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447 North Division Street
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Editor ..... Pres. Wilhelm Petersen
Managing Editor ..... Pres. Wilhelm Petersen
Book Review Editor ..... Prof. Adolph Harstad
Typesetting ..... Jesse Jacobsen
Erica Jacobsen
Printer ..... Quick Print
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Foreword

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Established in the fall of 1946, it has been carrying out its important mission of training men for the pastoral ministry. The seminary catalog states: "The primary purpose of the seminary is to train pastors for the preaching ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod." This issue of the *Quarterly* begins with an anniversary sermon by the editor, delivered on Synod Sunday evening, June 16th, in Trinity Chapel.

Our readers will appreciate the work of David Jay Webber on his anthology of Church and Ministry in the Lutheran Confessions. This will be helpful as we continue our study of these two important doctrines.

Also included in this issue is an eloquent essay on prayer entitled *Behold, He Prayeth*, delivered to the 1947 convention of the ELS by Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker. Dr. Ylvisaker played a prominent role in the history of our seminary. He served as president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930-1950 and also taught exegetical courses at the seminary until his retirement. We reprint this solidly Scriptural, Lutheran essay in his memory.

A timely article by Dr. William Kessel entitled *Share the Promise Culture to Culture* will also be of interest to our readers. Under this theme the author develops three points: 1) The Doctrinal Context for Cross-Cultural Ministry; 2) The Historical Precedent of this Ministry; and 3) Its Historical Application. Dr. Kessel has an earned doctorate in cultural anthropology and taught at Bethany College for ten years. During that time he also taught courses at the seminary. He is currently serving as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, Arizona.

We are grateful to Pastor Robert Koester for granting permission to print his essay on *Grace as Taught by Augustine and Luther*. We are printing Part I in this issue and it will be continued in a subsequent issue. Pastor Koester is on the editorial board of Northwestern Publishing House and is also the author of *Law and Gospel—with special reference to the Church Growth Movement*.

WWP

Sermon for the Fiftieth Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

Text: Jeremiah 6:16

by Wilhelm W. Petersen

Gracious, Heavenly Father, it is with grateful hearts that we come before you on the fiftieth anniversary of our seminary, to thank and praise you for the many blessings which you have showered upon our seminary over these hears. We especially thank you for instituting the office of the ministry through which you Word is regularly proclaimed and the Sacraments administered, to the joy and edification of your people. Continue to keep us faithful to the saving truths of your Word so that those who are taught by faithful instructors will proclaim your saving Gospel, to the glory of your name and the salvation of many blood-bought souls. May our continuing prayer be:

Preserve this ministry
    While harvest-days are keeping;
And since the fields are white
    And hands are few for reaping,
Send workers forth, O Lord,
    The sheaves to gather in
That not a soul be lost
    Which Thou art come to win.
In Jesus' saving name, we ask it. Amen.

Text —
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)**

In Christ Jesus dear fellow-redeemed in Christ,

This is certainly an historic day in the life of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Earlier today a new chapel was dedicated to the glory of the Triune God and now this evening we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of our seminary. In addition we also graduate a class of seven seminary graduates, all of whom have received their calls and will be ordained this summer. Two of our graduates will serve on foreign fields, one in Lima, South America, and the other in Ukraine. And as we gather here this evening a new synod/seminary building is being constructed and will be dedicated at next year's synodical convention.

All of this is simply "mind-boggling," "overwhelming," "awesome." It fills us with a sense of unworthiness, yet humble gratitude to a gracious God, *"Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."* (Eph. 3:20) Our sentiments are those of Jacob of old, *"I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant,"* (Gen. 32:10), and of the psalmist, *"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever."* (Ps. 106:1)

This evening we want to focus on the 50th anniversary of our seminary, our training school for pastors. Ever since 1946 Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary has been carrying out its mission of training men for the Gospel ministry, and it is only right and proper that we pause and reflect upon the blessings which the Lord has showered upon our seminary and at the same time to project into the future and beseech his continued blessing upon our "school of the prophets."

The text which has been chosen for our anniversary service is one that has been used on various occasions in our synodical history and it certainly is fitting for our anniversary celebration. Yes, these inspired words from the prophet Jeremiah are as appropriate today as the day they were written. On the basis of this text, then, let us consider:

"When Alone will our Anniversary be Pleasing to God and a Blessing to Us?"

1. When we resolve to continue in "the old paths."

2. Then we will continue to find "rest for our souls."

These words of Jeremiah were spoken by Jeremiah to a rebellious people, ripe for destruction. Things were in a bad way - morally and religiously. Covetousness, greed, and avarice were rampant in the land. There was gross unfaithfulness on the part of the religious leaders. Listen to some of the complaints recorded in Jeremiah: *"they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out* of the mouth of the Lord." (23:16b) *"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."* (5:31) *"And from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely,"* (6:13b) *"Because my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up."* (18:15) These are just some samplings of the sad state of affairs in Jeremiah's day. The Lord threatened judgment upon the people, but before carrying out this threat he makes a last appeal to the people, *"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein."* (Jer. 6:16)

All this happened many years ago, several centuries B.C. We ask: "But haven't things changed for the better?" If we think so, we live in a world of our own imagination, a world that doesn't exist! Morally, things are as bad if not worse, than in Jeremiah's day. In a recent poll 44% of the respondents stated that they believed that they descended from an animal. And the theological climate today is such that many religious leaders "deal falsely" with the truth. As we note the similarity between the times may we heed the words of our text and resolve to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein."

What is meant by the "old paths?" In Jeremiah's day it was an admonition to walk in the saving truths revealed by God to Abraham, their father, and to Moses and the prophets. To us "the old paths" mean basically the same, namely to continue in the truths revealed to the prophets and apostles recorded in Holy Scripture. The Bible is the source of truth revealed by the Holy Spirit, as St. Peter writes by divine inspiration, *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (II Peter 1:21) and St. Paul urged young Timothy: *"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,*

which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (II Tim. 3:14-16)

In brief, then, Holy Scripture "is the only sure and perfect rule for faith and life." It is on this truth that by the grace of God our synod has stood; the motto engraved on our official seal is *IT IS WRITTEN.* And when our seminary was opened 50 years ago our leaders wanted to make it clear where they stood. From a bulletin of the opening service we read: "We want to take our stand with those who want to retain inviolate the doctrine of a verbally inspired word." Our seminary catalog today says the same: "Both the Synod and the Seminary are committed to the Holy Scripture as the inspired, inerrant Word of God." Daniel March had it straight when he gave this striking description of the Bible: "The Bible is the oldest and newest of book. It surveys the whole field of time, and it looks farthest into the infinite depths of eternity. It lends the most vivid and absorbing interest to the scenes and events of the past, and it keeps us in the most active sympathy with the time in which we live. It gives the most reliable record of what has been, and it affords us our only means of knowing what is yet to be. It is so conservative as to make it a solemn duty to study and revere the past, and it is so progressive as to be in advance of the most enlightened age. It is strict enough to denounce the very shadow and semblance of sin, and it is liberal enough to save the chiefest of sinners. It is full of God, and must therefore be read with a pure heart or its true glory will not be seen. It is full of man, and must therefore always be interesting and instructive to all who would know themselves."

It is incumbent upon us, then, not only to be thankful for the blessings of the past, but to resolve to walk in the "old paths" of a verbally inspired, inerrant Scripture. History records many doctrinal controversies but today the battle is over the very Bible itself. Alas! Much of Lutheranism has departed from the Sola Scriptura principle. For example, a textbook on doctrine used in many Lutheran seminaries has this to say about the Bible: "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 in-

quire behind the text and attempt to reconstruct the real history that took place."

To those "scholars" who contend that the Bible is unreliable we say, "No thanks," that kind of scholarship we neither need nor want. Rather we say with Dr. Koren, a theological leader of the Norwegian Synod: According to Scripture we have reason to be certain that many an unschooled man or woman, and by the world despised, has gotten farther in the knowledge of God and His grace than have the vast majority of the most learned pastors and professors. Above all, we must not be learned beyond that which was written. For our Savior has said: 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'"

Continuing to walk in the *OLD PATHS* of Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, the promise will be ours: "Ye shall find rest for your souls." Why can we say that? Because the content of Scripture is Christ. "But these are written" writes John "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Because of His redemptive work we sinners — hell-bound by nature — have been justified in the sight of a holy, righteous God. "To be justified means that God by grace has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ, acquitted us of the guilt and punishment of sin, so that He regards us in Christ as though we had never sinned." (*Explanation of Luther's Catechism*) And this Savior who has done all of this invites us: *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Mt. 11:28)

It was St. Augustine who said: "O God, our souls were made for Thee and we shall find no rest until we rest in thee." Because of sin there exists a void, an emptiness in our souls which no earthly thing can satisfy. Therefore comfort is our greatest need. Dr. Norman A. Madson, the first dean of our seminary, impressed upon us the importance of proclaiming comfort to God's people. Those of us who were students remember him emphasizing this point, namely that ours is a ministry of comfort. We recall his words: "The homesick heart needs comfort, so I would impress upon you with all the resources of eternity in my counsel: Never forget that yours must primarily be a ministry of comfort."

And comfort there is aplenty. Isaiah said to the people of his day, *"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."* (Is. 40:1,2) And St. Paul echoes this blessed truth in the New Testament: *"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* (Rom. 5:20) This love of our gracious God is greater than the greatest sin in the world and in our lives. Isaiah compares it to a mother nursing her newborn babe: *"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."* (Is. 49:15)

This, then, is the message that is to predominate in your preaching, teaching, and counseling. Yes, preach the law of God, too, for it is only through that law that we see our need for a Savior. But the law is, as our confessions state, a "foreign" or "alien" work and its purpose is to lead to Christ's proper work, namely forgiveness. Only the Gospel message can give rest to the soul.

Finally, this rest does not mean instant release from all our cares, trials, and afflictions of life. No, they will continue to be our lot as long as we are in this world. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" says Jesus and He levels with us when He says, *"Ye shall be sorrowful"* and then quickly adds *"but your sorrow shall be turned to joy."* (Jn. 16:20b) So this rest of which our text speaks is not a rest <u>from</u> trials, but a rest <u>in</u> trials, that rest and peace which can come from the knowledge of knowing that we are one with God, forgiven by the blood of Christ. We are no longer under the yoke of God's holy law; rather we live under His grace.

So on our fiftieth anniversary may we continue to walk in the *OLD PATHS*, described as the "good way." Then our observance will truly glorify God and the blessing "ye shall find rest for your souls" will continue to be ours. It will sustain us in whatever trial God permits to come into our lives until that glorious day when

All trials are then like a dream that is past,
    Forgotten all trouble and sorrow;
All questions and doubts have been answered at last;
    Then dawneth eternity's morrow;
Have mercy upon us, O Jesus!
(Hymnary 239, v. 6)

And as we continue our walk in life's long funeral procession where the death rate is 100% we can face the yawning grave with this song in our hearts,

I know of a sleep in Jesus' name,
A rest from all toil and sorrow;
Earth folds in her arms my weary frame,
And shelters it till the morrow;
My soul is at home with God in heaven,
Her sorrows are past and over.
(Hymnary 506, v. 1)

Church and Ministry in the Lutheran Confessions

An Anthology

compiled by David Jay Webber,

Pastor of Trinity Congregation, Brewster Mass.

Confessional quotations are from

The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert [Fortress Press, 1959].

I. Through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, Jesus Christ continually creates, gathers, and preserves his Holy Christian Church. The Christian Church is present wherever Christian believers are present, but its presence is outwardly discerned only on the basis of the presence of Christ's Word and Sacraments, which therefore serve as the marks of the Church. On this basis the Church's presence can most readily be discerned in "local congregations" or their equivalent, but it can also be discerned in synodical assemblies, in theological institutions and religious schools, and in small gatherings which may be comprised of only two or three confessing Christians. ...thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd. (Smalcald Articles III, XII:2, p. 315)

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4,5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Augsburg Confession VII:1-4 [German], p. 32)

...churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies, when in Christian liberty one uses fewer or more of them, as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known axiom [from Irenaeus], "Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith." (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X:31, p. 616)

We concede that in this life hypocrites and evil men are mingled with the church and are members of the church according to the outward associations of the church's marks—that is, Word, confession, and sacraments—especially if they have not been excommunicated. The sacraments do not lose their efficacy when they are administered by evil men; indeed, we may legitimately use sacraments that are administered by evil men. Paul also predicts that Antichrist will "take his seat in the temple of God" (II Thes. 2:4), that is, that he will rule and hold office in the church. The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ. This church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, consecrates, and governs by his Spirit, as Paul testifies when he says (Eph. 1:22, 23), "And he has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness," that is, the whole congregation "of him who fills all in all." Thus those in whom Christ is not active are not members of Christ. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession VII/VIII:3-5, p. 169)

Christ is talking about the outward appearance of the church when he says that the kingdom of God is like a net (Matt. 13:47) or like ten virgins (Matt. 25:1). He teaches us that the church is hidden under a crowd of wicked men so that this stumbling block may not offend the faithful and so that we may know that the Word and the sacraments are efficacious even when wicked men administer them. Meanwhile he teaches that though these wicked men participate in the outward marks, still they are not the true kingdom of Christ and members of Christ, for they are members of the kingdom of the devil. We are not dreaming about some Platonic republic, as has been slanderously alleged, but we teach that this

church actually exists, made up of true believers and righteous men scattered throughout the world. And we add its marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the sacraments. This church is properly called "the pillar of truth" (I Tim. 3:15), for it retains the pure Gospel and what Paul calls the "foundation" (I Cor. 3:12), that is, the true knowledge of Christ and faith. Of course, there are also many weak people in it who build on this foundation perishing structures of stubble, that is, unprofitable opinions. But because they do not overthrow the foundation, these are forgiven them or even corrected. The writings of the holy Fathers show that even they sometimes built stubble on the foundation but that this did not overthrow their faith. (Apology VII/VIII:19-21, pp. 171-72).

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession V:1-2 [German], p. 31)

Hypocrites and evil men are indeed associated with the true church as far as outward ceremonies are concerned. But when we come to define the church, we must define that which is the living body of Christ and is the church in fact as well as in name. We must understand what it is that chiefly makes us members, and living members, of the church. If we were to define the church as only an outward organization embracing both the good and the wicked, then men would not understand that the kingdom of Christ is the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit but would think of it as only the outward observance of certain devotions and rituals. (Apology VII/VIII:12-13, p. 170)

There is an infinite number of ungodly within the church who oppress it. The church will abide nevertheless; it exists despite the great multitude of the wicked, and Christ supplies it with the gifts he has promised—the forgiveness of sins, answer to prayer, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Creed offers us these consolations that we may not despair but may know all this. It says "the church catholic" lest we take it to mean an outward government of certain nations. It is, rather, made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions or not. (Apology VII/VIII:9-10, pp. 169-70)

Consequently the church cannot be better governed and maintained than by having all of us live under one head, Christ, and by having all the bishops equal in office (however they may differ in gifts) and diligently joined together in unity of doctrine, faith, sacraments, prayer, works of love, etc. (Smalcald Articles II, IV:9, p. 300)

Since decisions of synods are decisions of the church and not of the pontiffs, it is especially incumbent on the kings to restrain the license of the pontiffs and see to it that the church is not deprived of the power of making judgments and decisions according to the Word of God. And as other Christians ought to censure the rest of the pope's errors, so they ought also to rebuke the pope when he evades and obstructs true understanding and true judgment on the part of the church. (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 56, pp. 329-30)

With reference to the condemnations, censures, and rejections of false and adulterated doctrine, ...it is not our purpose and intention to mean thereby those persons who err ingenuously and who do not blaspheme the truth of the divine Word, and far less do we mean entire churches inside or outside the Holy Empire of the German Nation. On the contrary, we mean specifically to condemn only false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked proponents and blasphemers. These we do not by any means intend to tolerate in our lands, churches, and schools inasmuch as such teachings are contrary to the expressed Word of God and cannot coexist with it. Besides, pious people should be warned against them. But we have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us. These people go their way in the simplicity of their hearts, do not understand the issues, and take no pleasure in blasphemies against the Holy Supper as it is celebrated in our churches according to Christ's institution and as we concordantly teach about it on the basis of the words of his testament. It is furthermore to be hoped that when they are rightly instructed in this doctrine, they will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine Word and unite with us and our churches and schools. (Preface to the Book of Concord, pp. 11-12)

...the Gospel...offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gos-

pel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered," etc. (Smalcald Articles III, IV, p. 310)

II. Jesus Christ has given the keys of his kingdom to the Church. He has thereby designated his Church, which is his body and his royal priesthood, as the instrument through which he will bring the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins to the world. Paradoxically, the Church is both the assembly of the faithful which receives the Gospel from Jesus Christ, and the divinely-appointed custodian of the keys which dispenses the Gospel as the agent of Jesus Christ. The Church is, as it were, the corporate "voice" of Christ through which Christ, by his Spirit, impels the proclamation of his Word and the administration of his Sacraments. The keys are a function and power given to the church by Christ to bind and loose sins, not only the gross and manifest sins but also those which are subtle and secret and which God alone perceives. (Smalcald Articles III, VII:1, p. 311)

...Christ did not question Peter alone but asked, "Who do you [plural] say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15) And what is here spoken in the singular number ("I will give you [singular] the keys" and "whatever you [singular] bind" [Matt. 16:19]) is elsewhere given in the plural ("Whatever you [plural] bind" [Matt. 18:18]), etc. In John, too, it is written, "If you [plural] forgive the sins," etc. (John 20:23). These words show that the keys were given equally to all the apostles and that all the apostles were sent out as equals. In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys do not belong to the person of one particular individual but to the whole church, as is shown by many clear and powerful arguments, for after speaking of the keys in Matt. 18:19, Christ said, "If two or three of you agree on earth," etc. Therefore, he bestows the keys especially and immediately on the church, and for the same reason the church especially possesses the right of vocation. So it is necessary in these passages to regard Peter as the representative of the entire company of apostles... (Treatise, 23-24, p. 324)

...the Holy Spirit...has a unique community in the world. It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines

and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it. (Large Catechism II:40,42, p. 416)

I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community or Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit. Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel. (Large Catechism II:51-54, p. 417)

We reject and condemn these errors of the Schwenkfelders: ... That the ministry of the church, the Word proclaimed and heard, is not a means whereby God the Holy Spirit teaches men the saving knowledge of Christ, conversion, repentance, and faith or works new obedience in them. ... That a minister of the church who is himself not truly renewed, righteous, and pious cannot teach profitably nor administer genuine and true sacraments. (Solid Declaration XII:28,30,35, p. 635)

There are two, and only two, basic types of sacrifice. One is the propitiatory sacrifice... There has really been only one propitiatory sacrifice in the world, the death of Christ... The rest are eucharistic sacrifices, called "sacrifices of praise": the proclamation of the Gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the afflictions of the saints, yes, all the good works of the saints. These sacrifices are not satisfactions on behalf of those who bring them, nor can they be transferred to merit the forgiveness of sins or reconciliation for others ex opere operato. Those who bring them are already reconciled. The sacrifices of the New Testament are of this type, as Peter teaches in I Pet. 2:5, "A holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices." (Apology XXIV:19,22,25-26, pp. 252-54)

We are perfectly willing for the Mass to be understood as a daily sacrifice, provided this means the whole Mass, the ceremony and also the proclamation of the Gospel, faith, prayer, and thanksgiving. Taken together, these are the daily sacrifice of the New Testament; the ceremony was instituted because of them and ought not be separated from them. Therefore Paul says (I Cor. 11:26), "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death." (Apology XXIV:35, p. 256)

III. In accordance with Christ's own command and institution, his means of grace are publicly administered, and the keys of his kingdom are publicly exercised, by the ministers of the Gospel whom the Church calls to speak on its behalf. We also say that this public ministry is carried out by the ministers of the Gospel whom Christ calls (through his Church) to speak on his behalf. Since Jesus Christ has given his keys to the Christian Church, its call is nothing less than the call of Christ himself. Ministers of the Gospel, as they proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments, represent Christ. They may also be understood to "represent" the Church, but only because, and only in so far as, the Church itself represents Christ. In I Cor. 3:4-8 Paul places ministers on an equality and teaches that the church is above the ministers. Therefore he does not attribute to Peter superiority or authority over the church or the other ministers. (Treatise, 11, p. 321)

In his Large Catechism Dr. Luther writes: "I am also a part and member of this Christian church, a shareholder and partaker in it of all the goods which it possesses. The Holy Spirit has brought me thereto and has incorporated me therein through this, that I have heard the Word of God and still hear it, which is the beginning of my entrance into it. For before we became members of the Christian church we belonged entirely to the devil and were completely ignorant of God and Christ. Until the Last Day, the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community of Christendom, through which he heals us and which he uses to proclaim and propagate his Word, whereby he initiates and increases sanctification so that we grow daily and become strong in faith and in its fruits, which he creates." In these words the Catechism makes no mention whatever of our free will or of our contribution, but ascribes everything to the Holy Spirit, namely, that through the ministry he brings us into the church, sanctifies us therein, and effects in us a daily increase in faith and good

works. (Solid Declaration II:36-38 [quoting Large Catechism II:52-53], p. 528)

Since the priesthood of the New Testament is a ministry of the Spirit, as Paul teaches in II Cor. 3:6, the only sacrifice of satisfaction it has for the sins of others is the sacrifice of Christ. It has no sacrifices like the Levitical which could be transferred to others ex opere operato; but it offers to others the Gospel and the sacraments so that thereby they may receive faith and the Holy Spirit and be put to death and made alive. ... Through the ministry of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit works in the heart. Therefore this ministry benefits people when he does work to give them new birth and life. (Apology XXIV:59, p. 260)

Thus priests are not called to make sacrifices that merit forgiveness of sins for the people, as in the Old Testament, but they are called to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments to the people. As the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches clearly enough, we do not have a priesthood like the Levitical. If ordination is interpreted in relation to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. The ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises: "The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (Rom. 1:16), again, "My word that goes forth from my mouth shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). If ordination is interpreted this way, we shall not object either to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament. The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it. It is good to extol the ministry of the Word with every possible kind of praise in opposition to the fanatics who dream that the Holy Spirit does not come through the Word but because of their own preparations. (Apology XIII: 11-13, p. 212)

In accordance with the Scriptures, therefore, we maintain that the church in the proper sense is the assembly of saints who truly believe the Gospel of Christ and who have the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we grant that the many hypocrites and evil men who are mingled with them in this life share an association in the outward marks, are members of the church according to this association in the outward marks, and therefore hold office in the church. When the sacraments are administered by unworthy men, this does not rob them of their efficacy. For they do not represent

their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), "He who hears you hears me." When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ's place and stead. (Apology VII/VIII:28, p. 173)

...we confess that hypocrites and evil men have been mingled with the church and that the sacraments are efficacious even when evil men administer them, for ministers act in Christ's stead and do not represent their own persons, according to the word (Luke 10:16), "He who hears you hears me." We should forsake wicked teachers because they no longer function in the place of Christ, but are antichrists. Christ says (Matt. 7:15) "Beware of false prophets"; Paul says (Gal. 1:9), "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." Christ has also warned us in his parables on the church [Matt. 13:24-50] that when we are offended by the personal conduct of priests or people, we should not incite schisms, as the Donatists wickedly did. (Apology VII/VIII:47-49, pp. 177-78)

...no jurisdiction belongs to the bishops as bishops (that is, to those to whom has been committed the ministry of Word and sacraments) except to forgive sins, to reject doctrine which is contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the fellowship of the church ungodly persons whose wickedness is known, doing all this without human power, simply by the Word. Churches are therefore bound by divine law to be obedient to the bishops according to the text [Luke 10:16], "He who hears you hears me." However, when bishops teach or ordain anything contrary to the Gospel, churches have a command of God that forbids obedience: "Beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15) "If an angel from heaven should preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8), "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth" (II Cor. 13:8), and also, "Given to me is the authority for building up and not for tearing down" [II Cor. 10:8]. The canons require the same thing... Augustine also says in reply to the letters of Petilian that not even catholic bishops are to be obeyed if they should happen to err or hold anything contrary to the canonical Scriptures of God. (Augsburg Confession XXVIII:21-28 [Latin], pp. 84-85)

...the keys have the power to bind and loose, according to the statement [Matt. 16:19) "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." As we have said above, the keys do not have the power to impose penalties or to

institute forms of worship; they only have the command to forgive the sins of those who are converted and to denounce and excommunicate those who refuse to be converted. Just as "to loose" means to forgive sins, so "to bind" means not to forgive sins. It is of a spiritual kingdom that Christ is speaking. God's command is that the ministers of the Gospel absolve those who are converted, according to the statement (II Cor. 10:8), "Our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up." (Apology XIII:176-77, p. 210)

...magistrates, parents, even brothers and sisters and other good friends are under mutual obligation to reprove evil where it is necessary and beneficial. But the right way to deal with this matter would be to observe the order laid down by the Gospel, Matthew 18[:15-17], where Christ says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." ... Christ teaches further: "If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses." So the individual is to be dealt with personally and not gossiped about behind his back. If this does not help, then bring the matter before the public, either before the civil or the ecclesiastical court. Then you do not stand alone. You have witnesses with you through whom you can convict the guilty one and on whose testimony the judge can base his decision and sentence. This is the right procedure for restraining and reforming a wicked person. (Large Catechism I:275-76,279-80, pp. 402-03)

Thus we have three kinds of fathers presented in this [fourth] commandment: fathers by blood, fathers of a household, and fathers of the nation. Besides these, there are also spiritual fathers—not like those in the papacy who applied this title to themselves but performed no fatherly office. For the name spiritual father belongs only to those who govern and guide us by the Word of God. St. Paul boasts that he is a father in I Cor. 4:15, where he says, "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." Since such persons are fathers, they are entitled to honor, even above all others. (Large Catechism I:158-60, p. 387)

But let us talk about the term "liturgy." It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says (I Cor. 4:1), "This is how one should regard us, as

ministers of Christ and dispensers of the sacraments of God," that is, of the Word and sacraments; and II Cor. 5:20, "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Thus the term "liturgy" squares well with the ministry. (Apology XXIV:79-81, p. 264)

Among our opponents there is no catechization of the children at all, though even the canons give prescriptions about it. In our circles the pastors and ministers of the churches are required to instruct and examine the youth publicly, a custom that produces very good results. Among our opponents, there are many regions where no sermons are preached during the whole year, except in Lent. But the chief worship of God is the preaching of the Gospel. (Apology XV:41-42, pp. 220-21)

IV. By virtue of the authority of Christ which has been entrusted to the Church, the Church always and under all circumstances retains the right to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments. It therefore always and under all circumstances retains the right to issue calls to the public ministry of the Gospel. In ordinary circumstances the Church exercises this right through an established, orderly calling process which reflects its submission to the applicable directives of Holy Scripture, and which reflects the fraternal accountability that Christian church bodies, congregations, and individuals owe to one another. However, in extraordinary circumstances the Church may exercise this right in extraordinary ways through extraordinary means. Two or three Christians gathered in the name of Christ are the Church, and as such they have the authority to call one of their number to some form of the public ministry of the Gospel if there is an emergency situation that truly requires it. A call that in regular circumstances would be "irregular" is therefore "regular" when it is issued according to the legitimate needs of irregular circumstances.

...we have directed our churches and schools first of all to the Holy Scriptures and the Creeds, and then to the aforementioned Augsburg Confession. We desire particularly that the young men who are being trained for service in the church and for the holy ministry be faithfully and diligently instructed therein, so that the pure teaching and confession of the faith may be preserved and perpetuated among our posterity through the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit until the glorious advent of our only Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Preface to the Book of Concord, p. 12)

...we say that no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the sacraments in the church unless he is duly called. On this matter we have given frequent testimony in the assembly to our deep desire to maintain the church polity and various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, although they were created by human authority. We know that the Fathers had good and useful reasons for instituting ecclesiastical discipline in the manner described by the ancient canons. But the bishops either force our priests to forsake the sort of doctrine we have confessed, or else, in their unheard of cruelty, they kill the unfortunate and innocent men. This keeps our priests from acknowledging such bishops. Thus the cruelty of the bishops is the reason for the abolition of canonical government in some places, despite our earnest desire to keep it. Let them see to it how they will answer to God for disrupting the church. In this issue our consciences are clear and we dare not approve the cruelty of those who persecute this teaching, for we know that our confession is true, godly, and catholic. We know that the church is present among those who rightly teach the Word of God and rightly administer the sacraments. (Apology XIV:1-4, pp. 214-15)

If the bishops were true bishops and were concerned about the church and the Gospel, they might be permitted (for the sake of love and unity, but not of necessity) to ordain and confirm us and our preachers, provided this could be done without pretense, humbug, and unchristian ostentation. However, they neither are nor wish to be true bishops. They are temporal lords and princes who are unwilling to teach or preach or baptize or administer Communion or discharge any office or work in the church. More than that, they expel, persecute, and condemn those who have been called to do these things. Yet the church must not be deprived of ministers on their account. Accordingly, as we are taught by the examples of the ancient churches and Fathers, we shall and ought ourselves ordain suitable persons to this office. The papists have no right to forbid or prevent us, not even according to their own laws, for their laws state that those who are ordained by heretics shall also be regarded as ordained and remain so. St. Jerome, too, wrote concerning the church in Alexandria that it was originally governed without bishops by priests and preachers in common. (Smalcald Articles III, X:1-3, p. 314)

The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addi-

tion, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confession of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops. Accordingly Jerome teaches clearly that in the apostolic letters all who preside over the churches are both bishops and presbyters. He quotes from Titus, "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might appoint presbyters in every town," and points out that these words are followed by, "A bishop must be married only once" (Titus 1:5-7). Again, Peter and John call themselves presbyters. And Jerome observes: "One man was chosen over the rest to prevent schism, lest several persons, by gathering separate followings around themselves, rend the church of Christ. For in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist to the time of Bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of their number, set him in a higher place, and called him bishop. Moreover, in the same way in which an army might select a commander for itself, the deacons may choose from their number one who is known to be active and name him archdeacon. For, apart from ordination, what does a bishop do that a presbyter does not do?" Jerome therefore teaches that the distinction between the grades of bishop and presbyter (or pastor) is by human authority. The fact itself bears witness to this, for the power is the same, as I have already stated. Afterwards one thing made a distinction between bishops and pastors, and this was ordination, for it was decided that one bishop should ordain the ministers in a number of churches. But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right. Consequently, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves. For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers. This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, "When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men" (Eph.4:8,11,12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for

building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. It is like the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen), and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former. Here the words of Christ apply which testify that the keys were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, "You are a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9), These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation. (Treatise, 60-70, pp. 330-32)

V. No one should carry out the duties of the public ministry of the Gospel without a regular call from the Church. The Church does not call all its ministers to carry out all aspects of the overall ministry which Christ has entrusted to it. The Church itself, as the corporate "voice" of Christ, and in accordance with its needs and circumstances, defines the parameters and scope of each call that it issues. The Church may, of course, issue calls to more comprehensive and general forms of the ministry of the Gospel (parish pastor, bishop, etc.), and it may also issue calls to more limited and specialized forms of the ministry of the Gospel (theological professor, teacher, etc.). Anyone who has been called by the Church to carry out some or all of the duties of the public ministry is, by virtue of that call, a minister of Jesus Christ, and of his Church. It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call. (Augsburg Confession XIV [German], p. 36)

Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command, "As the

Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23). This power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments (to many persons or to individuals, depending on one's calling). In this way are imparted not bodily but eternal things and gifts, namely, eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These gifts cannot be obtained except through the office of preaching and of administering the holy sacraments, for St. Paul says [Rom. 1:16], "The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith." (Augsburg Confession XXVIII: 5-9 [German], pp. 81-82)

Besides, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons, as the Levitical priesthood is, but is spread abroad through the whole world and exists wherever God gives his gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers. Nor is this ministry valid because of any individual's authority but because of the Word given by Christ. (Treatise, 26, p. 324)

The chapters and monasteries which in former times had been founded with good intentions for the education of learned men and decent women should be restored to such purposes in order that we may have pastors, preachers, and other ministers in the church, others who are necessary for secular government in cities and states, and also well trained girls to become mothers, housekeepers, etc. (Smalcald Articles II, III:1, pp. 297-98)

It is likely that here and there in the monasteries there are still some good men serving the ministry of the Word... (Apology XXVII:22, p. 272)

...some of us have had this document [the Formula of Concord] read article by article to each and every theologian, minister, and schoolmaster in our lands and territories and have had them reminded and exhorted to consider diligently and earnestly the doctrine contained in it. When they had found that the explanation of the dissensions which had arisen was agreeable and conformable first of all to the Word of God and then to the Augsburg Confession as well, the persons to whom it had been presented, as indicated above, gladly and with heartfelt thanks to almighty God testified that of their own volition and with due consideration they accepted, approved, and subscribed this Book of Concord as the correct Christian interpretation of the Augsburg Confession and publicly attested this with

their hearts, lips, and hands. Therefore this Christian agreement is called and also is the unanimous and concordant confession not only of a few of our theologians but generally of each and every minister and schoolmaster in our lands and territories. (Preface to the Book of Concord, pp. 7-8)

As far as our ministry is concerned, we do not propose to look on idly or stand by silently while something contrary to the Augsburg Confession is imported into our churches and schools in which the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has appointed us teachers and shepherds. (Solid Declaration XII:6, p. 633)

APPENDIX 1:

I hope, indeed, that believers, those who want to be called Christians, know very well that the spiritual estate has been established and instituted by God, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood and bitter death of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. From his wounds indeed flow the sacraments (they used to depict this on broadsides). He paid dearly that men might everywhere have this office of preaching, baptizing, loosing, binding, giving the Sacrament, comforting, warning, and exhorting with God's Word, and whatever else belongs to the pastoral office. For this office not only helps to further and sustain this temporal life and all the worldly estates, but it also gives eternal life and delivers from sin and death, which is its proper and chief work. Indeed, it is only because of the spiritual estate that the world stands and abides at all; if it were not for this estate, the world would long since have gone down to destruction. I am not thinking, however, of the spiritual estate as we know it today in the monastic houses and the foundations with their celibate way of life, for it has long since fallen from its glorious beginning and is now nothing more that an estate founded by worldly wisdom for the sake of getting money and revenues. There is nothing spiritual about it except that the clergy are not married (they do not need marriage for they have something else in its place); except for this, everything about it is merely external, temporal, perishable pomp. They give no heed to God's Word and the office of preaching—and where the Word is not in use the clergy must be bad. The estate I am thinking of is rather one which has the office of preaching and the service of the Word and sacraments and which imparts the Spirit and salvation, blessings that cannot be attained by any amount of pomp and pageantry. It includes the work of pastors, teachers,

preachers, lectors, priests (whom men call chaplains), sacristans, schoolmasters, and whatever other work belongs to these offices and persons. This estate the Scriptures highly exalt and praise. St. Paul calls them God's stewards and servants [I Cor. 4:1], bishops [Acts 20:28]; doctors, prophets [I Cor. 12:28]; also God's ambassadors to reconcile the world to God, II Corinthians 5[:20].

Martin Luther, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" [1530], Luther's Works, Vol. 46 [Fortress Press, 1967], pp. 219-21

APPENDIX 2:

...necessary to the public execution of the priestly office of instructing, consoling, exhorting, denouncing sins, judging controversies over doctrine, etc., is a thorough knowledge of Christian theology, a faculty for teaching, skill in languages, speaking ability, and other gifts, and these are not equally manifest in all whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated; therefore those who lack these talents rightly yield their privileges to others better endowed than themselves. For God is not the author of disorder and confusion but of order and peace. Therefore, so that all things might be done decently and in order and to prevent barbaric confusion and a Cyclopean assembly where nobody heeds anybody in anything from existing in the church, Paul himself established a particular order of vocation and commands that this ministry be committed to suitable and faithful men who should teach others. In Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim. 3:1-7, he sets forth at length the qualifications of the bishop or minister of the Gospel who has the duty of performing and administering sacerdotal functions in the public assemblies of the church. Paul does not differentiate bishops, presbyters, and pastors; he assigns precisely equal dignity of rank and the same office to presbyters and to bishops—and it is in fact clear that there were many such in individual towns. In Acts 20[:28], Paul says to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus whom he has called to him: "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God." Note also Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1,2; etc. Later, by human authority, ranks were established among the ministers and bishops, and within the presbyterate there appeared the ostiary, the psalmist, the lector, the exorcist, the acolyte, the subdeacon,

the deacon, and the priest. One bishop—or overseer, or superintendent—was placed in charge of many presbyters or pastors of individual churches. An archbishop, or metropolitan, came to exercise authority over the bishops. ... This episcopal order and the ranks connected with it are not evil in themselves. They should not be disparaged when they serve to uphold the unity and harmony of the church in true evangelical doctrine and the preservation of Christian discipline and peace; when they maintain and spread right doctrine and reverent worship of God; when they do not claim that they possess the illicit power to interpret Scripture arbitrarily, to establish new articles of faith, to legislate in matters of doctrine and worship; and when they do not assume tyrannical authority over the other members of the church; etc.

David Chytraeus, On Sacrifice [1569] [Concordia Publishing House, 1962], pp. 98-102

APPENDIX 3:

Because many duties belong to the ministry of the church which cannot all conveniently be performed by one person or by a few, when the believers are very numerous—in order, therefore, that all things may be done in an orderly way, decently, and for edification, these duties of the ministry began, as the assembly of the church grew great, to be distributed among certain ranks of ministers which they afterward called taxeis (ranks) or tagmata (orders), so that each might have, as it were, a certain designated station in which he might serve the church in certain duties of the ministry. Thus in the beginning the apostles took care of the ministry of the Word and the sacraments and at the same time also of the distribution and dispensation of alms. Afterward, however, as the number of disciples increased, they entrusted that part of the ministry which has to do with alms to others, whom they called deacons. They also state the reason why they do this—that they might be able to devote themselves more diligently to the ministry of the Word and to prayer, without diversions. (Acts 6:1-4) This first origin of ranks or orders of ministry in the apostolic church shows what ought to be the cause, what the reason, purpose, and use of such ranks or orders—that for the welfare of the assembly of the church the individual duties which belong to the ministry might be attended

to more conveniently, rightly, diligently, and orderly, with a measure of dignity and for edification. And because the apostles afterward accepted into the ministry of teaching those from among the deacons who were approved, as Stephen and Philip, we gather that this also is a use of these ranks or orders, that men are first prepared or tested in minor duties so that afterward heavier duties may more safely and profitably be entrusted to them. That is what Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:10: "Let them also be tested first, and so let them minister." Likewise: "Those who serve well as deacons will gain a good rank for themselves." [1 Tim. 3:13, Vulgate] Thus there were in the worship service of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1) prophets and teachers, of whom the former either prophesied of future events or interpreted the more difficult passages of Scripture (1 Cor. 14:29-32), while the latter set forth the elements of Christian doctrine to the people (Heb. 5:12-14). Paul and Barnabas receive Mark into the ministry (Acts 13:5) not merely in order that he might render bodily services to them but so that they might be able to entrust some parts of the ministry of the Word to him, as Paul expressly says (Acts 15:38). There were in the church at Corinth apostles, prophets, and teachers; some spoke in tongues, some interpreted, some had psalms, some prayers, benedictions, and giving of thanks, not in private exercises but in public assemblies of the church. (1 Cor. 12:28-30; 14:26-27) In Eph. 4:11 the following ranks of ministers are listed: (1) apostles, who were not called to some certain church, and who had not been called through men, but immediately by Christ, and had the command to teach everywhere, and were furnished with the testimony of the Spirit and of miracles, that they might not err in doctrine but that their doctrine might be divine and heavenly, to which all the other teachers should be bound; (2) prophets, who either had revelations of future events or interpreted tongues and the Scriptures for the more advanced, for these things are ascribed to the prophets of the New Testament in 1 Cor. 14; (3) evangelists, who were not apostles and yet were not bound to some one certain church but were sent to different churches to teach the Gospel there, but chiefly to lay the first foundations; such an evangelist was Philip (Acts 21:8), and Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5), Tychicus, Sylvanus, etc.; that there were such evangelists also after the times of the apostles Eusebius testifies, Bk. 3, ch. 37, etc.; (4) pastors, who were placed over a certain flock, as Peter shows (1 Peter 5:2-3), and who not only taught but administered the sacraments and had

the oversight over their hearers, as Ezekiel (34:2 ff.) describes the pastoral office; (5) teachers, to whom the chief governance or oversight of the church was not entrusted but who only set the doctrine before the people in a simple manner, such as the catechists were later; thus Paul (Rom. 2:20) speaks of "a teacher of children," and the word teach is expressly used in this sense in Heb. 5:12. All these ranks the apostles include under the terms "presbytery" and "episcopacy." Sometimes they also call those to whom the ministry of Word and sacrament has been committed by the term "minister" ("servant"). (Col. 1: 7,23; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Cor. 3:6; 11:23; Eph. 3:7) Also Paul himself sometimes performed the ministry of the Word in such a way that he entrusted the administration of the sacraments to others. 1 Cor. 1:17: "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel." And in 1 Tim. 1:17 he mentions two kinds of presbyters, of whom some labored in preaching and teaching, while others had been placed in charge of ecclesiastical discipline. Tertullian also mentions this kind of presbytery, Apologeticus, ch. 39. This about completes the list of ranks into which we read that the ecclesiastical ministry was divided at the time of the apostles. This division has examples also in the Old Testament. For David, according to 1 Chron. 23 ff., divided the ministry of the temple into certain ranks or orders. Also in the synagogue there were readers, who only read the Scripture text. There were, besides, also teachers who interpreted the Scripture and applied the text for the purpose of exhortations (Luke 2:46; Acts 15:30-35). And this was the difference between the scribes and Pharisees. However, because of the present dispute, the following reminder must be added: (1) that there is no command in the Word of God, which or how many such ranks or orders there should be; (2) that there were not at the time of the apostles in all churches and at all times the same and the same number of ranks or orders, as can be clearly ascertained from the epistles of Paul, written to various churches; (3) that there was not, at the time of the apostles, such a division of these ranks, but repeatedly one and the same person held and performed all the duties which belong to the ministry, as is clear from the apostolic history. Therefore such orders were free at the time of the apostles and were observed for the sake of good order, decorum, and edification, except that at that time certain special gifts, such as tongues, prophecies, apostolate, and miracles, were bestowed on certain persons by God. These ranks, about which we have spoken until now,

were not something beside and beyond the ministry of the Word and sacraments, but the real and true duties of the ministry were distributed among certain ranks for the reasons already set forth. This example of the apostles the primitive church imitated for the same reason and in similar liberty. For the grades of the duties of the ministry were distributed, not however in identically the same way as in the church at Corinth or in that at Ephesus, but according to the circumstances obtaining in each church. From this one can gather what freedom there was in the distribution of the ranks. ... Therefore the ranks or orders were distinguished, not by empty titles but according to certain duties that belonged to the ministry of the church. The bishop taught the Word of God and had charge of the church's discipline. The presbyters taught and administered the sacraments. The deacons were in charge of the treasuries of the church, in order from them to provide sustenance for the poor and in particular for the ministers of the church. Afterward the deacons also began to be employed for assisting with a certain part of the ministry of the bishop and the presbyters, as also Jerome testifies, Ad Rusticum, such as for reading something publicly from the Scriptures, for teaching, exhorting, etc., admonishing the people to be attentive, to turn their hearts to the Lord, to proclaim peace, to prepare the things which belong to the administration of the sacraments, distribute the sacraments to the people, take those who are to be ordained to the bishop, to remind bishops about matters which pertain to discipline, etc. ...subdeacons were placed under them; they collected the offerings of the faithful which were contributed for the sustenance of the poor and the ministers. Besides these there were lectors, who read publicly to the people from the Scriptures, especially from the Old Testament, for the reading of the New Testament was thereafter given to the deacons. There were psalmists or cantors, who sang first what the whole assembly was accustomed to sing. There were doorkeepers, who at the time of the Sacrament, after the announcement by the deacon, put out of the church the Gentiles, catechumens, penitents, the possessed, heretics, and persons who had been excommunicated, for thus Dionysius describes this office. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons had their famuli, servants, companions, or followers, whose services they used when necessity demanded it, as Paul had used the services of Onesimus. They called these men acolytes. From this the ignorant afterward made candle bearers. Besides these

there were exorcists, who had the gift of casting out or restraining demons. This distribution of ranks in the more populous churches was useful for the sake of order, for decorum, and for edification by reason of the duties which belong to the ministry. In the smaller or less populous churches such a distribution of ranks was not judged necessary, and also in the more populous churches a like or identical distribution of these ranks was not everywhere observed. For this reason, for this use, and with this freedom many of these ranks of the ancient church are preserved also among us. ... For we do not outrightly reject or condemn the distribution of these ranks, such as it was in the apostolic and in the ancient church, but use them in our own churches where necessary and for edification, in the way we have said.

Martin Chemnitz, Examination of the Council of Trent [1565-73], Part II [Concordia Publishing House, 1978], pp. 682-88

"Behold, He Prayeth"

by S. C. Ylvisaker

1947 Evangelical Lutheran Synod Convention

Introduction

The subject of Prayer lies close to the heart of every Christian, for prayer is his very breath. It concerns us all, for without it we could not live the Christian life. It is precious, for God has added His blessing to Christian prayer in the words: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"—Matt. 21, 22. Prayer is as the flower of Christian faith, fragrant, beautiful, spreading happiness as it also receives unto itself the dewy gladness from above. Prayer is the adornment of a Christian, revealing the inner beauty of his heart: humble penitence, loving trust, firm confidence—it is John leaning on the bosom of his Lord. Prayer is that voice of a child of God which can not be stilled. In adversity it cries for help; in happiness it thanks God; in success it asks the blessing of God; in sorrow it asks for comfort, in sin and for forgiveness, in difficulty for guidance and wisdom, in perils of mind or body for deliverance, and in the lonely hours for the sympathy and understanding of God. Prayer is the music of the heart, reflecting all its moods, speaking all its needs, a calm and quiet pastoral when the days are untroubled, but as a raging storm, troubled, impassioned, loudly crying and anguished when the storms of temptation or doubt or suffering or misunderstanding and persecution rage high. Some prayers would not be heard if the Spirit of God did not translate even secret moanings and groanings and sighings into prayers understood and known by God. Some prayers would bring a curse, if the Spirit were not quick to change our ignorant and unwise, even thoughtless or childish demands into requests that please God and into prayers for such things that He knows would be for our good and bring a blessing to us and others with and through us.

To some, prayer is a means of grace, actually conveying the grace of God to man without the Word and Sacraments. To others it is a sort of emotional privilege, and indefinable manner of communication with a

Higher Being, whoever that may be, which in the end, if analyzed carefully, is nothing else than an appeal to self to do your best. Others find in what they call prayer a quite satisfactory means of fulfilling spiritual obligations, and they recite their rosary or other prayer-formulas by the hundreds or by the hour, assured that they have now performed their religious duties for the day. Men pray to unknown gods today as they did in ancient Athens, wondering all the while why their nameless and meaningless gods do not answer—like the priests of Baal on ancient Carmel. They pray in the form of vile curses and oaths, and they do not consider that their blasphemy has effectively shut the door of the heart of God to these prayers, as well as to those which in the hour of need arise so frantically from these same cursing lips. What perversion of prayer God in heaven must hear to weary Him who hates all falsehood and deceit and hypocrisy!

Prayer is not a means of grace. It is not and must not be a mere matter of form—as when men of all religious faiths and sects gather at baccalaureate services, Memorial Day exercises and the like, to add dignity to their rites by so-called invocations and benedictions. Prayer is not a work by which we help save ourselves as by a good deed well done. Prayer is not a mere emotional uplift by which we are encouraged to put forth the better effort. It is not as a stray message sent out into space for some stray god to pick up at his convenience. It is not simply a jumble of words, sung or spoken or thought, as when many, disagreed among themselves as to their actual intent, put on a show of agreement in prayer in order to please their own vanity or that of others. Prayer is not an opportunity to boast of one's own religious fervor and to decry the attitude of others—the old Pharisee and the new pietist. Prayer is not what men would make of it but what God has ordained.

What then, is Prayer?
The Scriptures do not leave us in doubt.

a) Prayer is, above all, an *activity of faith*. It is not the only activity, for Scripture mentions others such as love, trust, confidence. But these are all intimately associated with each other and connect with faith.

When a man is in need of companionship, of advice, of help, of sympathy and understanding, of comfort, he will naturally turn to a friend whom he trusts. He will ask him for such help, if he has the confidence that this

friend can help and that his friend loves him enough to grant him the help he needs. Prayer to a Christian is the expression of this need, this trust and confidence. This is what we call the activity of faith. One who does not ask his friend for help has thereby confessed, at least to himself, that he does not quite trust his friend as much as he thought. And a Christian who does not ask God for help, who does not communicate with God in prayer, has thereby proved, again at least to himself, that his loving trust, i.e. his faith, in God was not real and living. It was merely pretended.

If you would know that prayer is an activity and not a dead form or ritual, study the scenes we know from the life of Christ: in Gethsemane, on the Cross, in the night hours in the lonely desert or on a lofty mountain, when He like Jacob of old struggled with God in prayer, when He wrought His miracles of healing or when He prayed the intercessory prayer (John 17) for His own. Or consider an Eliezer when he prayed for the success of his mission (Gen. 24, 12-14), a Jacob before he met Esau (Gen. 32, 9-12), a Moses (Exod. 32, 11-13; 33, 12 f.; Ps. 90), a David in his psalms, a Jonah in the belly of the fish (Joh. 2, 2-9), an Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18, 36.37). When Paul prayed, or the publican or the malefactor or the Syrophenician woman or the centurion or blind Bartimaeus, they showed by their very asking that they believed, i.e. trusted and had faith in Him to Whom they prayed, and thus their faith was active by this turning to Christ in prayer. And the Christians down through the centuries and those whom we have known? We admit that there has been much formalism, much hypocrisy and much so-called dead Christianity in the church; but we can not dismiss the prayers of the sainted martyrs, of such teachers of the church as Polykarp, Athanasius, Augustin, Luther, Walther, or of our beloved fathers and mothers with this cruel remark. These lived in faith and in prayer, they labored with a prayer on their lips, they slept in faith having folded their hands in prayer. And today God finds this activity of faith in prayer to be no altogether lost. The very fact that our church is living today, nay, that the world still stands, is proof that our Christians are active in prayer.

b) This prayer-life of a Christian is **commanded** by God, and that by innumerable passages of Scripture, of which we have selected some:

> 2 Chron. 7, 14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn

from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Is. 55, 6: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:"

Joel 2, 32: "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered."

Matt. 26, 41: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Luk. 18, 1: "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Eph. 6, 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Phil. 4, 6: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

1 Thess. 5, 17: "Pray without ceasing."

1 Tim. 2, 1: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men."

1 Tim. 2, 8: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Ps. 50, 15: "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

c) We need not be in doubt, then, that God wants us to pray.
By using the imperative or commanding form of the verb, as Scripture does in so many of these passages, God makes prayer an **urgent** thing. In so far there is no difference between this command to pray and the other spoken from Sinai: Thou shalt, thou shalt not! Even those commandments from Sinai we too often read and hear as if they speak to us out of thunder and lightning as from an angry God, filled with wrath and dire threatenings against a people whom He hates. We then forget that they, too, are spoken by a loving God to a people whom He loved and which He in love has redeemed unto loving service of Him. And when the same God here

seems to command, let us not forget that His commandment is spoken in love to those who love Him. His command then becomes as the command of a king to a subject he would honor and to whom he would accord a great privilege. The Word of God has spread before the children of God a vast store of good things: spiritual good things which Christ purchased and prepared for us by His life, His death and resurrection; earthly and bodily good things prepared for us by the almighty hand of God in creation. Now He says: "Come, for all things are now ready." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Joh. 16, 24. To understand this correctly we call this an invitation to the honored members of the household of God. These members are commanded to pray, to ask, to demand even, for they have rights to maintain, they have an ownership to claim, they have privileges to enjoy. When Christians do not heed this invitation, it must be because they think they do not need what God offers, or that they do not believe the promise, or trust that these good things are for them—in which case they do not actually believe and their Christianity is mere hypocrisy, a worthless and inactive thing, dead or dying. These commands of God to a Christian to pray can not be a new burden and another heavy work to do. They instead lift the eyes of a Christian to see his new glory and estate, for he is a son and heir with the privileges of such a son and heir. The kingdom of the Father, with all that this kingdom owns, is his for the asking. Let him ask, then, believing, for the Word of God is this: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21, 22.

d) prayer is carefully described in Scripture.

That we may not err in the carrying out of this command of God, He describes prayer more in detail. In the passage just quoted we note the words **ask, believing**. We may ask for any thing for which we may ask **in faith**. Furthermore, the command is addressed to the disciples, i.e. to those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord. This involves that fundamental thing, redemption from sin with its dread consequences. He who is invited to pray is accordingly he who, having seen the misery of his own sinfulness, has found forgiveness, life and salvation in Christ's atoning blood. This is basic in all Christian prayer. Thus this matter of prayer, too, is made to center about the great basic doctrine of justification, and without the gospel of justification there could be no Christian prayer. Again, Jesus invites us to prayer **in His name**: "And whatsoever ye shall

ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" —Joh. 14, 13. 14. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" —Joh. 14,6.

From these passages it is clear that there is only one way to the Father's heart, through faith in Christ. Only one name will count in prayer, the name of Jesus Christ. We may heap up all the names of heathen gods, of Mary and the innumerable saints of the Catholic church, the names of pious forefathers and families and church denominations, of this lodge god or that, of pious YOU and pious ME —all counts as nothing, for the words stand in all eternity: "Whatsoever ye" (believers in Me) "shall ask in my name" (none other), "that will I do", and "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We need spend no time here on the negative. A Christian believes these words of Christ as he believes in Christ Himself, and he turns in abhorrence from every other name to Him Who alone can fulfill the promise.

Then let us in gratitude recognize the privilege of this expression "In His Name". That includes faith and trust in His name. It means that we may and shall use this name as we approach the Father's throne of grace, as if we say: "This, O heavenly Father, is that for which Thy Son has paid with His blood, which He has told me that I may ask for with full confidence. It is because I am assured that I am asking only that which pleases Him that I dare to come, and His name on this request is a pledge and guarantee of good faith in making the request as well as of a God-pleasing content of the request. I ask as though Thy dear Son asks by and through me. Thou canst not refuse a prayer that comes from Thy dear Son." In this manner we may ask for the greatest and best things, for we know that Jesus wants us to have them, since He died to give them to us: forgiveness of sin, life, salvation, the truth of God, the love and mercy of God, the strengthening of our faith, the victory of faith, heaven. In this same spirit we may ask for laborers in the vineyard, the extension of God's kingdom, for comfort against sin and despair. Since the Saviour has told us that we may ask for all of this, then we may also ask for them in His name.

He has not told me as definitely and clearly that He wants me to be rich in earthly goods, to be healthy in body, to have a nice home, or that I may have success in this or that venture, even if this concerns the church in some outward way. It may rather be God's good pleasure that some

seeming accident befall me or my immediate family, that our church be kept poor, or that we meet with other apparent difficulties. These texts therefore warn us that we do not arrogate to ourselves the use of Christ's name in these earthly things in the same way as when we ask for spiritual and heavenly things. There we would far rather do as the example of Christ Himself impels us to do, that we in all earthly things let God's wisdom be our wisdom and choice, let His decision prevail over our folly and ignorance, so that we pray: O heavenly Father, I ask Thee graciously that this child recover speedily from the sickness which has brought it to the brink of death, —that I may be given riches to help the needy and the church, —that I may become an orator to present Thy truth with greater power and success, —however, I do not know but that for this child for whom I pray so heroically, if he become well, may not later on fall away in sin and unbelief, —whether, if I become rich, my riches may not become only another temptation for the flesh and for the church, —whether oratory, too, may not become a stumbling block to faith and to the kind of success that Thy gospel should gain —therefore grant these things, O all-wise and ever-gracious God, only according to Thy good pleasure and the glory of Thy most holy Name. Thy will be done." Such a prayer we also pray in the name of Christ, for it is based on His work and promise, and we dare to approach the Father only as those who are children of God through faith in His Son. Let this difference between the certain and the uncertain, the spiritual and the material, between the heavenly and the earthly always be felt. AS if this makes the one prayer more uncertain than the other? Not in this sense that God may hear the one and not the other. And yet, in the one case we may name the very things for which we ask, knowing by the definite promise of God that He will give just that: forgiveness of sin, strengthening of faith, knowledge of His truth, and the like; in the other, the bodily good things, we may also name and with the full assurance that God in heaven hears our prayer for Christ's sake, but fully assured, too, that God will grant that which He in His infinite wisdom knows to be far better than our best judgment or wish. In His divine hands we safely entrust our fondest wish and our greatest need. It is in this sense our Saviour has said (Matt. 21, 21): "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree. but also if ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done." If we can pray such a prayer fully

assured that the moving of that mountain is something entirely necessary for the Kingdom and for the glory of God, and that this very thing is the will of Christ, then we may pray for this in the name of Christ. This the apostles could do, for they had the direct revelation of God, and they healed the sick, raised the dead, walked on the water, and Moses struck the waters of the Red Sea and they parted so that the Israelites passed through on dry land. Let us rather leave these heroic and miraculous powers in His hands Who knows the hour of their need better than we.

To the Biblical concept of prayer belongs more than the privilege of asking God for spiritual and bodily good things. If we turn again to the prayers of Christ, to the model prayer taught by Christ, to the book of prayers of the Old Testament, and to the prayers of the prophets and apostles, we shall find that these include much that we can not classify as requests. The Lord's Prayer rises to a mighty climax: "for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen." This doxology is rightly treated by Luther as a part of the prayer itself. The Highpriestly prayer (Joh. 17) includes such statements as these: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." Many other verses in this remarkable prayer similarly. In His prayer at the grave of Lazarus Jesus says: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Joh. 11, 41.42. In His prayer on the Cross Jesus cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark 15,34. And again: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Luk. 23, 46. In eleven verses of the ninetieth psalm, called "A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God", Moses pours out his heart to God, enumerating blessings, calling to mind the vanity of human life and earthly good things, confessing sins, —all as a fitting background for the petitions which follow. The psalms generally, classed as prayers, follow the same pattern and give the believers the occasion to speak out of a sick and sorrowful heart, a happy heart overflowing with gratitude, a heart that looks up to God with holy awe and then again with childlike love and confidence, a heart that praises God in His heavenly majesty, acknowledges His faith-

ful shepherding, exalts Him as his one Redeemer, looks to Him as the only Comforter against sin and every affliction. Prayer is there seen to be a sacred opportunity, in the silent night or in the brightness of the day, to communicate most intimately with a loving Father in heaven, to lay before Him the innermost thoughts of the heart, concealing nothing. There, at the foot of the Cross, the believer has found the one spot where he may be truly honest and be as he is. There he may uncover the whole sordid mess, which is his own heart, and know that He Who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebr. 4,15) will understand and extend the hand of sympathy. There he will be welcomed by the loving arms of His Saviour in every temptation and distress as Peter was, in every confession of sin and remorse over sin as David was; there, too, he will be received when in victory over sin he can rejoice, when he has experienced anew the faithful help of God and has come to give thanks, when he has been convinced again of the glory of His Redeemer and comes to bring his faltering praise. There the Christian is granted the heavenly privilege of being alone with his God without fear, be rebuked by that eye which saw Peter's sin and knows ours, but be invited back to a full forgiveness by Him Who proved His love by His death in the sinner's place. Prayer means all of this, and more, ever more. The more it is used, the greater will become its intimate companionship. The Psalms are well worth our exhaustive study from this point of view alone, that we may learn to realize better the full meaning and significance of this personal association with God in prayer. For that is what it is, an associating with God whereby we confide to Him all things —our innermost thoughts and needs, our thanksgiving and praise, our confession, our joy and happiness, our loneliness, our griefs and disappointments, our expectation of help and salvation.

The church as the communion of believers has learned this and it has brought its response. Thus we have recorded from the prayer-life of Christians down through the centuries hymns of prayer, supplication, praise, giving of thanks, of confession of sin, of faith in the forgiveness of sin. These hymns and prayers record the Christina's temptations and battles and victories through Christ. There are hymns and prayers to be used at significant occasions in our life: baptism, instruction, confirmation, marriage, anniversaries, celebration of Holy Communion, burial. Blessed is he who has learned them well, that he may turn also to these as he stands

before the throne of grace and lacks words of his own by which he may approach his God.

The prayer-life of the individual Christian is largely a secret thing between him and his God. Let it be so according to the words of our Saviour: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly". Matt. 6,6. There is no such thing as mass Christianity, mass conversion, mass faith. So God deals always with the individual. So prayer, love, and the other fruits of faith are always an individual thing. God furthermore knows the peculiar temptations and weaknesses of the human heart, even after it has learned to believe in Christ. That heart is a proud and selfish thing in so far as the old Adam is still there. It loves the praise of men. It is brave when it parades before men but very cowardly when facing God alone. Thus the Pharisees would prefer he street-corner for their praying exercises, while the Publican stood alone. But it is the Publican-sort God loves, and so He sends us into the closet where all sham and pretense flees, where pride cannot stand, but only humility in the knowledge that God is there and deceit is of no avail. Let him who prays go into the closet alone with God!

And yet, God invites to and urges public prayer and fellowship with other Christians in prayer. The Third Commandment includes the invitation to assemble about the word of God and to join in worship by hearing the Word read and expounded, by confessing the name of God, by praying, giving thanks and praising God. The Old Testament church thus worshipped together publicly, and so many of the Psalms bear record to this that joint prayer was an essential part of these services. The church of the New Testament likewise. Of the first Christians after the resurrection of Christ we read: "These all continued with one according prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Acts 1,14. And again we read: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2, 41.42. Acts 12,12: "And then he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." Acts 16,13: "And on the

Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Acts 20, 36: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all." Acts 13,3: "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

It is evidently of such joint worship and joint prayer the Epistle to the Hebrews admonishes that we must not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" —Hebr. 10, 25; for the promise is there (Matt. 18, 20): "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We note again how the name of Christ enters in also in connection with joint and public prayer. Fellow-believers are here joined together most intimately as those who kneel before the same altar, acknowledge one faith in Jesus their Saviour and now voice their agreement before God and men. As it is a beautiful confession when it is said of Paul, "Behold, he prayeth", thus it is a beautiful thing also when it can be said of two or three, Behold, they pray together. But joint prayer presupposes agreement in prayer as Christ says: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" —Matt. 18, 19. On this basis of a common faith in Christ and of agreement in those things for which we ask, our Saviour invites us to join hands and hearts in praying the most glorious prayer of all: "Our Father who art in heaven..." By this address we are joined with all those who in spirit are agreed in matters of faith. In this most intimate circle of believers we go on to pray together for those great things: that the name of our common God be hallowed by the preaching of His most holy truth and by our holy living in accordance with that truth; that His glorious Kingdom, where we are sheltered together under His wings, loving Him and beloved by Him, be extended here and abroad; that His holy and gracious will, perfect, glorious, heavenly, may be reflected and find expression in this sacred communion, His church; that we together may feed our bodies with the bounties of His creation, not forgetting that we do this, too, together and owe one another the love of a common faith also in material things; that we together may be forgiven by God in Christ, even as we, too, come before Him as forgiving children of His; that He, our mighty and faithful Saviour and Shepherd be near us in the hour of temptation and danger and battle to bring us back from every wayward path and

deliver us from every evil, even this evil word itself, from death and hell. And together we cry in triumphant faith: Lord, our heavenly Father, Thou alone **wilt** hear and grant this joint prayer of ours, for Thine is the Kingdom and we are those subjects of thine whom Thou hast loved and for whom thy Son hath died; Thou **canst** hear and grant our prayer, for Thine is the power, almighty and ready to save; Thou **must** hear and grant our joint prayer, for Thine is the glory only when Thou keepest Thy sacred promises, spoken long since by those whom Thou hast sent. In this spirit Christians come together for joint worship, singing hymns, praying, confessing as with one mouth their common faith and their common needs and their common requests; for they believe the same, hope the same, love the same God and Saviour, nay even experience the same temptations and sorrows and weaknesses. They are a fellowship in the real sense, for God has bound them together into one holy communion with Christ. How we should cherish joint prayer with our brethren in the faith and fervently pray God together also for this that nothing and no one may be allowed to corrupt and disrupt it!

e) the manner of prayer.

The manner of prayer may seem unimportant, and it is, if we consider how one may fold the hands, another bow the knees, a third stand downcast, smiting himself on the breast like the Publican, a fourth look up confidently into heaven whence cometh his help. One may cross himself, another may be too feeble to move hands or lips. One may use an eloquent language, another be dependent on the Holy Spirit to translate his anguish of heart into prayer. One may cry out in impassioned speech, another remain calm and even cheerful in his quiet faith. But in all of this God looks upon the heart (1 Sam. 16, 7). There is beauty in prayer. For look again on the true Christian when he prays: in the face of his sin and guilt he is humble (Ps. 51). As a believer he is trustful (Ps. 23. 46), loving (Ps. 84), unselfish so that he continually prays also for others, especially his fellow-believers (Ps. 85). In his faith he is persistent and like Jacob he will not let his Saviour go until He bless him (Ps. 80. Eph. 6, 18). He studies the will of God and prays in accordance with that will (Ps. 119; 1 Joh. 5,14). He prays with a forgiving spirit even as God has forgiven him (Mark 11, 25. 26; Matt. 6, 14; Col. 3, 13). He prays everywhere (1 Tim. 2, 8) and continues instant in prayer (Rom. 12, 12). He remembers that "God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and

doeth His will, him he heareth" (Joh. 8, 31) and that "the prayer of the upright is his delight" (Prov. 15, 8. 29). When necessary the believer will devote himself to prayer, will "fast and pray" (Matt. 17, 21; Mark 9, 29; Acts 13, 3; Luk. 2, 37). Altogether, the Christian is happy in prayer, rejoicing in the privilege of this sacred communion with Him for Whom his whole being longs and Whose Gospel of forgiveness and salvation has given life and hope. To a Christian, prayer thus becomes as holy incense which is wafted as a loving sacrifice ("and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" —Joh. 12, 3), proclaiming to all men the loving gratitude and trusting dependence of the Christian toward his God.

f) Christian prayer is blessed by God.

This individual and joint prayer, commanded by God, has the blessing of God. We mark these passages:

> Matt. 6, 6: "And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."
>
> Matt. 7, 7.8: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."
>
> Matt. 21, 22: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." See Mark 11, 24.
>
> Luk. 11, 13: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"
>
> Joh. 11, 40: (in the very presence of death): "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"
>
> Joh. 14, 13. 14: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."
>
> Joh. 15, 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Luk. 22, 32: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Luk. 1, 13: "Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard."

Acts 10, 30.31: "And, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard."

James 5, 16. 17. 18: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

James 5, 13-15: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

1 Pet. 3,12: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers."

1 Joh. 5, 14. 15: :And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

James 1, 5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Ps. 2, 8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance."

Jer. 29, 12. 13: "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Gen. 20, 17: "So Abraham prayed unto God: And God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid servants."

Numb. 11, 3: "And when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched."

1 Sam. 1, 26. 27: "And she said, Oh my Lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him."

In other words, prayer is not mere wishful thinking or vain chatter. God Himself has added His word of promise to true Christian prayer. He has blessed it with His heavenly blessing. He has in one clear instance after the other fulfilled His promises, granting earthly good things and spiritual good things, to the individual and to the church.

As a result of prayer God has reached down from heaven to halt the laws of nature or to use them in a special way to do His bidding; He has rescued from bodily danger and harm, has protected and blessed and extended His kingdom; He has healed the sick, comforted and strengthened and guided clergy and lay, learned and unlearned, parents and children. He has established peace by the forgiveness of sin; He has preserved in faith, raised the fallen, cheered the faint. He has heard the mother crying for her child, the pastor pleading for his parishioners, the father for his family, the king for his subjects. The whole church is as one great praying band, holding aloft the promises of God and receiving at God's hands the blessings God has attached to Christian prayer, thus enriching the church, nay the whole world with these blessings of God, these answers to Christina prayer. Eternity alone will reveal what prayers have wrought.

g) The doctrine of prayer is to be classed with the other clear teachings of Scripture.

When we now, as in retrospect, consider again the many passages of Scripture which deal with the subject of prayer, the careful definition and description of prayer, the things for which we may pray, how we should pray, to Whom our prayers should be directed, we must say that those err greatly who would claim that this is not doctrine. Whatever God teaches in Scripture is doctrine, no matter whether this appears in the form of the mere presentation of truth or truths, or it is brought by way of a command or invitation or exhortation or admonition, in the way of comfort or Gospel news or blessing. God does not deal in the abstract as if He sets before us

a teaching with no reference to God Himself as the Saviour or us sinners as those who are to be saved. It is true, we seem to teach and to learn so much apparently in the abstract, as so much learning, and yet no physician, no scientist, no musician can separate what he knows about these various fields from the living body with which he deals, the chemical compound which is actually there before him, the piece of music which he is composing or analyzing and studying. There has too often been a studying and teaching of the Biblical truths which unconsciously forgets that theology and doctrine are, after all, concerned with God as He is, with man as he is, with faith and truth, sin, death, hell, heaven, prayer and all the rest as something that is there not only theoretically and in the abstract, but actually, really, as living realities. And if we remember that prayer was defined as an activity of faith, then that does not merely mean an abstract doctrine or idea, but it is something which is real, which acts, does.

This doctrine regarding prayer furthermore does not stand alone. It leans on other doctrines in such a way that it can not be separated from them. They form the basis, give the incentive, provide the proper motive, grant hope and boldness, even point to the content and ultimate goal. Above all, they direct us to the One Source of every good thing for which we would pray. Thus it is not our feelings and emotions that drive us to pray, but the teachings of God about our innate sinfulness and helplessness in all things material and spiritual. It is the Holy Spirit which creates that faith in our hearts which is the mother of prayer. It is the loving invitation and command of God that gives us courage. It is faith, created in our hearts by God Himself, that seizes upon this invitation and acts in prayer. It is Christ Who has forgiven our sins and clothed us in His righteousness to Whom faith looks as the Mediator with the father also in prayer. It is the Gospel message which, as a means of God's grace, brings and seals the word of forgiveness and promise to us, so that we believe in the promises of God also with regard to prayer. And thus we might go on to list the one teaching of the Bible after the other as teachings directly or indirectly related to the doctrine of prayer. What would be left if we should remove all of this? The simple answer would be this: then we would have the prayer of the pietist, for whom prayer is largely an emotional experience. Or we should have the prayer of the Catholic, who does not believe Scripture when it says: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Joh. 2, 1) —and he prays instead to Mary and the innumerable saints. Then we would pray as the lodgeman, to whom every god is the same god. Or as the unionist, to whom doctrines, definite teachings about prayer or anything else are an abomination, and this becomes his doctrine against which he tolerates no gainsaying, so that he will bring Jew and Catholic and Protestant and even pagan into a prayer that is addressed to no god in particular, says nothing and accomplishes nothing. Then we would fall into the similar trap of the fanatic, to whom neither the content nor the fulfillment are as important as the fever-pitch of excitement which prayer effects. Then our prayer, finally, would be as that of the unbeliever, who scoffs at prayer until he is caught in an extremity of danger or of despair, and then blindly reaches out into the dread unknown, calling frantically upon some god to help whom he does not know, whom he has despised in his life and now hopes against hope will be at hand to save —but He is gone, and the darkness of eternity gathers round as the dread reality it is. Pity the man who, when he dies, must die alone!

What endangers Prayer?

a) in our own personal life.

We are faced in our own personal life with the temptation to make light of those things of which Scripture has warned us that they endanger Christian prayer. When the Saviour taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer, He uncovered the one danger when He added these significant words: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" —Matt. 6, 14. 15. See mark 11, 25. In other words, and unforgiving spirit on our part will effectively block the way to the Father-heart of God, even as it has shut our own heart to the reception of the very thing for which we should pray the most fervently, the forgiveness of our own many sins. Again, when the Saviour bids us to pray "believing" (matt. 21, 22), He means just that; for to pray without faith, i.e. trust in the promises of God, is mere hypocrisy, and to such Pharisees Jesus cries "Woe unto you." (Matt. 23, 14) and says "They have their reward" and may expect not to hear answer to their prayer (Matt. 6, 5). —There is a further danger in letting prayer become a thoughtless habit as in the church services, in the "recitation" of memorized prayers at certain stated times of the day or night, and the like. And yet, far rather the good habit of

memorized prayers than the bad habit of no prayer at all. May God in mercy stir up our hearts that our prayers become the living expression of our faith that they should be. And may He also in mercy keep us from that fear of making prayer a habit, which in the end too often becomes the excuse of a lazy and indifferent Christianity which, because it does not pray, robs the person himself, his fellow-Christians and the world in general of the many blessings God has stored up in prayer.

We endanger prayer, furthermore, by unwillingness to give up the very sin against which God wants us to pray. Let us say, a man has a special weakness toward the use of intoxicating liquors, and as a Christian he prays for strength to overcome this temptation. God points him clearly to the Word and to prayer. The Word directs him to the avoidance of certain companions, to greater persistence in prayer, to continued use of the Word in public and private worship —for the Word is the very power of God —but the man insists on his evil companionship, begins gradually to neglect the Word and prayer. Then he need not wonder that the effect of prayer does not seem to come. It is as necessary for us today as it was for Jacob of old to struggle with God in prayer, lest He do not bless us. In this case it is not the failure of prayer that is to be recorded but the overpowering love of sin and the refusal of this man to give up the pleasures of sin that he might receive the answer to prayer that God is offering. Thus when these pray, they do not actually believe, and they do not actually want those things for which they pray —their prayers are not offered in faith.

b) Again, we may endanger prayer by not distinguishing carefully between prayer **for** and prayer **with** others.

The expression "to pray with" others is apparently used very seldom in Scripture. See Acts 20, 36. It is implied in such references which were quoted in an earlier section of this paper dealing with joint prayer, but we note here again the definite limitations mentioned there: agreement in faith and in the things for which we ask. On the other hand, the Bible again and again, by almost innumerable passages urges us to pray **for** each other, for the church, for the government, for those who sin and err, for the sick and sorrowful, for the sending out of laborers into the vineyards of the church, for our enemies. In other words, when the believer stands alone, there is nothing for which he may not pray and there is no limit or bounds to the wide prerogative of his prayer, so long as it is offered in

Christ's name with all that this implies. But in the case of joint prayer, whether that be in private or in public, agreement is and must be presupposed. We can not pray the second petition, for example, of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come", with a Catholic, because he there is praying for the extension of the Catholic Church. We can not pray the first petition of the same prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name", with one who differs with us in doctrine, and that, any doctrine, however small that he may be advocating; for he prays for the perpetuation of this doctrine, I for its destruction. We can not pray the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread", with one who does not believe that our livelihood is given us freely by a gracious Father in heaven, but earned and paid for by the toil and sweat of our own efforts. We can not pray the fifth petition, "Forgive us our trespasses", with one who believes, as the synergist does, that we must earn this forgiveness at least in part of that forgiveness is dependent to some extend on the degree of our worthiness, the earnestness of our prayer, the seriousness of our contrition, the piety of our lives. Whether the words, the form, the manner of prayer is the same is immaterial; but there can be no joint prayer unless we pray to the same Christ, for the same thing, being one with each other in spirit and in truth.

Since this particular hindrance to the proper exercise of prayer is rapidly becoming more acute among us, it is well to treat the subject more fully. Men argue in favor of a more promiscuous use of joint prayer and of fellowship in prayer. It should be sufficient, they say, to recognize the other party as a fellow-believer in Christ, in order that we may join hands with him in prayer. But we forget so easily that we who can not read the heart can judge of a person's Christianity only be his outward confession, his attitude of loyalty to the Word which Christ has spoken. If he then refuses to accept the plain word of Scripture in this or that doctrine, what of his faith in Christ?

Some would distinguish between joint prayer and fellowship in prayer, as if joint prayer were only a temporary and occasional thing, where two or more individuals or groups, facing some special emergency and recognizing each other as Christians, undertake to join in a prayer for some special good thing upon which they are apparently agreed: it might be at a time of shipwreck, asking for God's blessing when eating in each others' houses, for the direction of the Holy Spirit when discussing teachings of God's Word. Fellowship in prayer would then have to do with

such joint prayer where the two or more parties have mutually recognized each other as thoroughly agreed in matters of confession, so that they may at any time and in any cause pray together publicly as full brethren who mean the same and speak the same. The one, joint prayer, is more casual, the other of a regularly established sort; the one implies that the two recognize each other as Christians, admitting at the same time that they may differ in certain points of doctrine, while the other is dependent upon full recognition as brethren in all matters of confession.

It must be said that this is a distinction without a difference and plainly one which the Scriptures do not allow. When the Scriptures speak of prayer, they speak as to the individual Christian in the overwhelming number of passages. In other words, the concern of Scripture in this particular doctrine is the Christian alone with his God, and thus the whole question of joint prayer and of fellowship in prayer does not assume the prominent place that some would insist that it has. Even in case of emergency it is Jesus Who prays for His disciples, not with them (Joh. 17), and Paul who prays alone, not with those among whom he was shipwrecked (Acts 27). Let those who are so quick to urge joint prayer on such occasion remember this! Where joint prayer is mentioned and urged, Scripture takes for granted that there is spiritual agreement among those who pray together—thus in the church of the Old Testament as evidenced in the Psalms and in such passages of the New Testament as Matt. 18, 19. 20. and Acts 1, 14. to pray only the one petition of the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be Thy Name", with a false teacher will make us partakers in his sin (2 Joh. 10.11). Hear the passages again:

> Matthew 18, 19. 20: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
>
> Acts 1, 14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."
>
> 2 John 1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed:

If we would study the propriety of joint prayer or of prayer-fellowship with those who err in any point from the teachings of our Lord as revealed in the sacred Scriptures, we must consider this question in connection with the whole subject of joint worship, for joint prayer is evidently classified with joint worship, as in Acts 2. 42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Thus pulpit and altar fellowship are placed side by side with joint prayer or fellowship in prayer.

Let him who professes to believe in Christ heed His Word, which by plain and definite passages enjoins on us all that we flee all error—Matt. 7, 15; avoid those who teach otherwise than the Word of God teaches—Rom. 16, 17 and show our faithful allegiance to Him Who loved us by faithful allegiance to His Word—Matt. 10. 32.33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

To claim to love the Saviour and His Word (Joh. 14, 23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words") and then to make light of that which is opposed to that Word and which some would teach as the Word of God though it is not, is tempting god, offending the church (Matt. 18, 7), becoming guilty of hypocrisy and calling down the woe from heaven which God speaks against those who add to or take from the Word of God (Rev. 22, 18. 19), To put error on a par with truth is that great sin of which Paul warns us in 2 Cor. 6: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? . . . Wherefore come out from among the, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the "(literally, an) "unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." To claim to love the brethren and then go with them on their way of error, praying with them and worshipping with them despite their error, is not true love but a hypocritical love which will only encourage them to continue undisturbed on their mistaken and fateful course. Let us remember also that refusal to pray with an adherent of false doctrine is not a judging of the heart, which God has reserved unto Himself, but a judging of error which God enjoins. In these matters, too, we are not dealing as with weak

Christians whom we must be careful not to offend, but as with a pestilence against which we must guard and defend the church of God, not by embracing those who have become afflicted by it, but by heeding the Lord's stern command to avoid them. This, however, in no wise hinders us from doing that other bidding of the same Lord of praying **for** them and testifying to them. We should love the person and show this love by praying **for** him; but we should hate the error and refuse to pray **with** him who holds it. In this there is no contradiction, for thus we show love to God and His Word and His church, and thus, too, we show true love to him who needs the admonition that God gives and the loving prayer of a true friend who would bring the erring one back tot the fellowship of the saints and the household of God.

May God in mercy preserve our church from that poisonous contagion which threatens us today by a false teaching of fellowship in prayer where God forbids such fellowship, that the pestilence of unionism may not make a pesthouse out of that temple which God has called a house of prayer, a communion of saints (Ps. 149, 1), the body of Christ (Eph. 1, 23), the building of God (1 Cor. 3, 9), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21, 2). These are sacred names not to be defiled, even as the church of Christ, is a heavenly creation not to be disturbed or defaced by the reasonings and perverse notions of men. Let us by sound doctrine and holy practice preserve the gracious blessing of true Christian prayer among us, and let us in true Christian loyalty and love heed those admonitions against error also on this front by which the Lord of the church protects His Zion against the floods of pietistic and Pharisaic unfaithfulness.

The whole subject of prayer causes us to look up, not down. Though sin oppress as in the case of the Publican, and the unworthiness of our life and whole being moves us to stare in dismay at its enormity of filth and guilt, the grace of God in Christ draws us to a wondering contemplation of a love that is beyond comprehension, a glory that is beyond compare—and as Paul, lost in that wonder born of faith, prayed, so we pray and thank God for the untold privilege. When the 103rd Psalm closes with that mighty climax, calling upon the saints and angels to bless the Lord and then adds: "Bless the Lord, O my soul", it is as an invitation from heaven to join those heavenly hosts in a heavenly experience. Together with them we lift hands and hearts cleansed by the blood of Christ, in

prayer and adoration, in thanksgiving and praise—a sacred privilege accorded only to the children of God.

Then let us on bended knee thank God also for this very gift of prayer and not only for the great things we receive though prayer. Let us use it diligently, for just as faith becomes the more precious and the stronger and the richer the more it is used, so prayer, for it is an activity of faith which God loves. Let us be instant in prayer and let our life be as an incense of prayer for a sweet-smelling savor to God. When prayer is threatened by errorists, by fanatics and unbelievers, let us guard and defend it with the weapons which God gives. But let us bear this in mind, too, that the greatest enemy of prayer is found in our own heart: laziness, neglect, temptations to doubt, unbelief. Here there is no excuse, for there is no Christian, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, young or old, sick or well, who can not pray. Then let ours be a praying life, a praying house, a praying church, that God may be honored and our church and our individual lives be blessed by prayer.

Share the Promise Culture to Culture

Dr. William B. Kessel

Part 1 — The Doctrinal Context of Cross-Cultural Ministry

The account of Jesus and the woman at the well of Sychar (John 4:4-42) may rightly be regarded as one of the most powerful lessons in the Bible. In this solitary event are taught many of the sublime Christian doctrines. As true Man, Jesus was tired; as true God, He knew everything the woman ever did. He modeled His undeserved love (grace) for sinners by speaking to this stranger. Jesus first illuminated her sins and need of the Savior and then presented Himself as her Redeemer, thus rightly dividing the word of truth — Law and Gospel. The doctrine of the Trinity is shown in bold relief with Jesus speaking of His heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit working faith in the hearts of the woman and townspeople through the Gospel. Sanctification, a Gospel response, is illustrated by the woman's willingness to abandon her water jar and publicly confess her sin and her Savior. Furthermore, this text is one of the greatest examples of cross-cultural evangelism found in the Bible. In this short dialogue, Jesus viewed this woman as typical of all humankind which is born in sin and would be lost forever without the grace of God. He also viewed her as unique. Her own personality, set of sinful experiences, and attitudes made her an individual, distinct from all others. Finally, Jesus saw her as typical, or at least similar, to other Samaritans whose beliefs and culture made them abhorrent to most Jews.

Every Person is Like Every Other Person

"Dearly beloved: We learn from the Word of God that all men from the fall of Adam are conceived and born in sin and so are under the wrath of God and would be lost forever unless delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] These familiar words from the rite of infant baptism are a vivid reminder that in some ways every person is like every other person.

First, all people, regardless of age, sex, race, or nation are lost and condemned creatures.

> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. . . (Is. 53:6).
>
> For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. . . (Rom. 3:23)
>
> The soul who sins is the one who will die (Ezek. 18:4).
>
> For the wages of sin is [eternal] death. . . (Rom. 6:23).

Notice that there are no exceptions and no exemptions. Inherited sinfulness, total depravity, concupiscence, are terms which define a common human predicament (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 3:10-12) which leads to a common human plight, and a tragic eternal consequence (Rom. 1:18; Mark 16:16, also see Augsburg Confession II:1-2).

Second, all people, regardless of age, sex, race, or nation have been reconciled to God through Christ.

> God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).
>
> All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:23-24).

This universal justification is the end result of Jesus' active obedience and passive obedience coupled with God's good and gracious will (see Augsburg Confession III: 1-3).

> But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Gal. 4:4-5).
>
> For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

Third, all people, regardless of age, sex, race, or nation come to and are sustained in faith only through the Means of Grace.

> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Rom. 1:16).
>
> Jesus Christ . . . has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).
>
> [Baptism] now saves you. . . (1 Pet. 3:21).
>
> He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. . . (Titus 3:5-6).
>
> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28).
>
> This is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:24).

Subjective justification takes place in any person only when the Holy Spirit works though the Gospel in Word and sacrament creating spiritual life where before there was only death. "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5, also see the Formula of Concord SD II:25 and Augsburg Confession IV:s1-3, V:3). Professor David Valleskey rightly notes, "Faith is not something man *does*. Faith, rather, is something man *gives*" (original emphasis).[2]

Fourth, all people regardless of age, sex, race, or nation are intended recipients of God's love and salvation.[3]

> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Matt. 28:19-20).
>
> Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).
>
> Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34-35).

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:12).

God our Savior. . . who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

The Lord. . . is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6).

Every Person Is Like No Other Person

When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, He realized that in some ways she was unlike every other person. Each human being is a distinct individual with his or her own unique history and personality.

From a certain perspective, Jesus' disciples had much in common. They were Galilean Jews. Many of them were fisherman from the small towns to the west and north of the Sea of Galilee. The twelve were Old Testament believers. James and John, Peter and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptizer. Furthermore, according to Jewish tradition a man had to be about 30 years of age in order to be considered a teacher. Jesus sent the twelve on various missionary tours. They were, thus, probably about His age.

In spite of their similarities, each disciple had his own unique attitude, attributes, and abilities. While Peter may have been impulsive (Matt. 14:22-33; 17:4; Luke 5:8), he also demonstrated leadership potential (John

6:66-69). Meanwhile his brother, Andrew, is characterized in Scripture as unobtrusive, an evangelist content quietly to introduce individuals to Jesus (John 1:40-42; 6:8-9; 12:20-22). James and John also were brothers. They were both presumptuous (Mark 10:35-45) and jointly shared the appellation "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). Yet, John was the disciple whom Jesus especially loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). Thomas may have tended toward pessimism (John 11:16; 14:5) as well as doubt (John 20:24-29). Matthew, of course, was a changed man—from tax collector to disciple (Mark 2:13-17). Simon was a political zealot (Matt. 10:4), and Judas was greedy (John 12:4-6).

Indeed one of the great wonders of the Bible is how God took men with such distinct personalities as humble Moses (Num. 12:3), self-effacing Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6), and intellectual Paul (Acts 22:3; 23:6) and used them as His instruments in writing the Bible. Indeed, "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Every Person Is Like Some Other People

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "... it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness..." (1 Cor. 1:21-23). Paul thus made a fundamental distinction between the Jews on the one hand, and the Gentiles on the other. In doing so he recognized cultural differences.

Culture can be defined as that set of mental models or mental road maps which are shared by the members of society and which allow them to produce socially acceptable behavior.[4] Anthropologist Ward Goodenough comments that culture is:

> the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them as such. The things people say or do, their social arrangements and events, are products or by-products of their culture as they apply it to the task of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances.[5]

The foregoing definition indicates that culture is not artifacts but mental patterns for perceiving reality and behaving responsibly. Culture is not innate or biological. It is learned and shared by group members. Since

culture is socially transmitted, different groups have different cultures and behave differently. In some ways every person is like some other people— the people with whom he or she shares a culture.

The Old Testament is replete with examples of cultural differences. Jonah acknowledged his religious if not cultural superiority and only reluctantly preached to the Ninevites. To the contrary the little Hebrew slave girl willingly told the Syrian general, Naaman, of her people's prophet (2 Ki. 5). Ruth walked away from her Moabite roots and accepted Naomi's God and people. Daniel struggled to maintain his own faith and customs in the face of Babylonian opposition.

Jesus, likewise, distinguished between different cultural groups. During His time of humiliation, He acknowledged that His ministry was restricted to only one cultural/religious group, "the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Likewise when he sent out the twelve disciples on their first missionary effort He instructed them, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5-6). In time the Good Shepherd would expand his spiritual flock to include those from other cultures (John 10:16). Once He was exalted He would draw all men to Himself (John 12:32).[6] This was in keeping with explicit Old Testament prophecies (Gen. 12:3; Is. 2:203; 19:18; 60:3; Micah 4:1-2) as well as that of Simeon (Luke 2:32).

After Christ's ascension the floodgates of the Gospel were thrown open to people from different cultures. Peter's Pentecost address is particularly interesting. People from different cultures, but who shared the Jewish faith, were addressed in their own particular languages (Acts 2:8-11). Another cultural group, the Jews from Israel, began to ridicule them, assuming they were drunk. Peter addressed the "Men of Israel" and preached Christ to them (Acts 2:22ff). Later God brought men of different cultures together when Peter visited the home of Cornelius (Acts 10). Finally, Paul, a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:5) became a principal missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). His perspective was decidedly cross-cultural. "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise" (Rom. 1:14). For, as Paul concluded, "Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also" (Rom. 3:29). Consequently, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Finally,

Paul's closing words to the Romans were, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it" (Acts 28:28).

In summary, the Bible teaches that every person is a sinner in need of the Savior, that Christ lived and died for all, that God wants all to be saved, and that God employs only the Means of Grace as the mechanism whereby He creates and sustains saving faith. On the other hand, every person is unlike any other person, endowed with a distinct personality and individuality. Finally, every person is socialized and generally lives within the confines of a particular culture with its own norms, values, and rules of expected behavior.

Part 2 — The Historical Precedent for Cross-Cultural Ministry

In 1871 theologian Nikolai F.S. Grundtvig provided a Danish interpretation of Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." One verse, in particular, has become well-known to Lutheran Christians. A portion of it reads:

God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
(CW #293)

Grundtvig, like Luther before him, understood the centrality of mission work in the life of the Christian Church. Christ was unequivocal in His directives to Christians to share the Good news throughout all the earth, or as Isaiah so graphically stated, "Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes" (Is. 54:2). Heaven should be the destination for people of every "nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

The question, therefore, is not whether Christ wants all people to be saved, or whether Christians should engage in mission work. Rather the question is, "should cross-cultural mission work be done?" Can synods and congregations be successfully integrated? The book of Acts provides

documentary evidence that Christians from different cultures can successfully coexist. The process, however, is not always easy.

Judaic Christianity

The book of Acts begins with a description of Judaic Christianity. As Pentecost dawned, the Christian church celebrated its initial birthday. Native Jews and Jewish proselytes heard he message of salvation and believed (Acts 2:1-40). And the church grew (Acts 2:41), and grew (Acts 2:47), and grew (Acts 4:4), and grew (Acts 6:7). As Martin Franzmann notes, the Jewish believers described in Acts 1-12 observed Jewish dietary laws (Acts 10:14) and prayer hours (Acts 3:1; 10:9, 30). They taught in the temple (Acts 5:20; 5:42), met in synagogues (Acts 6:9-10), and proclaimed the message of Christ to fellow Jews (Acts 1:8).[7] For all intents and purposes they were Old Testament Jews who came to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Meanwhile, the Epistle of James provides clues about problems faced by Jewish Christians at this time. James, probably the half-brother of Jesus, was the head of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. He penned his epistle to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora, "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). With the stoning of Stephen persecution broke out against the church and the believers scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1) and radiated outward to Damascus, Antioch of Syria, and other areas near Palestine. James was aware that Judaic Christians were threatened from within and without. They faced poverty and persecution and the attenuating symptoms of bitterness and impatience. Their apathy or fatigue could potentially weaken them to the point that they were again ensnared by their former religion. Franzmann comments:

> For them, accommodation to the "world" meant, of course, accommodation to the Judaism from which they had escaped, Judaism with its distorted piety, its encrusted and inactive faith, its superficial and fruitless hearing of the words, its arrogant and quarrelsome "wisdom," its ready response to the seduction of wealth, its mad thirst for liberty. The danger of apostasy was for the members of this church anything but remote and theoretical. It was immediate and real.[8]

Thus, James' letter is like Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It provides Jewish Christians with instructions on holy living.[9]

Cross-Cultural Christianity

It didn't take long, however, before Christianity spread cross-culturally. Jesus' apostles witnessed in Jerusalem and Judea, then in Samaria, and finally throughout the Mediterranean world (Acts 1:8). Philip preached among the Samarians (Acts 8:4-25) then baptized the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). Cornelius and his household came to faith (Acts 10). Not long thereafter, unnamed Christian men from Cyprus and Cyrene, "had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:20-21). Eventually Barnabas visited Antioch as did Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas visited Cyprus and Asia Minor. Paul's message spread like an umbrella over people from different cultures. The Holy Spirit enlarged the tents of Christendom (Is. 54:2-3; Acts 12:24; 19:20).

Integration, however, led to growing pains as Acts 12-15:35 and Paul's letter to the Galatians show. Tensions and conflicts arose among Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul had taught, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). The implications were clear. The doors of the Christian church had been thrown open to all including those who were neither circumcised nor followed Jewish customs. The Judaizers, nevertheless, insisted that Gentile converts first become Jewish. "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses," they maintained "you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

An "Apostolic Council" was convened at Jerusalem to decide the matter. Delegates representing the "whole church" (Acts 15:22) were in attendance. The decision was rendered that the Gentiles were free from the Law. On the other hand, to promote fellowship within the churches as well as moral behavior, the Gentiles were asked to refrain from food polluted by idols and told to abstain from sexual immorality (Acts 15).

The matter was far from over. Judaizers in Galatia continued their teachings. In response Paul wrote his most hard hitting polemic. In Galatians he directly confronted the heresy of legalism. The letter had the desired effect. When Paul later gathered an offering for the destitute Chris-

tians of Jerusalem, the Galatians joined in (1 Cor. 16:1). Gaius, from a Galatian church, even accompanied Paul with the offering to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). This outflowing of love was a clear "expression of the unity between Gentile and Judaic Christianity."[10]

The Christian church had become integrated. Cross-cultural ministry and peoples from different cultures merged together into the Way. The remainder of Acts and many of the epistles provide prima facie evidence that the merger was comfortable. Some congregations were composed of Jewish converts, others Gentile believers, and still others both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Congregation	Composition
Jerusalem	Jewish Christians
Galatia	Jewish and Gentile Christians
Thessalonica	Predominantly Gentile Christians
Corinth	Jewish and Gentile Christians
Ephesus	Jewish and Gentile Christians
Philippi	Predominantly Gentile Christians
Colossae	Predominantly Gentile Christians
Rome	Predominantly Jewish then Gentile Christians

Professor Richard D. Balge writes, "That the congregations of Paul's mission fields were 'mixed,' cross-cultural, multi-cultural is evidence that Christians can live out the implications of what Christ did when he broke down the barriers between God and man, along with all the barriers between people" (original emphasis).[11]

In light of the historical example provided by the early Christian church, it seems obvious that the contemporary Christian church should engage in cross-cultural outreach. Some modern theologians, however, question the wisdom of such work.

Donald A. McGavran, key spokesman and current leader of the Church Growth Movement, advocates what is called the "homogeneous unit principle" of mission work. Professor David Vallesky has distilled the salient points in McGavran's doctrine when he writes:

> McGavran maintains that "men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers," and that "in most cases of arrested growth of the Church, men are deterred not so

> much by the offense of the cross as by non-biblical offenses" which are caused by forcing people to cross linguistic, class or racial barriers. "Christianity," contends McGavran, "like electricity, flows best when there is good contact. The power of God acts best within a people."[12]

McGavran has derived this principle on the basis of doctrinal misunderstandings and faulty exegesis. People do not "like to become Christians" under any circumstances.[13] On this issue the Scriptures are very specific.

> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).
>
> That which is born of the flesh is flesh... (John 3:6).
>
> The carnal mind *is* enmity against God (Rom. 8:7).
>
> The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them,* because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).
>
> And you *He made alive,* who were dead in trespasses and sins... (Eph. 2:1).

Likewise, the Formula of Concord states, "We believe that in spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of unregenerated man cannot by any native or natural powers in any way understand, believe, accept, imagine, will, begin, accomplish, do, effect, or cooperate, but that man is entirely and completely dead and corrupted as far as anything good is concerned" (SD 11:7).[14]

McGavran, nevertheless, attempts to bolster his argument that Christians should work among "winnable people" and not engage in cross-cultural ministry by interpreting "all nations" of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) as referring to separate races, tribes, or castes. Such an interpretation is exegetically indefensible, as several authors have shown.[15] It appears that McGavran's preoccupation with numerical growth leads him to promote a "harvest" rather than "search" theology. In his thinking, fields of "low receptivity" should be occupied "lightly," and the church should concentrate its efforts on "the proletariat" which shows more promise.[16]

What McGavran and other advocates of the Church Growth Movement fail to realize is that the Holy Spirit takes individuals from every nation, tribe, language, and people and through the Means of Grace makes them one people. Paul reminded the Ephesians of the unity which exists in the body of Christ: "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Peter, drawing on Old Testament passages (eg. Is. 62:12, Deut. 4:20; Mal. 3:17), elaborates, "But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Christianity transcends any and all racial, ethnic, sex, and age boundaries.

Not only are Christians a new people, but in becoming Christians they take on a new identity. Peter writes, "Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). The writer to the Hebrews made the same contention. The former heroes of faith were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. 11:13). Just as Christ was not of this world (John 8:14) and His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), His subjects are *xenoi* (strangers) and *parepidemoi* (pilgrims) on earth while their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20; Gal. 4:26). Consequently, regardless of age, race, sex, or earthly ethnicity, every Christian can rightly sing:

I'm but a stranger here;
    Heav'n is my home.
Earth is a desert drear;
    Heav'n is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand
    Round me on ev'ry hand.
Heav'n is my fatherland;
    Heav'n is my home.
(CW #417)

In summary, the Christian church is a cross-cultural church. It has been integrated from its inception, and it is God's will that all people today gather together for worship (Heb. 10:25). This is normally done by forming congregations and synods. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, working through the Means of Grace, transforms such diverse people into a new people.

Part 3 — The Practical Application of Cross-Cultural Ministry

Mequon professor, Richard D. Balge, recently addressed the WELS Southeastern Wisconsin District Pastoral Conference. His paper was titled "Cross-cultural and Multi-cultural Ministry in the New Testament," and he addressed the pastors and delegates with these opening words:

> Although it was not so designated the synod's first notable cross-cultural mission effort was the work among the Apaches of Arizona. There have [been] many such efforts since then, and not only in what we today call "world mission fields." There are many reasons why the topic of cross-cultural and multi-cultural ministry is timely. There are ever more immigrants entering the United States. The proportion of Hispanic people in the general population increases rapidly. The celebration and encouragement of cultural diversity has replaced the American melting pot idea. Without much reflection or research one can think of ministries carried on — in or by our synod — involving Native Americans, Hmong, Hispanic, African-Americans, and Koreans.[17]

A questions, however, arises. As we have seen, the Bible teaches that Christianity transcends cultures. Therefore, does culture matter? Worded differently, should the church be sensitive to cultural differences as it works cross-culturally? As we will see, an awareness of cross-cultural differences can be important in avoiding impediments to gospel transmission, and in directing the Word of God toward a particular people.

Cultural Awareness and Barriers to Evangelism

While not absolutely necessary, an awareness of another person's culture can be very important in evangelism. The missionary or pastor who displays cross-cultural awareness may avoid painful mistakes. In his paper, "A Biblical, Lutheran Theology of Missions," Professor David J. Vallesky posits the following thesis: "*As Christians use the means of grace to carry out Christ's commission, they will remember that while they can do nothing to add to the power inherent in the gospel, they can unconsciously put barriers in the way of the gospel, making it more difficult to communicate it to unbelievers*" (original emphasis).[18]

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed" (2 Cor. 6:3). Paul then

advised both Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-13) as well as Titus (2:1-10) about the attributes expected of God's people which will enable them to avoid lacing the path of the unbelievers with stumbling blocks (cf. 1 Pet. 2:12). On the other hand, Vallesky also points out, "*godless* behavior" as well as "*insensitive* behavior" form barriers to communicating the gospel.[19] The latter behavior can include cultural insensitivity.

The Apostolic Council described in Acts 15 was convened in order to delineate between cultural and spiritual differences separating Jewish and Gentile Christians. The decision of James and the Jewish council was to allow the Gentiles to remain uncircumcised and to eat their traditional food so as not to "trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). Likewise, in a matter of adiaphoron and to avoid placing a stumbling block in the way of the Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy before continuing on his missionary journey (Acts 16:3). Paul's willingness to accommodate himself to different cultures for the sake of the gospel is spelled out in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Professor Richard Balge characterized Paul's cross-cultural attitude as follows:

> Paul would put himself at anyone's service, adjust to anyone's culture, accommodate himself to anyone's lifestyle (excluding, of course, what was sinful), if it might help to win that person to eternal life. Though his stomach may not have rejoiced at Gentile cuisine he was willing to become like the Gentiles in diet.... He would do that "so as to win those not having the law." Strong in his understanding of Christian liberty, he put himself in the sandals of those who were still weak in understanding, "to win the weak." Giving up his exercise of freedom in certain matters, he adapted his conduct to the sensitive conscience of those who needed to hear the message of salvation. Paul's words teach us a perspective to be coveted in any cross-cultural ministry, any gospel ministry: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."[20]

Cultural Awareness in Proclaiming Law and Gospel

There is no question but that the early Christian leaders were aware of cultural differences and took them into account when engaged in cross-cultural mission work. The letter of James, for example, especially addresses "the sins of Judaism in their Christianized form; the problem

of sexual license, for instance, which looms so large in gentile Christianity and is constantly dealt with in letters addressed to gentile churches, is not touched on here...."[21]

An isagogical study of the synoptic gospels also indicates cross-cultural awareness. Matthew apparently had a Jewish audience in mind when he penned his gospel account. Thus he traced Jesus' genealogy back to King David and then back to Abraham, the father of the Jews (Matt. 1:1). Since former Jews would have known the Scriptures, Matthew quoted the Old Testament almost three dozen times (2:6, 18). Sixteen times he indicates that prophecies were fulfilled. In the narrative Matthew mentioned Jewish landmarks, customs, and laws without elaborations of explanation (15:1-2). Finally, he included considerable material to show how the Scribes and Pharisees opposed Jesus (27:1-4).

Mark, on the other hand obviously wrote to Gentiles, probably Romans. Consequently he interpreted Hebrew and Aramaic expressions not known to Latin and Greek speakers (Mark 3:17). He explained aspects of Jewish religion and compared Greek money to Roman currency (12:42). Meanwhile Latin expressions like legion, centurion, praetorium frequently occur. If Latins identified with power, then Mark's gospel was tailored for them. Forty-two times action words like 'immediately', 'at once', and 'without delay', were utilized.

Luke wrote to Theophilus, who was probably a high ranking official living in Rome (Luke 1:3). Understandably he used Roman dates, traced Jesus' chronology past Abraham to Adam (3:38), and refrained from calling Jesus by the Hebrew term 'rabbi'. Since Luke was writing to a Gentile convert he emphasized Jesus as the Savior of all people, including the Gentiles (9:52).

Church historian, Milton L. Rudnick, draws this isagogical conclusion:

> The specific form of the Gospel was determined by the background and situation of the hearers. To Jews, for example, Jesus was introduced as the Messiah promised to their fathers (Acts 13:16-41) and the heavenly High Priest foreshadowed in the Old Testament history and cultus (Heb. 7-10). To Gentiles He was presented as Lord of all (Acts 10:36), the unknown God, creator and judge, whom they worshiped without realizing who He was (Acts 17:22-31), the image of the invisible God, who by His

> blood reconciled all things to God whether on earth or in heaven (Col. 1:15-23), the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).[22]

This process of relating the Word of God to the cultural context of the hearers is called contextualization. As various authors have shown, contextualization involves accommodating oneself to another culture. It does not mean altering the Word of God or trying to make the message of the cross more rational or less offensive.[23] It does mean being especially sensitive in matters of adiaphora and learning to approach people.

Paul, who has been labeled the "greatest practitioner of cross-cultural and multi-cultural ministry" was a master at this approach.[24] David Valleskey has clearly shown that as Paul went from place to place he had a basic message to proclaim, but he did not use a "canned speech" approach. When confronted by different situations he employed a manner and text which was relevant to that place and time.[25] Building on the work of Valleskey, Krause provides a case in point:

> In Athens, at the Areopagus, Paul in his famous discourse about the "unknown God" demonstrates the folly of idolatry and skillfully demolishes both the deism of the Epicureans and the pantheism of the Stoics (Acts 17:22-31). Paul uses excerpts from two Greek poems that were dedicated to Zeus to back up his contention that God is both the creator and the preserver, and thus is deeply concerned about his creation. "In him we live and move and have out being" (Epimenides, ca. 600 B.C.), and "we are his offspring" (Aratus, ca. 315-240).[26]

Another example of contextualization is found in the way American pastors understand their own culture and approach people accordingly. World view is a people's basic assumptions about the world in which they live, which forces and entities control it, and the place of humans in the scheme of things. Most Americans believe that the world and the things in it operate according to discoverable scientific laws.[27] Like machines, the things in the world can be manipulated and improved. Such betterment or improvement comes about through much individual effort. Thus Americans emphasize things which are new and improved, and highly value personal initiative. A kind of optimism envelopes scientific enterprises as learned men and women make war on poverty and conquer space as they foster the cause of social evolution. This pragmatic and

empirical outlook leaves little time for the pursuit of wisdom, the art of contemplation, and the acknowledgment of things not seen.

Professor David Valleskey rightly notes that Americans have "drunk deeply from the poisoned well of evolutionary thought."[28] Consequently they believe in no person Creator, deny creation, and question the doctrine of sin. Obviously the Christian pastor has his work cut out for him. Meanwhile Paul working in ancient Lystra or cosmopolitan Athens faced people with a different world view. Those people accepted without question the existence of a god. Knowing this the apostle utilized their "natural" knowledge of God as a starting point for his discussion of the one true God.[29] Ultimately the pastor's task is to present God's Word so that the Holy Spirit can transform a person's world view into a Christian world view.[30]

Cultural Awareness in Gospel Response

Finally, cross-cultural awareness is important in allowing Christians the freedom to express their faith within the confines of their own culture. The writers of the Augsburg Confession rightly declared:

> For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places" (VII:2-3, also see Formula of Concord SD, X:9, 26-31).[31]

Wendland clearly grasped the implications of this statement when he wrote:

> We will want to let other nations express their faith and joy in the Lord in ways which reflect their own identity. We will want to guard against giving the impression that our Western culture is of itself superior. We will avoid showing a domineering spirit when working in cross-cultural relationships. At the same time we will not want to "contextualize" the gospel in the sense of making it more palatable.[32]

For missionary Wendland, cross-cultural sensitivity to gospel response need not result in diluting true Christian worship. The Lutheran church is liturgical. In Africa portions of the liturgy remained inviolate (Confession

and Absolution, Creeds, Scripture Readings, Sermon, Prayers, Sacraments, Benediction). What was altered?

> Sacred hymns, liturgical responses, and choir anthems, however, must be given musical settings that let the African truly "sing his religion from the heart." What a thrilling experience to be present in an African church service with its lively people-participation! It should be mentioned that in our African mission this didn't develop until Africans were involved with helping formulate musical settings for the church services.[33]

In summary, cultural sensitivity helps the pastor or missionary forsee or remove stumbling blocks from the path of his hearers. Cross-cultural understanding helps the Christian know his audience and communicate appropriately and sensitively. Finally, cultural awareness allows people to respond to the gospel in ways which are familiar, comfortable, and culturally understandable as long as they are not contrary to Biblical teaching.[34]

Conclusion

Christ's Great Commission gave the church its marching orders to proclaim the Gospel to all people of the earth. World-wide people have different cultures. Such differences, however, need not be construed as insurmountable barriers to evangelism. Jesus and the early apostles were aware of cultural-differences, and, yet, the multi-cultural church grew. Without compromising doctrine the Christian church can enjoy unity with diversity.

Perhaps at long last, it is time to provide a definition of multi-culturalism. Krause suggests it is "something akin to learning about other cultures and races; mastering their languages; learning to value differences as well as similarities among people; and preparing to live in an increasingly diverse society without prejudice and bigotry."[35] Why? For the glory of God and the salvation of many souls. This was clearly the case at Pentecost. Peter, spoke, and the crowd replied, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:37-39).

Footnotes

1 *The Lutheran Agenda.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n. d., p.1.

2 David J. Valleskey *We Believe — Therefore We Speak: The Theology and Practice of Evangelism.* Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995a, p. 81.

3 For a more complete discussion of spiritual universals see David Valleskey's book previously cited (pp. 19-163) along with his paper, "A Biblical, Lutheran Theology of Missions." Paper delivered at WELS Seeking our Neighbor Seminar held in Orlando, Florida, Nov. 17, 1995b. Much of the groundwork for the current study has been laid by Professor Valleskey's insightful and Scriptural writing.

4 This definition and examples of contrasting cultures can be found in William B. Kessel "Apache Indians and Anglo Missionaries: A Study in Cross-Cultural Interaction." Paper delivered at WELS Native American Symposium held in Tucson, Arizona, May 5, 1992.

5 Ward Goodenough "Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics." In *Report of the Seventh Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Study.* Paul L. Garvin, ed. Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics, No. 9, Washington D. C., 1957, pp. 167-173.

6 During His time on earth, Jesus, not infrequently encountered people from other cultural groups. These contacts included the:

Visit of the Wise Men (Matt. 2:1-12).

Woman at the well of Sychar (John 4:5-42).

Healing of the royal official's son (John 4:46-54).

Healing of the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

Healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).

Rejection by Samaritan villagers (Luke 9:51-56).

Cleansing of the Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19).

Audience with Greeks (John 12:20-22).

Audience with Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:2, 11-30; Mark 15:1b-19; Luke 23:1-5, 13-25; John 18:28-19:16).

Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:27-56; Mark 15:16-39; Luke 23:32-49; John 19:2-3).

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8 Ibid. p. 26.

9 William B. Kessel *The Life of Christ.* Madison: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1984, pp. 20-21. *The Living Church: The New Testament.* Madison:

Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1985, p. 53.

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11 Richard D. Balge "Cross-Cultural and Multi-Cultural Ministry in the New Testament." Paper delivered at the WELS Southeastern Wisconsin District Pastoral Conference held in Muskego, Wisconsin, June 6, 1995, p. 14.

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33 Ernst H. Wendland "Pastoral (Theological) Training on the Mission Field." Paper presented to the National Free Conference No. 7, First Annual Congress on Confessional Lutheran Missiology held at Itasca, Illinois, 1996, p. 6.

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Grace as Taught by Augustine and Luther

by Robert Koester

Part I — Introductory Material

Introduction to Augustine

Church Historians know more about Augustine than about any other Church Father. His writings were carefully preserved and disseminated in his own lifetime. They were very personal and introspective and through them Augustine gives us a good deal of information on his life. Also, one of his contemporaries, a fellow bishop by the name of Possidius, wrote his biography.

Augustine was born in Tagaste, a city in northern Africa, on November 13, 354. His father Patricius was a member of the city council, an unbeliever and unfriendly toward Christianity until shortly before the end of his life. His mother Monica was a Christian. Although her Christianity may have lacked depth, it did not lack intensity. It was to her prayers that Augustine later gave the credit for his becoming a Christian. Augustine's early exposure to Catholic Christianity was minimal. Following the custom of many in his day he was not baptized. He was enrolled as a catechumen shortly before his sixteenth birthday.

Both of his parents were ambitious for him, and tried to give him the best education possible. He went to school in Tagaste and "although he was a talented youth, he was also trifling, inattentive, lazy and an enemy of Greek."[1] He did excel, though. His father sent him to Madaura to study literature and then to Carthage to study rhetoric in preparation for a legal career. There in Carthage he took a mistress and in the summer of 372 his son Adeodatus was born.

A major change in his life occurred at age 19. While at Carthage he read a book by Cicero, the *Hortensius*. "Thereafter a new ideal arose in his soul; he had already dreamed—and it was then only a dream—to give up everything for the truth. 'Suddenly, every vain hope became worthless

to me and I yearned with unbelievable ardor of heart for the immortality of wisdom.'"[2] By now Augustine had become well known for his rhetorical abilities and he would continue to develop his literary abilities. But from age 19 on, teaching rhetoric was merely his way of supporting himself. His main quest was for truth.

The beginning of his thirst for truth coincided with his becoming a Manichean. He would remain one of their disciples for 9 years.

At age 29 Augustine left Carthage for Rome. By this time he had become disillusioned with Manicheism and was open for a change. The period between 383 and 386 was perhaps the most turbulent of his life. For a short time he became involved in Academic philosophy. But it was Platonic philosophy that gave him a reference point that would last his whole life. During this time, Augustine drifted into association with Ambrose, Bishop of Milan and into the company of other Christians. He began to read the Scriptures and in September of 386 he had his famous "conversion" experience. In the winter of 386 Augustine became a formal candidate for baptism. He remained in Rome for a year and a half after his conversion and in 388 returned to Africa.

From 386 to 396 Augustine developed as a Christian. He spent his first year after his conversion trying to answer philosophical questions in the light of his new-found knowledge of God.

In 388, upon his return to his home town, Tagaste, the prodigal son established a monastery. He lived there until 391. While Augustine was visiting the nearby town of Hippo the people requested that he be elevated to the priesthood, which he was. Until 396 he served as priest at Hippo. In 396 he was given the position of Bishop of Hippo, and retained that office until his death.

Augustine was alive during the capture of Rome by the Goths in 410. He lay on his deathbed while the Goths and Vandals laid siege to Hippo and died on August 28, 430.

One of Augustine's correspondents, the bishop of Milevis, speaks of him as "God's truly busy bee, building up for us combs full of heavenly nectar."[3] There can be no doubt that Augustine was the greatest writer of the Catholic Church. He was not a systematic theologian nor the final word in Catholic theology. That task would be left to Thomas Aquinas. His writings are like Luther's. They are letters, sermons and essays written for specific people and in answer to specific questions.

In his writings Augustine ranges far and wide. His background affords him a base for discussing every conceivable topic. His writings have kept commentators and thinkers busy for centuries, and the interest in Augustine still goes on.

In general, his formal writings can be grouped into major categories and follow a certain chronological progression. Augustine's early writings were largely philosophical. If you are not prepared for them they will surprise you. There is very little of Christianity in them. In one of his most famous books, the *Soliloquies*, Augustine begins with a prayer to God asking God to help him in his quest for truth, and then engages in a strictly philosophical dialogue. To understand these early writings requires a certain understanding of Neo-Platonic philosophy and other philosophies of the day.

Other than his strictly philosophical writings, his essays are addressed to three main issues. First, he writes against the Manicheans, trying to influence some of his friends to leave the group and trying to keep others out of it.

Second, after Augustine became Bishop of Hippo he became somewhat of an official spokesman for the church. Between 400 and 412 he wrote against the Donatists. The Donatists were a rival church in North Africa. They had split away from the Catholic church over the question of whether or not wicked priests could hold office. In his anti-Donatist writings, Augustine sharpened his understanding of the church.

Third, the Pelagian controversy broke out in about 412. Questions on free will, grace and predestination would largely occupy his time until the end of his life. These writings will be of most importance to us in this paper.

In addition to his formal writings, 270 letters, 363 sermons, and various commentaries on some of the books of the Bible are extant. Of special significance are Augustine's *Confessions*. There he describes himself as the prodigal son, wandering from the faith and leaving home, but coming to his senses in a foreign country and finally returning home to his native Africa to serve the Lord. His greatest work is the *City of God*. It is an answer to the accusation that Rome was conquered by the barbarians because they had forsaken their gods. In the *City of God* Augustine puts the whole matter in perspective and traces how history is centered not on the city of man, but on God's city, his Church. His *On the Trinity*

is a series of books on Scriptural and rational arguments for the Trinity. At the end of his life he wrote his *Retractions* in which he went over all his works and noted where he had erred.

Augustine was born at the end of the Church's youth, and his thinking helped it move into maturity. He died when the Roman Empire was almost dead, and when the Church was to take the political and cultural reins. There was no one immediately after him who would refine and correct his writings. So even though the Church Councils would not accept all of his conclusions, his writings formed the basis of much of Catholic theology. Thomas Aquinas would replace him as the official spokesman for the church, but there would continue to be a strong Augustinian element in the Catholic Church.

Augustine is also a part of our heritage as confessional Lutherans. We may be surprised to see what a tremendous role he plays in our theological heritage. While reading Augustine one comes upon idea after idea that finds its way into Luther's writings. For example, the categories Luther uses in *The Bondage of the Will* are all there in Augustine. Without taking away any of Luther's greatness, we will have to admit that Luther built on Augustine's foundation and brought it into line Scripturally. But the foundation was there, and Luther would be the first to admit his debt to Augustine.

Introduction to Grace

The question we will ask in this paper is: What is the relation between Augustine's understanding of grace and Luther's understanding of grace? Before we get into Augustine's teaching on grace, it would be good to get our bearings on how the Bible uses that term.

First, the standard definition of grace is good: "God's undeserved love." This definition could be broken down into various aspects of that love. Grace can refer to 1) God's favor toward us, 2) God's work of redeeming us through Jesus' sacrifice, 3) God's activity in leading us to faith (which includes electing, calling, and preserving us in faith), 4) God's power given to us as members of his church to do some facet of the work of his church (which includes our personal growth and ability to help others). Each of these aspects finds its center in Christ.

In Romans 11:5 Paul writes about the favor of God, given to God's people from eternity, *So too, at the present time there is a remnant cho-*

sen by grace. He echoes this in 2 Timothy 1:9, *who has saved us and called us to a holy life- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time*. In these two passages the meaning of grace is clearly God's favor since it speaks of something God did before we were ever born.

Other passages speak about God's grace in time. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul calls Jesus' work for us a work of grace, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich*. In Ephesians 2:7 Paul refers to God's act of sending his Son as an act of grace, *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus*.

Jude 4 speaks about God's favor toward us and how godless men would slip into the church, *who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2 Paul uses the term grace and then explains what it means, *We urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."* In both of these passages grace is the favor of God through which he forgives our sins and brings us to faith in his pardon.

There are passages in which grace refers to God's giving us some ability. Acts 6:8 tells us about Stephen, *a man full of God's grace and power*. In speaking about his own ministry, Paul writes in Romans 1:5, *Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship*. He speaks about the gifts of grace that God gives to each Christian in Romans 12:6, *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us*.

Luther, of course, understands God's grace like this— as God's favor in Christ. A couple quotations from *What Luther Says* will suffice. In 1527 Luther wrote, "I am seeking and thirsting for a gracious God. And He earnestly offers Himself as such and urges even those who spurn Him and are His enemies to accept Him as such."[4] In 1532 he wrote, "Paul teaches a difference between grace, on the one hand, and gifts, on the other. Grace signifies that favor with which God receives us, forgiving our sins and justifying us freely through Christ. Do not consider it a quality in man."[5] And in 1537 he said, "Grace consists in this, that God is merciful to us, shows Himself gracious for the sake of the Lord Christ,

forgives all sins, and will not impute them unto us for eternal death. This is grace: the forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Lord Christ."[6] We should keep these words of Scripture and Luther in mind as we examine how Augustine understood God's grace.

Part 2: Augustine and Grace

Introduction

The foundation of any faith is what its adherents understand by the word "grace." How one understands grace determines what one considers to be God's greatest gift, God's "good news," his Gospel.

Throughout the history of the Church, there have been two lines of thinking on this issue. The first follows Scripture. Grace, according to Scripture, deals with God's disposition, that is, his attitude toward us. It is God's disposition of love and favor toward the world in general and particularly toward those who have come to faith in Jesus. The second line of thinking views grace as a quality that God gives the sinner to make him righteous. Sometimes this quality is called *gratia infusa*, although it might better be called by another term since *gratia infusa* can be understood correctly as gifts that the gracious God bestows on those who believe in his gracious disposition. The first understanding of grace finds its center in God's favor in Christ. Here, God's favor stands by itself; it is the center of our faith and our source of peace. All else flows from it. The second centers on a quality that enables us to obey the Laws of God, and it creates a Christianity that centers on the Law and how one is to find the grace needed to keep the Law.

In the next two parts of our paper we will explore how Augustine understood grace, or we might say, what he understood the Gospel to be. We will begin with his concept of the meaning of the word grace, listening to his own words as much as possible. Then we attempt to see how his understanding of grace was the natural outflow of his conversion experience. Third, we will examine to what extent he held to the teaching of "by grace alone." Finally, we will examine his concept of predestination.

What Augustine Meant by Grace

There is a general consensus among Catholics and Lutherans alike that Augustine taught the second understanding of grace. This certainly does

not imply that Augustine did not know God's forgiveness. He did. He rejoiced in God's forgiveness. But it was not the dominant theme in his writings.

Chemnitz, who is otherwise very gracious toward Augustine, must confess,

> The use of the word "grace" to describe the gifts of renewal is so common in Augustine and others that the grace of remission of sins or free acceptance by God is rarely mentioned in these discussions.... Indeed, there is no point in hiding the fact that Augustine in his conflict with the Pelagians used the word "grace" only in the sense of gifts.[1]

Pieper is clear on this also. He says,

> Luther and Melanchthon were aware that the obscurities of Augustine on this point had to be cleared away. Augustine stressed not so much the gracious disposition of God in Christ as rather the renewal, which results solely from God's grace, and this he made the ground of justification.[2]

What exactly did Augustine say? The following quotations were chosen because they are especially clear. However, I believe that any amount of reading of Augustine will show that these statements are the overriding norm.

Among the earliest of Augustine's polemics are the treatises against the Manicheans. In *The Morals of the Catholic Church* Augustine counters the charge of the Manicheans that they have the better road to morality. He writes, "Following after God is the desire of happiness; to reach God is happiness itself.... The greatest commandment, therefore, which leads to a happy life, and the first, is this: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind.'"[3] This is typical of Augustine, especially in his earlier years. As a philosopher, Augustine had been searching for two things: 1) the meaning of reality and 2) the best way to live so as to be happy. His early writings tell us that after he became a Christian he still pursued these goals but now within the context of Christianity. After he came to faith, Christ, the Word, was the revealer of reality, and purifications was the path to clearer revelation.

In another early treatise, *On the Profit of Believing* (391 AD), Augustine explains what it means to be out from under the bondage of the Law. To Augustine, being free is not so much being forgiven by God, but re-

ceiving the grace needed to keep the Law. He writes that we are delivered from the threats of the Law, "from which, when the Grace of Christ sets us free, it condemns not that Law, but invites us at length to yield obedience to its love, not to be slaves to the fear of the Law."[4] One can cite expressions like this from all over Augustine's works. He speaks of grace, love and obedience stemming from love. While it is easy to interpret his words in a Lutheran sense and "put the best construction" on them, when the reader searches the context, he finds no reference to forgiveness. Grace as the "medicine to overcome evil" is left standing by itself.

Throughout the Pelagian controversy, Augustine was called upon to defend this point: God's grace is not just the forgiveness of sin (as Pelagius taught) but it is also needed to do anything good. While the nature of the controversy may have led Augustine to emphasize the grace that leads to morality (since that was what Pelagius was denying), the only way a person can imitate Scripture in how it reaches morality (e.g. St. Paul in Romans 6) is by continually referring back to the grace of forgiveness. Only then does a moral life flow from a heart filled with the new life imparted by the Spirit. But this Augustine did not do.

Bear with me as I give a few longer quotations from one of Augustine's earlier works against Pelagius (*On the Spirit and the Letter*, 412 AD. He explains what "the righteousness of God" is

> But I ask your attention, O man, to what follows. "But now the righteousness of God," says he, "without the law is manifested." Now those who wish to establish a righteousness of their own are ignorant of this righteousness; they will not submit themselves to it. His words are, "The *righteousness of God* is manifested." He does not say, the righteousness of man, or the righteousness of his own will, but the "righteousness of *God*"— not that whereby he is Himself righteous, but that with which He endows man when He justifies the ungodly. The law, indeed, by issuing its commands and threats, and by justifying no man, sufficiently shows that it is by God's gift, through the help of the Spirit, that a man is justified.... That righteousness of God, however, is without the law, which God by the Spirit of grace bestows on the believer without the help of the law. When indeed, He by the law discovers to a man his weakness, it is in order that by faith he may flee for refuge to His mercy, and be healed.... It is not, therefore, by the

> law, nor is it by their own will, that they are justified; but they are justified *freely by his grace*— not that it is wrought without our will; but our will is by the law shown to be weak, that grace may heal its infirmity; and that our healed will may fulfill the law.[5]

You probably found yourself agreeing with much of this, but having an uneasy feeling that something was wrong. What is wrong is Augustine's understanding of "the Law." To us the Law is an equivalent expression for God's will. To Augustine, however, the Law meant the pressure God's will places on the conscience without also giving the person the ability to keep it. Augustine's understanding of grace fits his understanding of the Law. Grace supplies what the Law cannot: the ability to keep the Law. Augustine's view of grace comes out clearly when he speaks about how a person is freed from the "Law."

> "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," must be understood in the sense which we have already indicated— that the letter of the law, which teaches us not to commit sin, kills, if the life-giving spirit be absent, forasmuch as it causes sin to be known rather than avoided.[6]

> For there is no doubt that, without His assisting grace, the law is "the letter which killeth"; but when the life-giving spirit is present, the law causes that to be loved as written within, which it once caused to be feared as written without.[7]

> The law was therefore given, in order that grace might be sought; grace was given, in order that the law might be fulfilled. Now it was not through any fault of its own that the law was not fulfilled, but by the fault of the carnal mind; and this fault was to be demonstrated by the law, and healed by grace.[8]

Here, the phrase "the Spirit gives life" is understood in the sense that the Spirit gives us grace to keep the law.

Note the progression in the following beautifully written section and notice the role to which grace is assigned.

> The law says: "Thou shalt not covet." Faith says: "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." Grace says: "Behold, thou are made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Health says: "O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me." Free will says: "I will freely sacrifice unto Thee."

> Love of righteousness says: "Transgressors told me pleasant tales, but not according to Thy law, O Lord."[9]

Here we can see clearly that grace is a power that heals one's defective nature and makes it willing to serve God.

A later treatise, *On Grace and Free Will* (426 AD), contains a good example of how Augustine interprets the teaching that the Christian is not saved "by works of the Law."

> What is the purport of his saying, "Not of works, lest any man should boast," while commending the grace of God? And then why does he afterwards, when giving a reason for using such words, say, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works?" Why, therefore, does it run, "Not of works, lest any man should boast"? Now hear and understand. "Not of works" is spoken of the works which you suppose have their origin in yourself alone; but you have to think of works for which God has molded you. For of these he says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Now he speaks... in reference to one who was already in full manhood, "Create in me a clean heart, O God"; concerning which also the apostle says, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God." We are framed, therefore, that is, formed and created, "in the good works which" we have not ourselves prepared, but "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It follows, then, dearly beloved, beyond all doubt, that as your good life is nothing else than God's grace, so also the eternal life which is the recompense of a good life is the grace of God.[10]

We can't help but notice Augustine's interpretation of Romans 3:27, "where then is boasting." To Augustine, boasting is excluded not because of God's grace in Christ, whose substitutionary work on the cross is our hope. Rather, it is excluded because God is the one who gives us the grace we need to keep the Law.

Augustine continues and clearly defines grace as the power to effect a moral life. His "particles of grace" is clearly not referring to God's gracious disposition in Christ.

> "Of his fullness we have received, even *grace for grace*." So that out of His fullness we have received, according to our humble

> measure, our particles of ability (emph. mine) as it were for leading good lives. But over and above this, we shall also receive "grace for grace," when we shall have awarded to us eternal life, of which the apostle said: "The grace of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."[11]

In discussing the section in Romans 10 where Paul says that the Jews did not submit themselves to Christ's righteousness, Augustine says,

> For they [the Jews] were under the law, not under grace, and therefore sin had dominion over them, from which a man is not freed by the law, but by grace. On which account he elsewhere says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you; because ye are not under the law, but under grace." Not that the law is evil; but because they are under its power, whom it makes guilty by imposing commandments, not by aiding. It is by grace that any one is a doer of the law; and without this grace, he who is placed under the law will be only a hearer of the law. To such persons he addresses these words: "Ye who are justified by the law are fallen from grace."[12]

So to Augustine, freedom from the Law does not mean being free from its requirements, but receiving God's gracious enabling power to keep it. This sample of Augustine's statements on grace should be enough to get us into the issue. Our next topic will be Augustine's road to becoming a Christian. It will become clear that his definition of grace flows out of his conversion experience.

Augustine's "Conversion"

Augustine's definition of grace is directly related to how he understood his conversion experience. The story is told to us in detail in his *Confessions* to which we now turn. Ever since he had read Cicero's *Hortensius* at age 19, Augustine devoted his life to a struggle to find "the good." This was the goal of every philosopher. The road took him first into the Manichean church. Although Augustine remained in the Manichean church for 9 years he was brought up in the Catholic church, a fact that continued to play a role even during his Manichean years. Augustine was part of a household in which he imbibed Catholic religion and practice. In his *Confessions* he states that during his entire search for wisdom he retained a basic concern in his heart fostered at his mother's breast which

> "alone checked me thus ardent, that the name of Christ was not in it [i.e. in the philosophies he studied]. For this name, according to Thy mercy, O Lord, this name of my Savior, Thy Son, had my tender heart piously drunk... and whatsoever was without that name, though ever so erudite, polished and truthful, took not complete hold on me."[13]

For a while, the Manicheans appealed to Augustine. They taught a duality of nature where good and bad substances were mingled in the body and its adherents did not have to worry about the bad in their lives since it was part of their very substance. Augustine could comfortably say, "My substance made me do it." It was a satisfactory answer to his moral failings.

But after a time he became disillusioned with Manicheism. The break took place when he learned from Neo-Platonism that there were not two opposing substances, but one God. This made more sense to Augustine since it was more in line with God's omnipotence. To Neo-Platonists, evil was a lack of "closeness" to God, but in itself it had no substance. Following Plato, Augustine began to believe that God had illumined each individual, giving the individual an inner path on which to walk and become closer to him. The more a person came to "know himself" the more he came to know the light that was within him and the more he could draw closer to God.

The question was, how could a person accomplish this. The answers given by the Neo-Platonists always centered on some sort of purification. Only as a person cleansed himself from "false goods" (i.e. all the things the flesh considers good but are not) can he approach the "real good" which is God.

About this time, as we mentioned above, Augustine became familiar with some Christians in Milan. Neo-Platonism would be for him only a stepping stone into the Catholic Church for since these "philosophers were without the saving name of Christ, I utterly refused to commit the cure of my fainting soul [to them]."[14] His tremendous desire to find the source of truth would end when he "resolved, therefore, to be a catechumen in the Catholic Church."[15] At this time he confesses that his faith in the Catholic Church was a faith, as yet "unformed upon many points."[16] It was an intellectual assent, or faith in this fact: The road to God could be found within the Catholic Church. "I had now begun to believe that Thou

wouldest by no means have given such excellency of authority to those Scriptures throughout all lands, had it not been Thy will thereby to be believed in, and thereby sought."[17]

Although we are tempted to focus on his later "conversion experience," Augustine's earlier "coming to faith" was just as important. This might be called his intellectual conversion. Now his quest for the *source* of truth was over. As unformed as his faith was, he was convinced that the Catholic Church held the answers he was looking for.

But there was another problem that needed to be addressed. His intellect had been converted, but not his will. Neo-Platonism had given him the concept of God as a spiritual substance who could be found, but it led him to depend on gaining knowledge to free his will so he could find God. Augustine knew better. He knew that he had always known what was the right thing to do, but he could never seem to find the power to do what he wanted. And now, in the Catholic Church he saw people who seemed to have the power to serve God.

Augustine had a keen awareness of his sin. He was a man of passion in every sense. The sins that concerned him were 1) the love of women. He had had a mistress since 19. Two years before his conversion, his mother had arranged to have him marry an "honorable" girl. For this reason he separated from his mistress, but because the girl to whom he was betrothed was too young, Augustine had to wait two years to marry her. During that wait, he could not go without, so he took another mistress with whom he was living during these struggles. 2) He was caught up in pride. He had become quite well known, and loved nothing more than the praise of the crowd.

The intense unfulfilled longing to have a will that would be able to rise up to God was his lot during the days prior to the day of his experience. Looking back on this time of struggle he saw God's ways.

> But you, Lord, abide forever, and you are not angry with us forever because you have pity on our dust and ashes, and it was pleasing in your sight to reform my deformity. Inside me your good was working on me to make me restless until you should become clear and certain to my inward sight. Through the hidden hand of your healing art my swelling abated and from day to day the troubled and clouded sight of my mind grew better through the stinging ointment of healthy sorrow.[18]

Following a somewhat Platonic mindset he wrote,

> I was admonished by all this to return to my own self, and, with you to guide me, I entered into the innermost part of myself, and I was able to do this because you were my helper. I entered and I saw with my soul's eye (such as it was) an unchangeable light shining above this eye of my soul and above my mind.[19]
>
> You beat back the weakness of my sight, blazing upon me with your rays, and I trembled in love and in dread, and I found that I was far distant from you, in a region of total unlikeness, as if I were hearing your voice from on high saying: "I am the food of grown men. Grow and you shall feed upon me. And you will not, as with the food of the body, change me into yourself, but you will be changed into me."[20]

The next lengthy quotations confront us with some very important material. Remember, Augustine is now describing the period between his intellectual acceptance of Scripture, and his total submission to God's will. He speaks about his life at this time in the context of Romans 7.

> I had no answer to make to you when you called me: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise form the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I could still find nothing at all to say except lazy words spoken half asleep: "A minute," "just a minute," "just a little time longer." But there was no limit to the minutes, and the little time longer went a long way. It was in vain that "I delighted in Thy law according to the inner man, when another law in my members rebelled against the law of my mind, and led me captive under the law of sin which was in my members."[21]
>
> This [to imitate the example of a conversion he had heard about] was just what I longed for myself, but I was held back, and I was held back not by fetters put on my be someone else, but by the iron bondage of my own will. The enemy held my will and made a chain out of it and bound me with it. From a perverse will came lust, and slavery to lust became a habit, and the habit, being constantly yielded to, became a necessity. These were like links, hanging each to each (which is why I called it a chain), and they held me fast in a hard slavery. And the new will which I was beginning to have and which urged me to worship you in freedom and to enjoy you, God, the only certain joy, was not yet strong enough to overpower the old will which by its oldness had grown

> hard in me. So my two wills, one old, one new, one carnal, one spiritual, were in conflict, and they wasted my soul by their discord.[22]

We conclude with a series of quotations leading up to his "conversion" experience.

> As to me I was mad and dying; but there was sanity in my madness, life in my death; I knew how evil I was; I did not know how well I would be soon. . . . My spirit was in a turmoil; I was boiling with indignation against myself for not entering into your will and covenant, my God, where all my bones cried out that I should enter and praise it to the skies. . . . All I had to do was to will to go there, and I would not only go but would immediately arrive; but it was necessary for the will to be resolute and sincere, not the turning and twisting this way and that of a will that was half maimed, struggling, with one part rising and another part falling.[23]

> I was saying inside myself: "Now, now, let it be now!" and as I spoke the words I was already beginning to go in the direction I wanted to go. I nearly managed it, but I did not quite manage it. Yet I did not slip right back to the beginning; I was a stage above that, and I stood there to regain my breath. And I tried again and I was very nearly there; I was almost touching it and grasping it, and then I was not there, I was not touching it, I was not grasping it. I hesitated to die to death and to live to life; inveterate evil had more power over me than the novelty of good. . . . Toys and trifles, utter vanities had been my mistresses, and now they were holding me back, pulling me by the garment of my flesh and softly murmuring in my ear: "Are you getting rid of us?" and "From this moment shall we never be with you again for all eternity?"[24]

> Yet still did they hold me back as I hesitated to ear myself away and to shake them off and to take the great step in the direction where I was called. Violence of habit spoke the words: "Do you think that you can live without them?" But by now it spoke very faintly. In the direction toward which I had turned my face and still trembled to take the last step, I could see the chaste dignity of Continence; she was calm and serene, cheerful without wantonness. . . stretching out to receive and to embrace me with those

holy hands of hers. She smiled at me and there was encouragement in her smile, as though she were saying, "Can you not do what these men and these women have done? . . . Why do you try and stand by yourself, and so not stand at all? Let him support you. Do not be afraid. He will not draw away and let you fall. Put yourself fearlessly in his hands. He will receive you and will make you well."[25]

And now from my hidden depths my searching thought had dragged up and set before the sight of my heart the whole mass of my misery. Then a huge storm rose up within me bringing with it a huge downpour of tears. So that I might pour out all these tears and speak the words that came with them I rose up from Alypius (solitude seemed better for the business of weeping) and went further away so that I might not be embarrassed even by his presence. This was how I felt and he realized it. No doubt I had said something or other, and he could feel the weight of my tears in the sound of my voice. And so I rose to my feet, and he, in a state of utter amazement, remained in the place where we had been sitting. I flung myself down on the ground somehow under a fig tree and gave free reign to my tears; they streamed and flooded from my eyes, and "acceptable sacrifice to Thee." And I kept saying to you, not perhaps in these words, but with this sense: "And Thou, O Lord, how long? How long, Lord; will Thou be angry forever? Remember not our former iniquities." For I felt that it was these which were holding me fast. And in my misery I would exclaim: "How long, how long this 'tomorrow and tomorrow'? Why not now? Why not finish this very hour with my uncleanness?"

So I spoke, weeping in the bitter contrition of my heart. Suddenly a voice reaches my ears from a nearby house. It is the voice of a boy or a girl (I don't know which) and in a kind of singsong the words are constantly repeated: "Take it and read it. Take it and read it." At once my face changed, and I began to think carefully of whether the singing of words like these came into any kind of game which children play, and I could not remember that I had ever heard anything like it before. I checked the force of my tears and rose to my feet, being quite certain that I must interpret this as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first passage which I should come upon. For I had heard this about

> Antony: he had happened to come in when the gospel was being read, and as though the words read were spoken directly to himself, had received the admonition: "God, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." And by such an oracle he had been immediately converted to you.
>
> So I went eagerly back to the place where Alypius was sitting, since it was there that I had left the book of the Apostle when I rose to my feet. I snatched up the book, opened it, and read in silence the passage upon which my eyes first fell: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in concupiscence." I had no wish to read further; there was no need to. For immediately when I had reached the end of this sentence it was as though my heart was filled with a light of confidence and all the shadows of my doubt were swept away. . . . For you converted me to you in such a way that I no longer sought a wife nor any other worldly hope.[26]

Augustine gives thanks to God for this conversion.

> O Lord, I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. But where had this ability been for all those years? And from what profound and secret depth was my free will suddenly called forth in a moment so that I could bow my neck to your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden, O Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer? How sweet it suddenly became to me to be without the sweetness of those empty toys! . . . For you cast them out of me, you cast them out and you entered into me to take their place, sweeter than all pleasure.[27]

Augustine was a brilliant man. What makes this account so compelling is that Augustine possessed a mixture of qualities that allowed him to analyze and explain himself in a way that goes beyond the skill of most. He was a philosopher, yet not a searcher of abstract concepts. He was searching for the intellectual and moral power, that is, the liberty to know God and draw closer to him.

What draws us to Augustine is his frankness, his insight, and his skill with words. But it is more. His searchings, his recognition of God's providence, his struggle to be moral are all part of the human experience.

Augustine would acknowledge that not all were as consumed as he was, but all carry within themselves the seeds of this experience.

What was his conversion? If we are squeamish with talking about people's conversions, we will never understand Augustine. Nor will we truly understand the nature of our own ministry, for we deal on a daily basis with what Augustine so brilliantly describes. The analysis that follows is my own, drawn from my experience with people from other churches. You will have to think about it yourselves, but I believe it fits the facts and helps explain much of what we witness in the religious world around us.

The context of Augustine's experience is of utmost importance. The setting that his upbringing, his church, and his world gave to him, couples with his own spiritual makeup come together to create the context that I believe led to his conversion. Think through the experience and what led up to it. First, Augustine was not an unbeliever. He was a child of a Catholic parent and a child of the Catholic Church. Even during his period of wandering he still remembered the name of Jesus, and the fact of God's judgment. His conscience would not let that knowledge pass from his heart and mind. As a child of the Catholic Church of his day he inherited a flawed view of forgiveness. One example of this is his understanding of Baptism that according to church teaching was a "one time" sacrament that remits past sins instead of an act that joins us with Christ and gives us continued forgiveness. (Shortly after his conversion he had a severe toothache that caused him such pain that he began to be afraid of God. He was miraculously healed and thanked the Lord for his faith that "suffered me to be at rest in regard to my past sins, which were not yet forgiven my by Thy baptism."[28])

Augustine also shared in the more general spiritual climate of his day. While Augustine would become the defender of grace, it was a grace whose goal was consistent with the predominate moralistic goals of the church at that time. This is best illustrated by his intense desire for celibacy outside marriage.

As we have seen, Augustine's search ended with an experience that gave his will the liberty to do what it wanted to do, i.e. to live morally. It is my contention that in such a climate—where appreciation for Christ's forgiveness is lacking, and pressure is put on the individual to arrive at

some moral or experiential goal—a conversion experience such as Augustine's will eventually take place.

That Augustine came to a genuine faith in Christ as his Savior is beyond doubt. He knew and treasured Christ's forgiveness. But from the way Augustine described his conversion experience, I think we would do well to question whether this was when he came to faith in the real sense of the term.

His experience fits exactly the pattern of conversion experiences of those who throughout the centuries have been associated with groups that lack a clear understanding of the Gospel, yet whose experience convinces them beyond a doubt that they have found Christianity. The setting in which Augustine found himself as described above, is a setting that has repeated itself over and over again throughout the history of the church. A weak understanding of forgiveness is coupled with a strong moralistic religious bent; a person is caught up in sinful habits that plague him and that he wants to shed; he has a deep yearning to be cured; all of these lead to an experience of euphoria and sudden success against the sins of the will—this is a common experience. Whether we are talking about Saint Augustine, Medieval mystics, followers of Osiander, the Pietistic Movement in Europe, the Great Awakenings in our country, or the modern Evangelical Movement, they all have these elements in common.

All of this is in contrast to a Lutheran understanding of the nature of Christianity where forgiveness is central. It is in contrast to a conversion where a person accepts the good news that Christ has died for his sins. The matter has nothing to do with the intensity of the struggle prior to conversion. What it has to do with is *what* gives relief to the person converted. Does that relief come from the knowledge of God's gracious forgiveness, or does it come from a quality infused into the recipient? I believe the former to be Christian conversion, the latter to be the reception of a human or in some cases a supernatural spirit.

Whether you accept this interpretation of Augustine's experience or not, as we look at Augustine's experience we cannot help but think about Augustine's definition of grace. He was convinced that what he had received came from God's grace alone. Through his experience Augustine received power to rise above his sins. And this is exactly what he described grace to be throughout his entire life, at the expense of God's grace as the favor of God.

As we will see in the next part, the nature of Augustine's experience led him to retain a certain emphasis on the natural "seeking heart," which undermined a clear teaching on "by grace alone." Also, it determined his understanding of predestination.

Continued in next issue...

Footnotes

Part I

1 Eugene Portalie, A Guide To the Thought of Saint Augustine, (Chicago: Henry Regency Company, 1960), 6.

2 Portalie, Guide To the Thought of Saint Augustine, 7, 8.

3 Roy W. Battenhouse, *The Life of Augustine*, A Companion To the Study of Augustine, (New York: Oxford, 1955), 54.

4 Ewald Plass, What Luther Says, Vol. II, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 603.

5 Ewald Plass, What Luther Says, Vol. II, 603.

6 Ewald Plass, What Luther Says, Vol. II, 603.

Part II

1 Martin Chemnitz, Loci Theologici, Vol. 2, 522.

2 Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 2, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), 15.

3 Whitney J. Oates, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 1:328.

4 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:405.

5 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:471, 472.

6 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:466.

7 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:486.

8 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:487.

9 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:503, 504.

10 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:749.

11 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:749.

12 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:753.

13 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:32.

14 Oates, Basic Writings, 1:72.

[15] Oates, Basic Writings, 1:72.

[16] Oates, Basic Writings, 1:96.

[17] Oates, Basic Writings, 1:78.

[18] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, (New York: New American Library, 1963), 147.

[19] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 149.

[20] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 149-150.

[21] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 169.

[22] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 168.

[23] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 175.

[24] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 180.

[25] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 180-181.

[26] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 182-183.

[27] Augustine, Confessions, trans. Rex Warner, 184.

[28] Oates, Basic Writings, 1:134.