returned from his work as missionary in Africa and had come to the synod. He was granted a gift of \$500 for help in his travel.

The Committee on Higher Education reported on the work being done at Concordia College and it also recommended that the synod request permission from the Missouri Synod to establish a professorship at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. The Committee on Higher Education set forth the fact that it could teach our students the Norwegian church language and about our synod's history and tradition and tell them what is going on in the synod work. The committee recommends that another professor be called to Concordia College. The reason for their recommendation is: a. The work is too much for one professor. b. It is absolutely necessary that our preachers are able to speak the Norwegian language. It is of extreme importance that they are able to work with the Norwegian. The reasons are: 1. As a result of the split there are many of the old who are with us. They do not understand very much English and Norwegian is the language of their heart. 2. There come also people from Norway who are our responsibility to seek and to help. In this transition period will there be not enough Norwegian pastors? 3. It has been the whole time the intention of the Missouri Synod that we should have our own teachers. Our teachers belong to the faculty, they are not an appendix, there is no problem with harmony.... 6. It is our desire to hold our students in a strong and living familiarity with our synod. They should be Norwegian Americans. 7. In order to serve the Norwegian people here in this land one must understand the

Norwegian language and be able to understand the Norwegian character and spirit. Someone has said, "Nationality counts." We are brethren in faith; but we do not become the same nationality by being brethren in the faith."¹²

THE SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD
OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The sixth annual convention of the American Lutheran Church was held in Our Savior's Congregation, Pastor O. M. Gullerud's call, at Princeton, Minnesota, from the 15th to the 21st of June, 1923. The meeting was opened with a divine service. Pastor L. S. Guttebo preached on I Cor. 15:18. The meeting was attended by twenty pastors with voting rights and five pastors who were permanent members. Thirty-five voting delegates were seated. Three congregations joined the synod. Three essays were presented. Rev. L. P. Jensen presented an essay on the "Sacrament of the Altar"; and William Moenkemoeller gave a paper on "The Divinity of Jesus Christ"; and Pastor H. Ingebritson presented an essay on "The Congregation School."

The Home Mission Committee reported that an investigation had been carried out in Detroit, Michigan, to ascertain if it was possible to open a mission congregation there. The Committee for Foreign Missions reported on our joint work with the Missouri Synod in India and China. Pastor G. O. Lillegard had returned as missionary to China.

A complete report on the work among Negro Missions is given in the 1923 Report. The work amongst the Negro schools in the south required a budget of \$123,000 for one year. Of this sum the Missouri Synod has promised to furnish about \$100,000. the

Wisconsin Synod about \$20,000, leaving \$4,000 to \$5000 for the Norwegian Synod and the Slovak Synod. Difficult conditions are described in the various schools. Pastor C. F. Drewes of the Missouri Synod reports:

The Mission Board requested about \$150,000 for the Jubilee collection to carry out its building program. However, to its great disappointment not even \$30,000 was raised leaving a deficit of \$120,000. From all parts of the mission field urgent letters of appeal are pouring in for needed chapels, schools, and college buildings. But your board is powerless to help, and under the circumstances feels "blue." Those appeals come in part from pastors who must preach or teach in log huts or in shanties, that are indescribably wretched. worse than thousands of pig sties owned by our farmers. Luther College needs at least \$20,000 for new buildings. Listen, it is literally true: The one and only living room for the boys is a classroom. Here the boarding students live, sleep, study. This is their sick room. Here the girls must take their domestic science lessons while a boy sick with the flu is in his bed. I saw this with my own eyes. If Christians of the Synodical Conference will not soon come to our aid and give us proper, decent facilities, we ought to close our colleges and educate no more colored preachers and teachers. The situation is intolerable, disgraceful, we simply cannot put up with it much longer. At Greensborough College conditions are just about as bad, in some respects even worse. Three years ago -- not three months ago -- no, three years ago we temporarily fixed up sleeping rooms for the boys in the third story which was never intended for anything else than a storeroom for trunks.

There are but few windows and they are small. The ceiling is low. Can you imagine what sweat boxes these bedrooms must be in the sunny south.¹³

Pastor Drewes concludes by saying, "I wish, brother Moldstad, some of our good Christians could be in my office for about a month and read and answer the letters I receive from our poor, pleading missionaries.....May God abundantly bless your synodical sessions! And may He in His grace also bless our Negro Missions." This letter was written to Pastor J. A. Moldstad who read and translated it for the synod.¹⁴

The Report of the Board for Higher Education gave the following news: Rev. C. U. Faye was called to Concordia College in St. Paul to instruct in the Norwegian language and other branches. Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker received a call from the congregation at Madison, Wisconsin. Owing to the difficulty experienced by the congregation in getting a pastor, the board did not feel it could refuse to release him from his position at the college. Dr. Ylvisaker accepted the call to Madison with the understanding, that he continue his work at the college to the end of the year. The sincere gratitude of the synod is due him for the excellent and conscientious service he has rendered our church during the past four years. The board also reported that Prof. Oscar Levorson was called jointly with the Wisconsin Synod to teach Norwegian and religion at Martin Luther College at New Ulm, Minnesota. The agreement was made that our synod pay such a proportion of his salary of \$1200 as the time used for the instruction of our pupils bears to the time used for the regular branches of the school. The Committee for Higher Education forwarded the request of the synod that the synod be able to place a professor at Concordia Seminary

in St. Louis. The president of the Missouri Synod would bring it to the convention to be held at Fort Wayne, Indiana. Professor Oscar Levorson reported on his work at Dr. Martin Luther College and urged that students be sent so that they could teach in the parochial schools of our synod.

A letter of greeting was received from Dr. F. Pfothenauer, president of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. It reads:

To the Evangelical Lutheran Norwegian Synod assembled at Princeton, Minnesota
Dear Brethren, The undersigned sends kind greetings to your venerable body in behalf of the Missouri Synod as an expression of the unity of the spirit which by the grace of God has been established and preserved between us. May the Holy Ghost be with you in all your deliberations, strengthening you that earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, and guiding you in your endeavors to further the kingdom of God at home and abroad. Fraternaly and cordially yours, F. Pfothenauer, president of the Missouri Synod.¹⁵

Greetings were also received from the Boston Norwegian Lutheran Church which is now a member of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Attention was called to the fact that Pastor Martinus K. Bleken and Mrs. Christian Anderson were called to their eternal rest during the year.

A committee of three was elected to look into the possibility of the establishment of an old people's home and help for the elderly.

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5. Synod Report, 1919, p. 7.
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7. Ibid., p. 128.
8. Synod Report, 1920, p. 3.
9. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
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11. Synod Report, 1921, p. 123.
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15. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

Rev. George M. Orvick, President
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW

David P. Scaer, Christology. Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Confessional Lutheran Research, 1989. (Volume VI of Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, 12 volumes, edited by Robert D. Preus.) Hardcover, 113 pp. \$8.00

Scaer's treatise on Christology is the first volume of this new dogmatics series to appear in print. The general introduction to the series (pp. vii-xi) indicates that Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics is not intended to replace Franz Pieper's monumental Christian Dogmatics as a normative standard for orthodox Lutheranism, but rather to supplement it especially in regard to the theological issues that have been raised since the publication of Pieper's work. One is therefore not surprised to find that Scaer's book lacks the depth and detail of Pieper's treatment of the locus, especially on historic questions and controversies. Scaer apparently did not see any reason to go over the same ground to any great length as had already been covered in Christian Dogmatics, and the general introduction makes it plain that we should not have expected him to do so.

However, this introduction to the series also claims that the volumes of Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics "follow not only the theology of the Book of Concord, as for instance the texts of Francis Pieper and Adolph Hoenecke and other confessional Lutheran dogmaticians have done, but, unlike the former confessional Lutheran dogmaticians, the authors of the present volumes follow the actual pattern of thought" of the Lutheran Confessions

(pp. ix-x). One would therefore expect Scaer's book to be somewhat similar to Leonard Hutter's Compendium theologicum, but this is not the case. Scaer often refers to, and uses the terminology of, the Lutheran Confessions, but no more so than Pieper, Hoenecke, or most other Lutheran dogmatists. Scaer's volume is distinctly confessional in its content, but not (as is claimed) in its literary and dogmatic form.

Another area in which Scaer's "dogmatics" book differs from what might be expected is in the fact that he "so heavily relied on Biblical exposition that the present volume may border on being classified as a Biblical theology" (Scaer's Preface, p. xiv). It is just that. There are quotations from the writings of other Lutheran theologians, but they are relatively few and far between. Notable by their absence are any references to Hermann Sasse's more significant Christological writings, available in English since 1984. There are several references to the notorious 1984 Braaten/Jenson dogmatics (also called, ironically, Christian Dogmatics), but these references are usually in the form of footnote quotations. Scaer seldom confronts the claims of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America theologians in a direct way. Since the Braaten/Jenson volumes have assumed such a significant position of influence among a large segment of American Lutherans, one would expect Scaer to have spent more time analyzing and refuting their unbiblical Christological statements. Scaer does, however, address the issues raised by Rudolf Bultmann and other European theologians who greatly influenced the authors of the Braaten/Jenson dogmatics.

Such relatively minor criticisms notwithstanding, Scaer's Christology is highly recommended. With a masterful use of sound exegesis and convincing

apologetics, Scaer refutes many of the faulty assumptions and conclusions of contemporary practitioners of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. Historical critics consistently claim that the "high" Christology of John's Gospel is not reflected in the Synoptics, which they believe are close to the original teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Scaer demonstrates that the Christology of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is just as "high" as that of John, and that all four evangelists clearly portray Jesus as one who understood himself to be the divine-Human Savior from sin. Scaer shows likewise that the historical-critical maxim that Christology must be done "from below" rather than "from above" is hopelessly misguided, intrinsically anti-incarnational, and therefore inherently un-Christian. He devotes a lot of attention to the specific articles of faith that are under attack today, such as the virgin birth of Jesus and his bodily resurrection, in order to give confessional Lutherans the guidance they need when dealing with the heresies of our time and when proclaiming the unchanging Gospel of the unchanging Son of God.

-- David Jay Webber
Cape Girardeau, Missouri