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# Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

Theological Journal of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Edited by the faculty of  
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary  
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## Foreword

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* which was originally named the *Clergy Bulletin*. The first issue of the *Clergy Bulletin* is dated August 21, 1941. This issue is one page in length and contains this introduction: "That the Lord will use this humble sheet to the glory of His name is our sincere prayer as we send out this first 'Clergy Bulletin.' May it under His guidance serve to keep us better informed and better equipped for work in our Synod . . . It is also our fervent wish that our pastors will make intelligent use of the Bulletin, realizing that it is a means by which one can reach other pastors in Synod." (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 1 [Aug. 21, 1941]) The *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* has carried out this noble task in the past and strives to do so today. We thank the Lord that He has allowed the *Quarterly* to continue and expand during these past sixty years.

The first article of this issue of the *Quarterly* is entitled, *The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Clergy Bulletin/Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. This article gives a short overview of the history of the *Quarterly*. Its purpose is to inform our readers concerning the origin and background of this periodical.

The second article is from our history. It first appeared in the *Clergy Bulletin* in 1953. (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XII, Nos. 6 & 7 [February & March 1953] pp. 75-79) It gives the flavor of our synod in its early years with its stress on pastoral care. In this article, *Pastoral Calling*, the writer points out the importance of pastors making home visits in their parishes. The author is Rev. Eivind G. Unseth, who spent many years as a pastor in the Chicago area and in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

The Christian funeral is the public declaration that the deceased confessed a faith in Jesus as the Savior and remained in that faith unto his end. Therefore he has the confident hope of the resurrection. Preparing for a Christian funeral is an important part of the work of a pastor. The essay entitled *The Gospel Message and the Funeral* gives valuable assistance in preparing for funerals and funeral sermons. The author of this essay is Rev. Herbert C. Huhnerkoch, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Kissimmee, Florida.

At the end of his life Joshua exhorts the people of Israel to remain faithful to the Lord. He says, "But if it is evil in your view to serve the Lord, then choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your fathers served that were beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Professor Harstad provides an excellent commentary on this portion of Scripture in his *Notes and Commentary on Joshua 24:14-15*.

Two sections of Scripture that are important for the study of the doctrine of the public ministry are 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 and Ephesians 4:11-12. Exegetical notes on these two passages are given by Professor Moldstad, Jr.

This issue of the *Quarterly* also includes a number of exegetical notes and book reviews.

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# The Sixtieth Anniversary of the *Clergy Bulletin/Lutheran Synod Quarterly*

by *Gaylin R. Schmeling*

## *I. The Clergy Bulletin 1941-1961*

### *The Early Years*

In July of 1941 a sample of a proposed clergy bulletin for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was distributed. The first paragraph of the sample states:

This sample copy of a projected clergy bulletin is the direct outgrowth of a suggestion made by one of the pastors in the Iowa-So. Minnesota conference . . . It was decided that such a venture ought to have the thoughtful consideration and full approval of the general conference before launched . . . It was pointed out that much good can no doubt come of such a bulletin . . . But if not properly supervised, also much harm . . . Witness various organs in the Synodical Conference that are responsible to no one in particular . . . Brothers Dorr, Galstad, and Ingebritson were asked to give you this sample, foretaste, and prospectus.

The first issue of the *Clergy Bulletin* was dated August 21, 1941. This issue was one page in length and contained this introduction.

That the Lord will use this humble sheet to the glory of His name is our sincere prayer as we send out this first "Clergy Bulletin." May it under His guidance serve to keep us better informed and better equipped for work in our Synod . . . It is also our fervent wish that our pastors will make intelligent use of the Bulletin, realizing that it is a means by which one can reach other pastors in Synod. This thing can be made a real clearing house of information, but may we all remember that

before anything can come out of a house it must first go in.

(*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 1 [Aug. 21, 1941])

The early issues of the *Clergy Bulletin* were usually one or two pages in length and consisted mainly of news items. One could find notes from the treasurer concerning “dry” seasons and the needs of the synod, dates for committees and conferences, and various other announcements. On September 18, 1941, there was this “LAST MINUTE FLASH: It is still not too late for students to enroll at Bethany.”

Beginning in 1942 the location where the particular issue of the magazine was printed was placed in the masthead of the *Clergy Bulletin*. That year the *Clergy Bulletin* was printed in Forest City, Iowa, and Tracy, Minnesota. Pastors took turns assuming the responsibility of printing the publication. In this case the pastors were Stuart Dorr of Forest City and U.L. Larsen of Tracy. By 1943 this statement was added to the heading of the magazine: “Published by authority of the General Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod.”

The first substantial theological article appears in 1945 when Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker wrote a paper entitled, *Our Preaching – with Special Reference to Law and Gospel*. (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 8) In the same year Prof. G.O. Lillegard published a major paper on the doctrine of church and ministry. The church and ministry debate was under discussion in the Synodical Conference at this time.

The *Clergy Bulletin* did not contain the name of an official editor until September of 1948. That year Rev. F.R. Weyland of Thornton, Iowa, was designated the editor of the publication. He continued as editor until 1951 when he was succeeded by the Revs. J.B. Madson (1951-53), R. Branstad (1953-55), T. Teigen (1955-58), A. Merseth (1958-60), P. Madson (1960), G.O. Lillegard (1960-62), M.H. Otto (1962-70), J.B. Madson (1970-76), T.A. Aaberg (1976-79), G.E. Reichwald (1979-80), W.W. Petersen (1980-97), G.R. Schmeling (1997-)

With the editorship of Rev. J.B. Madson in 1951 the submission of longer theological essays increased. Each issue of the *Clergy Bulletin* was generally larger. Often a particular essay continued through a number of issues. A sprinkling of Latin and Greek proverbs is to be found in the issues, indicating Madson’s great love of classical languages.

## *Church Fellowship Discussions*

Throughout the 1950s the synod's doctrinal concerns were plainly evidenced in the *Clergy Bulletin*. There were a number of articles concerning the Common Confession, church fellowship, and Romans 16:17. Controversy over the doctrine of church fellowship was threatening to rip the Synodical Conference apart.

In 1955 the *Clergy Bulletin* sadly reported the break in fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The LCMS had been the bulwark of orthodoxy throughout the world. Yet in the 1930s this mighty defense began to crumble. In 1935 the Missouri Synod accepted separate invitations from the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church to negotiate for the purpose of establishing pulpit and altar fellowship. The ELS and WELS rejected those invitations because they felt that the ALC and ULC merely wanted union without real doctrinal agreement, which conjecture soon became evident. In the negotiations between the ALC and LCMS, the ALC drew up a document called the *Declaration*, which was ambiguous on many important doctrines (Scripture, salvation, church and ministry, Sunday, and the last things). Missouri's adoption of it in 1938 alongside its own *Brief Statement* (1932) began its slow but steady decline. Discussion between the two churches continued. In 1950 the LCMS and the ALC produced a new union document called the *Common Confession*. Still, it too was an ambiguous and compromising statement.

The rift between Missouri on the one hand and the ELS and WELS on the other continued to widen. Missouri began to make a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint-prayer so that they could pray at meetings with church bodies with whom they were not in fellowship. In 1945, forty-four of their pastors drew up a statement known as the *Statement of the Forty-Four* in which they openly rejected the old Missouri stand on church unity and related doctrines. At the St. Louis seminary there were even questions concerning inerrancy. As the hope of settling these differences gradually faded, the ELS with deep regret declared at its convention in 1955 that its fellowship relations with the LCMS were suspended. The synod resolved:



THEREFORE WE HEREBY DECLARE with deepest regret that fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are suspended on the basis of Romans 16, 17, and that the exercise of such relations cannot be resumed until the offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned have been removed by them in a proper manner. (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XIV, Nos. 10 & 11 [June-July 1955] p. 106)

In September of 1960 a new masthead was found on the *Clergy Bulletin*. The magazine was still being published by the authority of the General Pastoral Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, but at the same time it was edited by the theological faculty of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. From this point on, a member of the seminary faculty would always be the editor of the magazine and it was published quarterly. This issue explained that there would be a new format for the magazine. Under the title, *A New Venture*, the editor G.O. Lillegard gave this information:

At its last meeting, (April, 1960) the General Pastoral Conference of the ELS decided to publish a theological journal, replacing the *Clergy Bulletin* which has served us for many years. The Theological Faculty was asked to take charge of this project. We have been uncertain as to what to name this journal and what form the publication should take. In the meantime, we owe at least an informal beginning of this task to our fellow-clergymen, and ask their indulgence with our first fledgling efforts.

It is our aim to make this new quarterly become a place where we can give the literary productions of our brethren a more adequate organ than we have had hitherto in the old *Clergy Bulletin*. Conference papers, theological studies, anything of general theological interest will be welcomed by the editor for possible use in our next number, (December, 1960). Book Reviews of current publications, historical data, the present critical situation in American Lutheranism all would be welcomed. Let us seek to make our "Theological Magazine" worthy of attention also outside of our immediate circles. (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 1 [September 1960] p. 1)

## II. *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly 1961-2001*

### *A New Name and a New Look*

The General Pastoral Conference in September of 1960 decided to change the name and format of the synod's magazine for pastors. However, it was not until June of 1961 that a new name *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was found on the magazine which in the meantime had become a quarterly. Other names offered for the magazine were *Synod Theological Magazine* and *Lutheran Theological Journal*, but *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was chosen.

At this time the logo of the *Quarterly* appeared which would be its logo for many years to come. This logo had a picture of the Scripture superimposed on a sword with the Latin inscription *Spiritus Gladius*, which means the Sword of the Spirit. This inscription is taken from Ephesians 6:17 where St. Paul writes, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The purpose of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was always to proclaim the inerrant life-giving Word of God which is the church's sure defense, comfort and stay.

In the early 1960s an historical paper by Professor R.E. Honsey continued in several issues. The paper was entitled, *King Sverre's Ecclesiastical Controversies*. This paper presented many important aspects of Norwegian church history in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was of special interest because of our Norwegian heritage.

The articles in the *Quarterly* indicate that the doctrine of church fellowship was still an issue for the synod in the early 1960s. The *Quarterly* printed the resolutions of the WELS convention in which it severed fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1961. (*LSQ*, Vol. II, No. 1 [September, 1961] p. 22ff.) Professor Glenn Reichwald reported on the 1961 convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession at Spokane, WA. This church body was made up of those who left the LC-MS, WELS, and the ELS because of questions concerning church fellowship. (*LSQ*, Vol. II, No. 1 [September, 1961] p. 30) Rev. Theodore Aaberg wrote a review of the CLC statement on fellowship entitled, *Concerning Church Fellowship, A Statement of Principle*. (*LSQ*, Vol. II, No. 4 [June, 1962] pp. 20-23)

## *The Otto Years*

Professor M.H. Otto became the editor of the *Quarterly* in 1962. He began teaching at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1957 and would be named dean of the seminary in 1968. As a teacher at the seminary he exerted a wholesome influence on the students. He taught them how to preach sermons and they appreciated his pastoral approach to theology. He was always a Christian gentleman and was highly respected by his colleagues. Prof. M.H. Otto continued in the position of editor until 1970 when Professor J.B. Madson became editor but he remained managing editor. In 1965 the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was upgraded. Before this it was mimeographed on 8 1/2 by 11 sheets. Now it was put into booklet or magazine form and was professionally produced.

At the request of the synod, Professor B.W. Teigen gave a report in the September 1964 *Quarterly* concerning the Lutheran free churches in Europe. He had traveled to Europe and made contact with these church bodies. The article described the situation in Scandinavia and Germany. Contact was made with Rev. Tom Hardt of Stockholm whose articles would appear in the *Quarterly* in the future. Mention is also made of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, our sister synod in Germany:

There are basically four groups of Lutheran Free Churches in Germany who have had some connection with the Synodical Conference in America. The first is the *Evangelisch Lutherische Freikirche*. This is the group that has been in fellowship with the Missouri Synod for many years. Their president is Pastor Heinrich Willkomm. Drs. Oesch and Kirsten from the Free Church Seminary at Oberursel belong to this group. (*LSQ*, Vol. V, No. 1 [September, 1964] p. 4)

An essay by Dr. Hermann Sasse appeared in the June 1965, issue of the *Quarterly*. The essay was entitled, *The Impact of Bultmannism on American Lutheranism, with Special Reference to His Demythologization of the New Testament*. The essay was introduced with this paragraph:

The article which appears here under the name of Dr. Sasse was a lecture he delivered to a free conference of over 100 pastors, teachers and laymen in Mankato, Minnesota, on March 8, 1965. It was an informal lecture and Dr. Sasse has not had the opportunity to check this material which was taken off the taped record of his lecture. This conference was sponsored by Bethany Lutheran Seminary of Mankato. (*LSQ*, Vol. V, No. 4 [June, 1965] p. 2)

The free conference would become the first of the annual Reformation Lectures at Bethany. These lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. These lectures would regularly be printed in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*.

In the latter part of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s there were a number of articles concerning biblical authority and inerrancy. As the battle for the Bible was being fought in American Protestantism the *Quarterly* reaffirmed the synod's stand on the inspired inerrant Scriptures. Other contemporary issues are also addressed. Professor B.W. Teigen wrote an essay concerning millennialism (*LSQ*, Vol. XII, No. 2 [Winter, 1971-72] pp. 1-47), Professor E.T. Teigen submitted an essay on Pentecostalism. (*LSQ*, Vol. XII, No. 3-4 Spring-Summer, 1972] pp. 1-61)

### *The Aaberg Years*

Rev. T.A. Aaberg became the editor of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* in 1976. That same year he was called to be the first full-time president of the seminary. He was the author of the book *A City Set on a Hill* and was beyond a doubt one of the leading theologians of the ELS. Professor Aaberg wrote one of the finest presentations of church fellowship for the 1977 ELS General Pastoral Conference. He begins his essay explaining the practical value of this scriptural doctrine:

The doctrine of church fellowship is not a set of dry, formal man-made church regulations which hinder the work of the Holy Spirit and make it hard, if not impossible, for pious pastors, teachers, missionaries, and evangelists to witness for Church and to bring the Gospel to mankind.

The doctrine of church fellowship is rather a spiritual, living truth from God's very Word, connected to the heart of the Gospel itself, that of a poor sinner's justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith. (*LSQ*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, [Winter 1976-77] p. 1)

At the cornerstone laying of the new seminary building on October 16, 1977, Professor Bjarne Teigen preached, using the text Revelation 21:1-6. The mid-October date (October 16) chosen for the cornerstone laying of the new building was in keeping with synod tradition. Since the founding of the old Norwegian Synod's first school at Decorah, Iowa, in the 1860s, October 14 had been the anniversary for remembering the founders of the synod and their dedication to Christian education. Many of the old Norwegian Synod's school buildings were dedicated on or around the 14<sup>th</sup> of October. (*LSQ*, Vol. XVII, No. 5 [Fall, 1977] p. 1)

In 1978 articles were printed concerning the doctrine of the church, indicating the intense discussions concerning church and ministry that were occurring in the synod. This doctrine was also the subject matter of the 1978 Reformation Lectures which had this theme: *The Pulpit and the Pew in Luther and the Confessions*. The first lecture dealt with the office of the ministry and the second with the role of the laity. The presenter was Dr. Herman A. Preus. (*LSQ*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 [March 1979]) The discussion concerning the doctrine of the church came to a God-pleasing resolution at the 1980 synod convention when the ELS Church Theses were adopted.

The synod's interest in mission work can be noted in the September 1978 *Quarterly*. Rev. N.A. Madson presented a history of the synod's mission work in Latin America. He noted that the synod began world mission work in earnest in 1968 when the convention resolved to begin mission work in Peru. "The Rev. and Mrs. Ted Kuster and their four children, and lay-workers, Mr. and Mrs. Orlin Myrlie, arrived in Lima, Peru on July 16, 1968 to begin their missionary work." (*LSQ*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 [September 1978] p. 39)

The June 1979 issue of the *Quarterly* began in this way, "The familiar initials T.A.A. – Theodore A. Aaberg – have temporarily been replaced with G.E.R. – Glenn E. Reichwald. President Aaberg has been granted a sick leave and Professor Reichwald is substituting.

We all hope and pray that the initials T.A.A. will soon return.” (*LSQ*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 [June 1979] p. 1) The hopes of Professor Reichwald were not realized. President Aaberg tendered his resignation because of ill health in August of 1979 and passed away in January of 1980. Professor Glenn Reichwald served as acting president of the seminary and editor of the *Quarterly* for the 1979-1980 school year.

### *The Petersen Years*

Rev. Wilhelm W. Petersen accepted the call of the Board of Regents to be the new president of the seminary, beginning his work on August 1, 1980. In the September 1980 *Quarterly*, the first that bears his name as editor, Professor Petersen wrote:

One of the duties of the undersigned, as president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, is to serve as editor of the Lutheran Synod Quarterly. It is with a sense of trepidation that he assumes this position for he is aware of the responsibility that goes with it. Here again he derives courage for the task from the words of Holy Writ: “But our sufficiency is of God.” (*LSQ*, Vol. XX, No. 3 [September 1980] p. ii)

Rev. Wilhelm Petersen faithfully served as president of the seminary for 17 years. He is remembered by his students for his emphasis on the Law/Gospel distinction, for his pastoral heart and for an evangelical approach to the pastoral ministry.

The year 1984 was the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker who was an early leader of the synod. The December issue of the *Quarterly* began with a sermon by Professor J.B. Madson, which was delivered on Synod Sunday, June 17, 1984, in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ylvisaker’s birth. Dr. Ylvisaker served as president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930-1950 and of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1946-1950. (*LSQ*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 [December 1984] pp. 1-10) The same issue of the *Quarterly* contained an essay on apologetics entitled *The Role of Apologetics in Lutheran Theology* by Rev. Steven Petersen. (*LSQ*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 [December 1984] pp. 31-45) This was a subject under discussion at the time.

A proper understanding of the Lord's humiliation and exaltation is an important aspect of the Lutheran Christology. In the June 1985 *Quarterly* Rev. J.A. Moldstad, Jr. presented an excellent exegesis of Philippians 2:5-11 which is the *sedes doctrinae* of this vital doctrine of the faith. Rev. J.A. Moldstad, Jr. was called as a seminary professor in 1994, and is presently the book review editor of the *Quarterly*. (LSQ, Vol. XXV, No. 2 [June 1985] pp. 8-28)

The year 1987 marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the death of C.F.W. Walther, often referred to as the American Luther. The December 1987 *Quarterly* contained an article by Pastor Herbert Larson on *The Centennial of Walther's Death*. Pastor Larson showed from the history of the Norwegian Synod that there existed a warm and cordial relationship between Dr. Walther and the leaders of the synod. For this the synod is truly indebted to this man of God. (LSQ, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 [December 1987] pp. 9-43) The Walther Centennial was also the theme of the 1987 Reformation Lectures. (LSQ, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 [March 1988])

In the 1980s there was considerable discussion concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper both within the ELS and outside of it. Several articles concerning the Sacrament are to be found as one pages through the issues of the *Quarterly* during this period. In fact, the entire December 1988 *Quarterly* was reserved for the Doctrine Committee's presentation of the Lord's Supper entitled, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*. This essay summarized the biblical and confessional doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The words of institution by virtue of our Lord's original institution effect the real presence of Christ's body and blood in a valid administration of the Lord's Supper (consecration, distribution and reception). One cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental *usus* when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins, yet we know from Scripture and we acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ. (LSQ, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4 [December 1988])

In 1990 the *Quarterly* contained a history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from 1918-27. The editor noted concerning this essay "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod will celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its reorganization in 1993. Pastor George Orvick, president

of the ELS, presents a brief history of the first nine years of its reorganization. This issue contains a summary of the first six years and the next issue of the *Quarterly* will present the following three years." (*LSQ*, Vol. XXX, No. 2 [June 1990] Forward) Rev. G.M. Orvick was the author of *Our Great Heritage* a popular history of the ELS. Rev. G.M. Orvick has faithfully served as president of the ELS for more than 26 years.

The June 1996 *Quarterly* contained a brief report of The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) held April 23-25, 1996, in Puerto Rico. The constituting convention had been held in Oberwesel, Germany, in April of 1993. The CELC is built on the same doctrinal principles as The Synodical Conference of North America, which was dissolved in 1967. The CELC consists of sixteen confessional Lutheran churches throughout the world including ELS and WELS from the U.S.A. (*LSQ*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 [June 1996] pp. 8-10)

### *The Recent Years*

In 1997 the present editor was called as professor and president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. In the first issue of the *Quarterly* edited by him this note is found:

*The Lutheran Synod Quarterly* is issued by Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary as a testimony of its theological convictions, as a witness to the saving truths of the inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and in the interest of the theological growth of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This was the purpose of the *Quarterly* while President Wilhelm Petersen was its editor and this continues to be its purpose. As President Petersen enters his retirement, we thank him for his faithful work and for a job well done during his seventeen years of editorship. We wish him God's blessing as he continues to write and teach for the edification of Christ's body the church. (*LSQ*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 [September 1997] p. 1)

The same issue of the *Quarterly* reports the dedication of the new seminary building at 6 Browns Court. Sunday, June 15, 1997, was an historic day for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. On that day



the new seminary building was dedicated to the honor and glory of our Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Rev. Raymond Branstad performed the rite of dedication and President George Orvick preached the dedication sermon based on Luke 15:1-10 and used the theme: *The Good Shepherd: A Pattern for Parish Pastors*. (LSQ, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 [September 1997] p. 4-10) This issue of the *Quarterly* also included Professor Wilhelm Petersen's sermon for the installation of the new seminary president. (LSQ, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 [September 1997] p. 11-18)

In 1998 the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* took on a new look. The color of the *Quarterly* became its now familiar light blue, Luther's seal became its regular logo, and it was bound in a more professional manner.

As the staff of the *Quarterly* looks to the future it finds encouragement in the words of Nehemiah 4:16-18. Nehemiah directed the workmen in Jerusalem to build the walls of the city with one hand, and hold a sword in the other ready for battle. They were to use the sword and the trowel. This is the purpose and goal of the *Quarterly*. As the Holy Spirit builds the walls of Zion, the church, the servants of the Lord are directed to use both the sword and the trowel (*Luthers Schwert und Kelle*) – for both defense and doctrine. The *Quarterly* will continue to use the trowel proclaiming that a man is justified or declared righteous not by anything he does or accomplishes, but alone through Christ's righteousness which is ours by faith in Him as the Savior. At the same time it will continue to use the sword battling false doctrine as it rises on every side. Remember Luther's sword and trowel.

# Pastoral Calling

*by Eivind G. Unseth*

The paper assigned to me is supposed to deal with pastoral calls. Permit me to say at the very outset that Unseth has no pretensions of presenting here an exhaustive or pedantic treatment of this particular phase of a pastor's work, neither does he even remotely imagine that he can add a single iota of information to what you already know regarding the subject. All that I intend to do in this brief paper is to review a few of the fundamental principles which apply to the matter of making pastoral calls. If you expect within the next thirty minutes to hear some startlingly modern, twentieth century technique regarding pastoral calling unfolded for the first time, you will be sadly disappointed. If you had anticipations of learning anything novel or new pertaining to the subject, you will likewise discover, at the conclusion of this paper, that you have been cruelly disillusioned. If, however, in coming to this conference, and observing this item on our agenda, you are expecting nothing more than a concise "refresher course," so to speak, then perhaps you won't feel too "let down" with what I am about to offer. And if this little essay may, even in some small measure, inspire all of us to return to our respective fields of labor with a renewed resolve to wear out our soles (S O L E S) in ministering to precious, blood-bought souls (S O U L S) then, indeed, we may regard the time consumed in considering this subject as having been eminently well spent. Or, better yet, let us pray that the next half hour will be a wise investment of time, which, by God's grace and blessing, may bring rich dividends to each of us in the form of implanting in our hearts a revived eagerness to go out and minister personally to the individual members of our flocks, as well as to those not yet in the fold.

The word PASTOR is, in my estimation, the one all-inclusive and perfect name by which a minister is known. "Pastor" means shepherd, a provider or feeder. Everybody knows that the work of a pastor is to care for his people, usually in the individual sense of personal love and especially in the spiritual sense. I say, everybody knows that, and certainly we pastors must know it best of all, for, in all prob-

ability, the Letter of Call which we received as we began the work in our present parishes contained a paragraph something like this: "We (i.e., the members of the calling congregation) authorize and OBLIGATE you to proclaim to us, jointly and SEVERALLY, the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the canonical writings of the Old and New Testaments and professed in the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church; to discharge toward all the members of our Congregation the functions of a pastor and curate of souls in an evangelical manner, in particular, to visit the sick and the dying and to admonish indifferent and erring members." Even if several sheep are dealt with at once, always at its heart pastoral work is personal. That is why it takes us from house to house, to the lowliest cottage or cabin or basement apartment where the pinch of poverty is keenly felt, as well as to the more palatial homes, where the temptations of prosperity are continually testing the Christian faith of those who dwell therein. Wherever immortal souls are to be found, there we must go to speak to them privately and individually as Jesus did in that Bethany home where He sat down and discussed with Mary "the one thing needful," at the same time making use of that occasion to reprimand Martha, who mistakenly imagined that other things were of superior importance. In spite of all the emphasis that is being placed these days on psychiatric techniques and psychological approaches, I still am convinced that the simple procedure used by Jesus in dealing with those two individuals might well serve as a pattern for us in our pastoral calling. Generally speaking, we might say that the whole human race is made up of Marys and Marthas, that is, those whose eagerness to feed upon the green pastures of God's saving Word knows no bounds, and those whose appetites for the truth have become jaded by an overindulgence of secular sweetmeats. Personally, I am not going to worry too much about neuroses and psychoses and a lot of other scientific, diagnostic nomenclature. Rather, I believe that if we will only use the common sense bestowed upon us by our Creator, sanctified, of course, by God's Holy Word, and will pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction in all that we do and say, our ministrations to the individual will be a blessing, both to them and to us, and will redound to the greater glory of our God and to the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Christ.

Some centuries ago a shepherd boy sang on the pastures of Bethlehem, "The Lord is my Pastor." Ages afterward a chorus composed of celestial voices came down to sing over the same place the answer of the eternal God. To that sacred spot God Himself had come, to be the Shepherd of all human sheep forever and ever. Like antiphonal music across half the Bible, Jesus answers David's psalm with one of His own. David had sung from the side of the sheep, and Jesus, the Shepherd, says: *Ego sum pastor bonus*. That is why to be a good pastor is to be like Jesus.

But, as Arthur Wentworth Hewitt says in his book, *Highland Shepherds*, that "is no easy thing. Let us go on with that translation in the Vulgate. There is a great thrill and a life-long burden in the very next words. *Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis*. Whether this best translates the Greek, let scholars say. We have been used to read, 'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,' and that is right, but the Vulgate with merciless finger points out that the good shepherd gives his SOUL for the sheep. Not in one flash of glorious death may He be one with it. *Animam suam dat*. Patiently through all His life, *animam suam dat*. You learned in your first year Latin that this word for soul meant all the thinking powers.... We must give all our best thought to the pastoral care of our people. We may not make a few calls absent-mindedly as a sideline. Pastoral work must be the center of all our plans. We must think of it more deeply, more sincerely, more constantly than of any other thing. *Animam suam dat*."

This is the *sine qua non* in our service to the Savior. Jesus is the good Shepherd. As the Father sent Him, so He has sent us, commissioned us to feed His lambs. To us also applies the command issued by our Savior shortly before His ascension into heaven, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE." Without personal pastoral care it is impossible for us to lead anyone to Jesus. The most impressive pulpit oratory will not do it, neither will well attended picnics or outings do it. The intimacy of the outing may have provided an opportunity for the shepherd to approach a tender, timid lamb; the pulpit oratory may have contained some exceedingly persuasive and appealing passages, but even that brought no surrender until personal, pastoral guidance was applied to the in-

dividual. The sheep do not flock into the fold in great droves, they must be brought in one by one. That is why I say that our pastoral work is *sine qua non* in our service to Jesus. Like His, our supreme business is to be good, faithful, solicitous shepherds.

I am going to invite you to hear Hewitt again. He says: "Do we mean then that pastoral work is more important than preaching? I am about to say a far more startling thing than that. But first, listen. You might, of course, interpret that question so that a negative answer would thunder like Thor. If on the one hand you mean by preaching such a tender and passionate invitation to Christ as cannot be resisted, while on the other you mean by pastoral work mere social gossip, then of course the answer is obvious. But let us not be silly in this sacred chapter. Here is the thing I want to say: Pastoral work is not to be asked whether it is more important than this or that. It is our only business.

"Now ... for convenience only, we shall consider pastoral work in its ordinary meaning of personal contacts, usually in home visiting; but let us never lose sight of its larger meaning. All phases of our work are for one end, pastoral guidance. All that is good in parish organization is good only for this end. All that is good in our preaching is really pastoral. We may not be pulling a lamb out of the brambles, but we are leading a flock. If by chance there is in our preaching anything good which has no pastoral quality, then it was not our business to say it; it might have been the business of the professor or the politician, it was not ours. Our sole business is pastoral, and our shepherd's crook is the cross. If you have any scorn of pastoral work, get out of the pulpit. If you have any notion that true preaching is not pastoral, drain your brain and refill. The sermon on the new birth was preached to one man who came by night. The sermon on the water of life was preached to one sinful woman."

But now, getting back to the common distinction between preaching and pastoral work, I would like to spend a little time in pointing out how greatly the former depends upon the latter.

Our pastoral calling, particularly the visits we make to the present membership of our parish, will provide us with prolific material for our pulpit work. Observation and experience have often been cited as the best sources of illustrations. But the personal intimacy of

the pastoral rounds does far more than merely supply illustrations for the sermon. As Dr. Fritz says in his *Pastoral Theology*: "When making his visits the pastor learns to know the spiritual needs of his people. His sermons will then be freshening, pointed, interesting, helpful." Unless we visit our people and thus learn to know their needs, their troubles, their temptations, their shortcomings, their sorrows, how shall we be able to preach to them with the greatest effectiveness, or how shall we know which channel to flood with the water of life? If sermons – good, timely, beneficial sermons – can be preached without visiting our people, then by the same token we might just as well give a physician a pop-gun and let him pepper pills around at random without his bothering to see the patients. There is also another respect in which the peripatetic pastor is richly rewarded in his sermon preparation. If we get out and familiarize ourselves with the sheep grazing in our pasture, we will soon discover the type of food which they are best able to digest. A sermon filled with heavy, "professional," theological terminology might be perfectly proper when preaching to preachers or to those who are thoroughly "at-home" in the presence of such highly specialized expressions, but such sermons are decidedly out of place among those whose education along these lines has been limited. Calling on our people will help us to aim at the right intellectual level as we speak from the pulpit. In other words, let us not be invisible six days of the week and incomprehensible on the seventh.

There is an old cliché which I profoundly believe is as applicable today as ever. It is this: "A housegoing pastor makes a churchgoing people." Perhaps we pastors could profitably take a leaf out of the book of most any progressive and successful salesman of our day. They do not sit in their cozy offices waiting for customers to come to them. On the contrary, they are so enthused over the superior quality of their product that they travel up and down the highways and byways eagerly and earnestly soliciting additional prospective users. No doubt, at some time or other we have all met such a salesman. Perhaps we have even been a bit put out because of his almost invincible insistence that we take and try what he has to sell. But I believe we could well adopt, in a reasonable measure, of course, some of his effervescent enthusiasm in our pastoral calling. We have indeed "the one thing" the whole world needs, the Gospel of forgiveness through

Christ Jesus, without whom there is no hope, nor peace, nor life. Many, to be sure, will not “come and buy” even though the blessings of the Gospel are meant for everyone “without money and without price.” To a large part of the world the Gospel is still regarded as antiquated “foolishness.” But let us not be discouraged. The salesman isn’t received kindly by everyone he approaches. He doesn’t “make a sale” at every stop he makes. Neither will we. Neither did the apostles. Neither did Jesus. We do have, however, the unfailing promise of the almighty God, who said: “My Word will not return unto Me void.” Some will gratefully embrace and accept this “foolishness” we are privileged to bring, and by it will be saved. If we are going to obey the command to preach the Gospel to every creature, there is only one way to do it, and that is to go with our precious message to every kitchen and cornfield in our neighborhood. I know all about the advisability of not hindering a farmer, for example, in his work, but he won’t get too nervous about it if you take another hoe and dig potatoes in the next row. Pastoral visitation is the only way to reach all the people. And, on the other hand, pastoral inattention is one of the most frequently repeated excuses for non-churchgoing.

Just what properly constitutes a pastoral call might be rather difficult to define. I have read of one pastor who sets himself the goal of one hundred pastoral calls a month. (!!)

If he rings a doorbell and finds no one at home, he leaves a card indicating that he has been there and marks that down in his book as being a pastoral call. When he calls following a death and sees the whole family, that is counted as one call. If he has lunch with two men he counts that two calls, because he has been in touch with two different families. Another minister does not consider a conversation he may have on the street corner with a parishioner as a call, regardless of the content of the conversation; yet if he calls upon the same parishioner in his office he regards it as a pastoral call. If a member of his congregation comes to his study for five minutes it is a pastoral conversation; yet a thirty-minute telephone conversation, no matter what subject is discussed, it not counted. Another clergyman regards as a pastoral contact every person he greets during the whole day. One wonders whether he considers kissing his wife good morning a pastoral contact. His records would seem to indicate that he does.

The time consumed in a call is something also that will definitely have to be determined by the nature of the call and the circumstances surrounding it. There might conceivably be cases where ten minutes would be too long and other cases where an hour or two would be too short. To say the least, a stop-watch will never be an essential part of a pastor's equipment. Russell Dicks, in his treatise on *Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling*, tells of a certain Boston pastor who was reported to have followed a precise timing in his pastoral calling, giving himself exactly ten minutes, no more, no less, for each call in each home. He never took off his coat, he never sat down. And Russell Dicks declares, rather significantly, that never, or hardly ever, did people seek his help when they were in trouble. Time is an important factor in fellowship; it cannot be hurried, neither must it become a burden.

As to the kind of calls a pastor will make, the variety is vast. It goes without saying that the soul-shepherd will go first of all to the sick and the dying. The need in such cases is immediately apparent. Sickness and death are a result of sin, and in the sick-room the opportunities for bringing both Law and Gospel to the sinner are especially favorable. Those who are ill are, as a rule, more receptive to spiritual ministrations. Through their illness they have learned that man is "as grass," a perishable pilgrim, a fragile, mortal being, and they are more ready to look to Him "from whom cometh our help." Then the pastor will visit the bereaved. Bereavement is a personal crisis. It is characterized by loneliness and a longing for solace. There is a craving for comfort and consolation which the Christian pastor can well supply. Many of the questions and thoughts which arise in the minds of the mourners have to do with God's justice, His love, the hereafter and related subjects. Here is an opportunity for the pastor to be of real service.

The aged and shut-ins are oftentimes likely to be forgotten, because they are there day after day, but they, too, must be placed high on the pastor's calling agenda. If they cannot come to church, to hear the sermon from the pulpit, the pastor must, as often as possible, bring the "bread of Life" to them, for they, too, need to be fed. If a congregation has a tape or wire recorder, the instrument could not possibly be put to better use than to make a recording of the entire Sunday service that could then be taken to the homes of those unable



to be present in person. If it is granted that the shut-in complex is one of the pastor's real concerns in his house-to-house ministry, this becomes a real help in solving a difficult problem. While the aged and the incapacitated are frequently forgotten, inasmuch as they are unable to participate in the regular activities of the congregation and consequently are not often seen, a pastor who sincerely loves his people will certainly never neglect them nor cast them off in their old age. In most areas there will always be calls to make on prospective members. People are on the move these days. The population picture is constantly changing. When our Savior said: "Go ye into all the world," He was not overlooking the fact that a part of that world is right in our own "backyard," so to speak, right in our very vicinity, in our own block or even in our own family or circle of friends. If these people are without church connections they merit a pastoral visit. There is another type of call which we shall simply refer to as the "everyday" call. In some respects this is the most effective and the most appreciated call a pastor can make because it comes of his own volition, not because someone is sick or bereaved and not to promote some program or to make some special request. When older parishioners bemoan the passing of "the good old days" in the church, or when they speak of "the grand old pastors," it is no doubt this kind of a call they are talking about. There are many, many other types of calls a pastor must make, but we cannot take the time to enumerate them here.

In all of our calling let us always keep uppermost in our minds that we are pastors, shepherds, feeders of the flock and that immortal souls have been committed to our care. Our calls are not visits in the ordinary sense of the word. Together with Isaiah we, too, may say: "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives ... to comfort all that mourn ... to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." Isaiah 61. Like Paul we are to teach publicly from house to house. Acts 20, 20. Indeed, the end of any effective ministry inevitably begins when the shepherd forgets or neglects his sheep.

(NOTE: Pastor Unseth served Holton-Suttons Bay, Michigan, St. Paul and St. Timothy in the Chicago area, and Our Savior's, Albert Lea, Minnesota. The above essay was prepared for and delivered to the Chicago-Madison Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod held in St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois, January 17-18, 1951.)

# The Gospel Message and the Funeral: Proper Preaching and Practice

by *Herbert C. Huhnerkoch*

There is no moment in the ministry more compelling than the death of one of the saints. There are simultaneous emotions of grief and relief, of devastation and victory, of finality and eternity. Even the pastor, who is accustomed to speaking on many occasions, may feel a certain sense of powerlessness. He may struggle for words at a time like this. Even though he knows that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of the resurrection are the perfect balm in sorrow, he may feel a sense of inadequacy in finding the right words. While there is one person, namely the departed brother or sister, who needs no further attention from the pastor, there are family, friends and a congregation who need special concern and meaningful comfort.

At death families find themselves in a flurry of activity on the one hand, while simultaneously being frozen in inaction on the other. They just don't feel right unless they are doing something, yet they feel powerless to really do anything of consequence. They turn to occupying themselves with laying to rest the body of the departed in some kind of "proper" way. Friends of the family scramble to lend some kind of support. They may send flowers, express sympathy in a card or personal greeting, and even travel thousands of miles just to be with the bereaved.

All of this tells us something about people and death. The need for the human family to lay its departed ones to rest in some memorable way is one of the unique traits of being human. Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers write in *Funeral Customs the World Over*:

There is no group, however primitive at the one extreme or civilized at the other, which left freely to itself and within its means does not dispose of the bodies of its members with ceremony. So true is this universal fact of ceremonial funeralization that it seems reasonable to conclude that it flows out of human nature. It is "natural," normal, reasonable. It satisfies deep uni-

versal urges. To carry it out seems “right,” and not to carry it out, particularly for those who are closely connected by family, feeling, shared living, common experience or other ties, seems “wrong,” an unnatural omission, a matter to be apologized for or ashamed of. While the persons concerned may arrive at such conclusions by sound reasoning based on sound premises, even where the compulsions behind the desire to bury the dead with ceremony are not analyzed or reduced to language, they remain strong and operative. So true is this that to the various definitions of man there might be added another. He is a being that buries his dead with ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

And they add:

Funeralization tends to be a reflection of the whole viewpoint, the *Weltanschauung*, the world outlook, the basic philosophy of life of the culture in which it is found. A cultural group buries its dead partly in keeping with its economic dimensions, partly in keeping with its outlooks.<sup>2</sup>

We would agree that funeral practice does reflect one’s whole philosophy of life. More precisely funeral practice reflects the collective absence or presence of the Christian faith among the survivors. The Apostle Paul counseled the Thessalonians not to “grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Obviously Paul was warning Christians to watch out for the philosophy of life common among unbelievers, who see nothing in death but darkness. For non-Christians the funeral is an opportunity to focus on the all-too-brief life of the departed and to be sad that he left so soon. But for Christians death is to be different. According to the Apostle, Christians are to focus on Christ, his death for sin and his resurrection, which brings life. For Christians grief gives way to joy. Our Christian philosophy of life, then, is ruled by our certainty that those who die in the Lord still live and their bodies will rise to live again on that last Great Day. Therefore, whatever tradition and form our funeral practices contain, they must joyfully exalt the hope we have in Christ.

Hope is not what we see around us in many modern attitudes surrounding death, which leave God out of the experience. In the 1960’s the life-oriented, future oriented and youth-oriented style of

American culture made people particularly reluctant to look at death. Children were often sheltered from death. Today, even though death has become a less taboo subject, it is still too often approached from an unchristian perspective. Rapidly advancing technology and declining moral values have combined to influence the culture of dying. Technology has made possible the *cryogenic* preservation of the body and has fueled the hopes of some to get a new chance at life their way. New creative ways of disposing of cremated remains, have helped people try to achieve immortality through their ashes. Funerals on the internet will make it possible for family members to connect with family at death without having to face death head on.<sup>3</sup> States which allow the right to die by assisted suicide, will certainly experience funerals afterward which display the self-centered mindset of the people involved. A recent Bill Moyers' documentary "On Our Own Terms," which appeared as a four-part series on public television, showed us that people are seeking more control over how and when they die and over how the events around their death will be handled.

Inevitably this desire for control at death impacts the pastor, who wants to honor Christ as he ministers to people at death. He will continue to have to say 'no' to doing funerals for people who have given him no evidence of the Christian faith during life. Though there are going to be some who will not appreciate a pastor for his decision not to officiate, he must be true to his Lord. A Christian funeral must indeed continue to be only for professing Christians.

In this paper I do not intend to say any more about whether or not to do a given funeral. Rather I will examine funeral practice as it relates to funerals we can do. Even in these cases we will be challenged to sort through practices, discarding those which compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ and embracing, or at least allowing, those that don't.

My hope is that we give attention to preparing ourselves now to deal with changing attitudes and trends regarding death and funerals. When someone dies, we are under enough pressure to put together a meaningful funeral service in a limited time, without being surprised by circumstances we could have foreseen. Being forearmed will help us handle the Christian's death with grace and courage.

So we will examine changing attitudes and concerns in regard to “The Gospel Message and the Funeral,” proper preaching and practice before, during and after the funeral.

## *I. The Gospel Message Before the Funeral*

### *A. Preparing Christians for death during life*

We prepare infants for dying the moment we baptize them and give them rebirth in Christ, for the wages of sin – death – stalks them from the first moment of life. We prepare Christians for death in the Supper of the Lord, for we give them to eat and drink that which offers the forgiveness of sins won by Christ’s death, so that they are prepared to die.

So it is, that long before we actually comfort the bereaved at the death of their loved one, we lay the foundation for that moment in their lives by being their caring pastor at many times in life. We build mutual trust through regular visits. We show interest in them when they are sick, and lead them to think about that sickness which could one day result in death. We counsel them in times when they fear dying and help them find comfort from the Scripture. We are constantly preparing our members for death in sermons and Bible classes, by preaching the Easter gospel and instructing them in the proper view of living and dying.

We prepare people for death week in and week out, as we teach them that, while death is deserved by the sinner, it is also the portal to victory for the Christian. We instruct them that there is no greater event in the life of a child of God than to depart this life to be with the Lord. The Apostle Paul looked forward to that moment in his own life with great longing: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). He also proclaimed, “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). In the language of a nomad, Paul also contended in 2 Corinthians 5:1,4, “Now we know that if the earthly

tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands... For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." Every Sunday the worship service is a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. It is an anticipation of what will happen to the dear Christians we shepherd during life, when that day arrives that the soul vacates the body for the joys of heaven and the tent of the body returns to the earth to await its resurrection. All of this preparation helps people approach death in a godly way.

It is very likely that those who have been equipped in life to anticipate death in Christ will appreciate our ministry to them all the more when death actually invades their lives. They will desire funeral practices which bring glory to the Lord.

### ***B. Preparing ourselves beforehand to minister at death***

While we ready others for death, we also prepare ourselves for dealing with death by studying the Word and learning to proclaim, to those who mourn, that Jesus Christ has rescued us from sin, death and hell. We also ready ourselves for our member's death by understanding the changing trends in funeral practices and how these trends may impact our funeral services for better or for worse. We will want to discover what trends are affecting the thinking of our flock. Do our members desire cremation in increasing numbers, as statistics nationwide show? Do they want the worship service somewhere other than in the church, e.g., the funeral home chapel? Do they want the traditional viewing? Will there be only a memorial service? Will there be interment or "inurnment?" Do they want to be involved in planning the service? Having some idea about the answers to these questions far in advance of funerals helps us serve well when the time comes.

I am thinking that if we serve in more traditional areas of the country we will still find funeral practices similar to what we remember from our youth. At a funeral I attended recently in Luverne, Minnesota, the funeral director informed me that less than 5% of his fu-

nerals are cremations. When I asked him how many funerals take place in the funeral home rather than the church, he responded that very few do. This makes me think that understanding funeral practice in some areas will be more challenging than in others. It is on the coasts, in the south, and in metropolitan areas that people will tend to divorce themselves from their roots. In these areas we may experience more cremations, more requests for what we may consider unusual practices surrounding funerals, and generally a greater desire on the part of people to be more “involved” in their own funeral planning. No matter where we live, we are serving people who are influenced each day by modern culture, which is constantly moving away from God and toward some attempt to achieve immortality another way. In such a climate our main challenge will be to keep people focused on Christ, so that they will still be looking to him at the time of death. It is when members drift from active worship life, that they may also drift into a greater concern for the externals of death, rather than the important spiritual center.

As we prepare ourselves for funerals, we may welcome some changes. It is an encouraging sign that Christians, like good stewards, are looking to spend less money on their funerals, by eliminating some of the traditional trappings. It has been good to see memorial gifts to our churches and schools taking the place of some of the expensive floral arrangements. We can be grateful that some compassionate Christians are planning to be organ donors to benefit others’ lives. But, we should encourage our members to share these plans with us beforehand, so that we can be ready to adapt and still help our flock see Christ in the moment of death. Our ultimate goal is to focus our members away from too much emphasis on peripherals and turn them toward the eternal joy found in our living Savior.

### *C. Preparing the funeral service itself*

In times past, planning the funeral service was almost totally in the hands of the pastor. He would meet with members of the family of the deceased to gather information for the obituary and perhaps ask them which verse of the Scripture was the departed brother’s special confirmation verse. Beyond that, it was the pastor who planned



the service, chose the hymns and determined the content of the service and the sermon.

Indeed, the pastor should still be the primary planner. As the shepherd of the flock, it is he who is called to take the lead. "Since the pastor by virtue of his call into the public ministry speaks for the church, he will be in charge of the funeral services."<sup>4</sup> However, in this "on our own terms" world, more and more families are hoping to have some input into the funeral service. They may request special music for the service, and more likely than not will select hymns like *How Great Thou Art* or *Amazing Grace*. Some may have composed their own obituary and funeral service. Some may ask to be involved in some way in the service, usually with a eulogy. While the pastor can build rapport with people by letting them help plan the service with him, he risks great complication in doing so. He may have to say 'no' to music whose theology is inappropriate for Christian burial. He may have to deny some other request, when people are very emotional. How much better it is to plan in advance, rather than when the funeral is tomorrow. It would be good for us to take the initiative to invite people to speak with us now about any special desires they have for their funeral. Then we can come up with a good plan together, gather appropriate information for the obituary, consider some appropriate hymns and Bible verses and file all of this for future reference.

Since there is no Scriptural injunction of any kind specifying that a funeral or memorial service should be conducted at all at the death of a saint, there is much freedom for the pastor, Christian congregation, and Christian family in planning a service. They can use traditional practices or create new customs. If they prefer, they can choose to plan no ceremony at all. When ceremonies are used, however, and the pastor is asked to be involved, he must do so in a manner which is evangelical and confessional. He must instruct people carefully in what the Bible says and work with them to conform outward practices to the principles of Scripture. He must recognize the difference between *adiaphoron* and doctrine, and strive to avoid offense even in those things which don't matter. He will plan to keep Christ at the center of the ceremony and message. Ultimately he will bring glory to the risen Lord as he comforts and uplifts the bereaved.

## *II. The Gospel Message at the Funeral*

### *A. As it is preached in words*

#### *1. In the sermon*

Whatever else changes regarding funeral practices, the one unchanging standard should be that the funeral service is to exalt Christ, not the deceased. Christ is exalted at the funeral most clearly and importantly in the sermon.

In an excellent paper presented several years ago in the South Atlantic District of the WELS, Pastor Robert Johnston made these appropriate remarks about funeral preaching:

There are few, if any, times in life when the average individual is more prone to be attentive and receptive to the message of God's Word. So often in the course of life, when things are going reasonably well, the Word is received with a rather nonchalant attitude. Only too often many give a noncommittal response as something which, at best, applies to them only on the periphery of life. At a funeral however, there is the overriding realization that death is something with which each of us must one day come face to face. The Christian, even one who is woefully weak in faith, as he or she stands in the presence of death at the coffin of a loved one, is looking for personal admonition and comfort from God's Word at such a time. Thus death itself may well become a blessing, not only for the departed Christian, but for those who survive. What a golden opportunity to share God's amazing grace and extol and praise His boundless love! Although it is not improper to point out the fruits of faith in the life of the deceased, we need to bear in mind that the funeral sermon's purpose is not to eulogize the departed, but to praise the grace of God. <sup>5</sup>

In my library, one of the best summaries of what the funeral sermon should contain comes from the Middler Homiletics notes of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1977.

The test of a good funeral sermon is not how successful the preacher has been in jerking tears, but how successful he has

been in drying them. As with other occasional sermons and addresses, strict homiletical procedure may be relaxed, but a clear progression of thought is still called for. The funeral sermon will 1) remind of the cause of all death, sin; it will 2) proclaim the Savior's pardoning grace; it will 3) herald the comfort, which lies in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting (emphasis mine). The preacher will not take it for granted that the bereaved know what happens when a Christian dies, that his soul goes to be with the Lord. They know, but when this truth has an immediate and personal meaning for them because their dear one has died, they want to be reminded. So too with the truths concerning the resurrection of the body in a glorified state, security in the judgment by virtue of the justification which is ours by faith, and the glories of life everlasting. Christians will appreciate hearing about these glories in some detail. If a pastor has a considerable number of funerals during the course of a year, he may fear that he is becoming repetitious, but, as indicated, for the bereaved the comforting truths of our faith take on a new meaning when the blow of bereavement has struck them. While it is not amiss to take note of the good example set by the deceased if he was rich in good works, the main thrust of the funeral sermon is not to be a eulogy, but to eulogize the Savior.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly the sermon is a tremendous opportunity to proclaim the resurrection gospel, comfort the bereaved, evangelize the lost, and instruct everyone in the basic elements of sin and grace. Its place should never be compromised. May it never be said of our funeral services:

It is ironic that those services of the church which are most attended by the general public — weddings and funerals — have become least distinctive in their Christian witness. It is precisely these services which ought to clearly demonstrate the theology and hope of the Christian community because of their “public” nature.<sup>7</sup>

## *2. In the obituary*

While it is true that the funeral service has for a long time been one of the greatest opportunities to preach Christ, it is also an opportunity to remember the specific life of a particular beloved Chris-

tian. After all, it is in celebrating God's grace in a specific life that people have gathered to remember, mourn, find comfort, acknowledge God's wisdom, praise him for his mercy, and pray earnestly for the strength to go on. It is good to acknowledge how the Lord worked graciously in the life of the departed in baptism and confirmation, and how he sustained marriage and family. It is fitting to call attention to special acts of service to the Lord as an encouragement to the living to pattern their Christian lives after that of the deceased. Such positive acknowledgment occurs even in the Scripture (Hebrews 11).

Especially in areas of the country where funeral practices are less traditionally Lutheran, the pastor may be pressured to eulogize the departed even beyond what he does in the obituary. I have found that the sermon itself provides the opportunity to blend in memorable elements of the person's life. The sermon can still be Christ-centered and properly comforting, while providing a unique look at how Christ worked in this one life. I present the following examples not as a standard for doing this, but as samples of some of my sermons which highlighted some aspect of the life of the departed.

For one who was once a pilot but in his latter days was nearly immobile: Isaiah 40:29-31. "They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

For one who died at Thanksgiving after a long, agonizing death: Psalm 136:1. "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever."

For one who was a finishing carpenter and had built beautiful chancel furniture in the church: 2 Corinthians 5:1. "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."

For a contractor who died a humble Christian: Matthew 7:24-25. The theme was "His Life Was Built on the Rock"

For one who built wrought iron fences and gates: John 10:9. "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture."

For a woman who loved hats and wore different ones to church each Sunday: Revelation 2:10. "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

## *B. As it is Preached in Practice*

In planning the service, the pastor will recognize the overriding importance of the words he speaks in the funeral sermon. He will also realize, however, that only a part of the message is delivered in words. Much of the message is delivered before the sermon is preached and long after its reverberations have filled the place of worship. What surrounds the sermon – place of worship, flowers, casket, urn, picture, music, etc. – must reinforce the message of the sermon, not undermine it.

### *1. By the location*

As the *Lutheran Agenda* makes very clear, there have always been options regarding the location of the funeral service. There is a form of service for use at the home, at the church, at the funeral home, at the graveside, and at any combination of the above. In the past most funerals had an element of ceremony at each location, but the main funeral service was at the church. Clearly, the location of the funeral service, which has varied through the centuries, is an *adiaphoron*.

#### **The home**

The funeral in ancient Israel, which occurred on the same day as death or, at the latest, the day after, began at the home of the deceased and proceeded to the burial location. By their mere presence, professional mourners, hired by the family, emphasized that death was a horrible loss, rather than a victory. (It was at one such procession from home to grave that Jesus encountered the widow of Nain in the crowd and injected the wonderful truth of the resurrection by raising her son back to life.) By going from the home to the cemetery rather than from the synagogue to the cemetery, the loss to a particular family seems to have taken priority over the loss to the wider church family.

According to *Life* magazine, this ancient tradition of the at-home funeral may be reemerging. The escalating cost of the tradi-

tional funeral is reportedly the major driving force behind this trend. The article focused on the life and death of Clyde Spivey, who was suffering from terminal cancer. As he and the family prepared for his death, they investigated costs and learned that a typical funeral would cost them \$5,400, not including the cemetery plot. They also learned that in their state, North Carolina, as in many other states, it is legal to bury the dead without using a mortuary and its services. They decided to do everything themselves. As his death became imminent, a retailer delivered his \$600 coffin to his home (still a lot of money, but much less than the \$2,000 coffin at the funeral home). When Clyde finally drifted into death, his wife washed his body for burial. His sons gathered his favorite suit and boots. Together they dressed and groomed him. Later they placed him in the coffin and moved it into the living room. The next day some friends gathered for a brief time of meditation. Afterward they loaded the coffin in their own van and headed to the cemetery, where the cemetery officials had agreed to allow a funeral without a funeral director.<sup>8</sup>

Though the Spiveys requested no pastor at Clyde's funeral, Christians in our own congregations may desire a funeral at home with the pastor present. We need to realize that nothing prevents us from conducting a funeral at home. In fact, an at-home funeral could be a pretty powerful experience, where families have to come face to face with the harsh reality of death without an unusual attempt to disguise the experience with ceremony. In smaller congregations the wider church family could certainly be invited. In larger congregations only close friends could attend.

## **The cemetery**

In ancient Rome, when Christianity was not a legal religion, funerals were held secretly in the catacombs. Even after that great persecution ended, the practice of holding the entire funeral at the place of burial endured.

These days, a funeral only at the graveside sometimes sends the message that the deceased was not an active member of the congregation. On the other hand, a graveside service is a pretty important part of facing the stark reality of death. No matter how beautiful

the coffin, the impact of being ready to lower the remains of a loved one into the ground is pretty forceful. It provides visual support to the message of death and resurrection.

Cemeteries, which surround many of our country churches, have the wonderful advantage of preaching a sermon to worshipers every week. On the one hand the headstones declare that “the wages of sin is death,” while in another way they proclaim, “Where, O death, is your sting?”

## **The funeral home**

In the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of this one professionals at funeral homes are providing an increasingly complete package of services at the time of death. In addition to their historic role of preparing the body for burial or cremation, they also provide the chapel for the service along with a choice of compact discs with music appropriate for various religious tastes. They transport the body to wherever it is going after the ceremony. And, for better or worse, they offer literature and counsel to the bereaved on the subject of dying.

The challenge which has faced the pastor in recent years is the growing desire on the part of some of our members to have the funeral service in the funeral home. “Convenience” seems to be the main reason for this popularity. Who is not impressed with the simplicity of a one-stop funeral? Families who have not been closely connected to the church in life are especially likely to want the service in the funeral home chapel.

A comment from Perry H. Biddle Jr. in *The Christian Ministry* magazine, presents well some of the concerns about the weakness of using the funeral home chapel:

Funeral chapels are a recent phenomenon and, while convenient, do not lend themselves well to Christian worship. They usually lack an adequate organ or piano, hymnals, symbols of the faith and other aids to worship. They often have “canned music” of a sentimental and funereal type.<sup>9</sup>

A funeral service at the funeral chapel can be very fine and

even preferred in some instances. However, its generic setting lacks the really confessional, visible images present in our Lutheran church buildings. It may send the message that the departed and his/her family were not close to their church family.

## The church

When I attended my brother-in-law's funeral in Minnesota recently, I experienced what I recall from my childhood to be the traditional Lutheran funeral service of the twentieth century. The pastor made an appearance at the funeral home for the viewing, which was held the evening before the service. There he closed out the evening with a devotion. The next day everything moved to the church. As the viewing continued in the narthex right up to the time of the service, the pastor assembled the immediate family in a private room off the church and had a brief prayer with them. Just before the service began, he led the family into the church in procession behind the coffin. After conducting the service, he led the recessional down the aisle behind the casket with the family following. He proceeded to the cemetery at or near the head of the funeral procession and presided over the committal service. At that point he and other family and friends returned to the church fellowship area for a luncheon. In each part of the carefully prescribed form, with the exception of the viewing the night before, the church building was the center of activity.

Whether or not we include all of the elements described above, it seems to me that we ought to take a more proactive role as pastors to preserve or bring back the church as the place for funerals and memorial services. Perry Biddle writes well about how desirable the church is for a funeral.

In contrast (to the funeral chapel) the church sanctuary is the place where the individual is baptized, confirmed and married and where the community of faith gathers to worship each week. It is not only appropriate, but desirable that funerals be conducted from the church.<sup>10</sup>

Let me expand on this a bit. It is certainly adequate to conduct a funeral or memorial service in a funeral home. However, the



advantage of the church as the place for the service is at least two-fold. First, the members of the congregation feel at home in the place where they sat alongside the deceased during life and heard the Word of God, received absolution, received the Sacrament, sang hymns, and prayed together. Second, by meeting in the church they invite unchurched relatives and friends to see how their congregation worships together. Just as the funeral sermon is an excellent outreach tool, so the church building issues an invitation to come back and learn more about Christ.

One of the positive byproducts of the increasing trend toward memorial services instead of full funerals is that there is no longer pressure to have the service quickly or according to the funeral home's schedule. Because of this it is easier to schedule the service at the church and at a time when more people are able to participate.

In my ministry in Arizona it has occurred more than once that we have held a memorial service on Sunday morning at the close of the regular worship service. Doing this usually means that more people are present to hear the message and lend support to the family. It connects the victory of death as closely as imaginable to the place where the Means of Grace were always a part of the person's life. If there is to be Bible class afterward, this service can be kept short with just a hymn or two, Scripture reading, a brief sermon, and prayer.

## ***2. By the presence of other participants in the service***

I attended a funeral service at an ELCA church recently, out of respect to the family with which I was acquainted and whose child had died in infancy. At the service each parent delivered a rather emotional speech about what his/her experience was like during this trying time. The mother's message in particular was emotionally charged and seemed to challenge God's wisdom in allowing such an untimely death. God's goodness in redeeming his little child was forgotten. I could tell that this participation by the parents pleased many of the worshippers. However, by allowing the parents to speak the pastor lost control of the gospel message, which needs to be at the center of the funeral. He never reclaimed the wonderful truth that God in his

infinite wisdom knows how to do what is best for each of his dear people. This example brings to mind advice from J.C. Fritz in *Pastoral Theology*:

The question frequently arises whether others outside the officiating pastor may have a part in the funeral service. It goes without saying that a Lutheran pastor cannot officiate with a pastor of a heterodox church body; that would be unionism. Nor has a layman a right to make a religious address at a funeral; he has not been called to do so. If, however, a well-known citizen has died (mayor of a city, head of some large business firm) and his fellow citizens desire to honor him not only by their presence, but also by having one speak in their name, there it may be preferable, however, that such address be made at the residence or at the cemetery.<sup>11</sup>

Although it may not be as popular in today's society to have the pastor conduct the entire funeral service, sound Law/Gospel preaching and proper Bible-based comfort demands that the clear, encouraging Word of God be properly applied. The one properly called to preach in behalf of the congregation is in the best position to accomplish this.

It has been my practice to counsel family members who are asking to make remarks at the service, that their emotional state may make it very difficult for them to do so. However, if their desire persists, I tell them that I will give them a chance to speak at the close of the service. They usually accept this counsel and, more often than not, inform me before the service, that they have decided not to speak at all.

### ***3. By the manner of disposing of the remains***

During life the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Out of respect for the God-given body, there needs to be some respectful treatment of the mortal remains. Yet there should not be an unusual focus on the body, lest we lose sight of the more important spiritual life which inhabited the body.

## Burial

Burial is a fine practice, which has withstood the test of time. Restricted land use and convenient transport of remains to distant locations have begun to erode the number of burials. Nonetheless, it continues to be the predominant practice among Christians.

Nowhere in Scripture is there a direct command to bury the dead, although from the time of Abraham to Christ, burial was the acceptable form of dealing with the mortal remains. (Abraham buried Sarah, Genesis 23:19. Jesus encountered the burial procession of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:11-15. Jesus himself was buried, Matthew 27:59-60.)

The WELS website offers the following comments in regard to the message burial brings:

It is very clear that burial was the regular treatment of the body by believers during Bible times. Christ's body was buried to await the resurrection. The Bible also compares burial to planting a seed in the ground with the confidence that new life will spring from it (1 Corinthians 15:35-38). We, therefore, prefer to bury the dead in order to follow the custom of Scripture and for the symbolism of burial. Man who was taken from the ground returns to the ground. <sup>12</sup>

## Cremation

I want to take a little extra time with cremation because, historically, it has been associated with pagan practice and because it is becoming increasingly popular around the world today. There is nothing inherently wrong with cremation. It simply hastens the process of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," which takes place under any method of disposition.

Cremation dates back to the Old Testament, but was reserved for those who died in unbelief or disgrace. In ancient Greece, by the time of Homer (800 B.C.), it had become the dominant mode of disposing of the dead. Cremation was actually encouraged for reasons of health and expedient disposal of slain warriors. Following the Grecian trend, the early Romans embraced cremation. By the height of the Roman Empire cremation was widely practiced. Remains were

generally stored in elaborate urns, often in columbarium-like buildings.<sup>13</sup> Cremation was rare among early Christians who considered it to be a pagan attempt to avoid the resurrection. They wanted to treat their dead as Christ had been treated. Eventually, by 400 A.D. after Constantine's Christianization of the Empire, earth burial had completely replaced cremation, except in rare instances of plague or war.

Skepticism about the propriety of cremation continued into the twentieth century. Even Lutheran pastors condemned, or at least strongly discouraged, the practice. In the September 1947 issue of *Concordia Theological Monthly* this item on cremation appeared:

Cremation need not be a symbol of unbelief. There may be true Christians who for valid reasons may desire that after death their bodies be cremated. But over against pagan cremation the early Christians insisted upon Christian burial, and that involved a confession. So today Christian burial in general is a confession, and this must be kept in mind when the thought of cremation rather than burial comes up for discussion.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of misgivings about the propriety of cremation, the number of cremations in North America has been increasing dramatically in recent years: from 5% in 1962 to 20% in 1992. According to USA Today, about 553,000 Americans were cremated in 1998. This represents about 25% of all deaths. The number of cremations has now reached an average of 26% nationwide. This number is expected to rise to about 40% by the year 2010. In some states like Arizona, California, and Washington already over 50% of deaths are followed by cremation.<sup>15</sup>

There seem to be several factors creating the atmosphere for greater numbers of cremations. The most compelling is that the escalating cost of a traditional funeral with embalming charges and expensive caskets moves many to seek the cheaper alternative cremation offers. Those who have moved to the Sun Belt, far away from the burial plot they own back home, find it more convenient and cheaper to transport a small urn, rather than a casket. Some, who are concerned about the overuse of land, prefer cremation as a space-saving maneuver.

So the changing culture of death has brought with it a greater percentage of cremations, complete with the coining of a new word,

“cremains.” Since disposing of the “cremains” of the dead can be done in a variety of ways from the simple to the elaborate, it is not surprising that as we begin this millennium it is possible, for example, to use the services of a company called *Celebrate Life* of Lakeside, California. For a starting price of \$3,200 they will incorporate your loved one’s ashes into fireworks and explode them in a heavenly display for your viewing pleasure. *Celebrate Life* makes this statement about its purpose: “A number of the founders of the company have had first hand experience at the death of a person close to them. Our final good-byes were traditional, and the final image we carried was of a cemetery. Not exactly the mental picture you want to carry around with you for the rest of your life, so most of us forget it as soon as possible. What if we could change the picture? What if instead there could be a picture of a joyous celebration? What if instead of a hole in the ground there was fire in the sky? Since a few of us were in the fireworks business, the idea obviously appealed to us.”<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, what we do with the mortal remains at death remains an *adiaphoron*, but the motive behind the action is of some concern. As our society becomes more secular and drifts farther away from God in its thinking and practice in many matters, it seems to be drifting more and more into preoccupation with the mortal remains of the deceased. Just as we may be deeply concerned about people who desire to spend an inordinate amount of money on a funeral and casket, so also we will also need to show pastoral concern for those desiring to do unusual things with theirs or others’ ashes.

Because of these potential abuses and the historic skepticism about cremation, we might wonder if there is any compelling reason to defend cremation or even prefer it. (I don’t think I have ever heard anyone ask, “Pastor, is it okay to be buried?” I have heard many ask, however, “Is it okay to be cremated?”) Actually, in some respects cremation may be preferred over burial, which for many years has suffered from the excesses of funeral directors. Consider the following valid remarks:

Rather than cremation being a pagan rite, it seems that some of the current funeral practices are far more primitive. It is pagan to make the body of the deceased an object on display.<sup>17</sup>

Cremation is not pagan, but some prevailing funeral customs are... Vestiges of pagan practices remain in modern funerals. We will not belabor the economic waste of modern funerals. But consider some of the other ways in which current funeral practices remain antithetical to the Christian faith. Instead of affirming the reality of death, the scrubbed vocabulary of undertakers speaks of people “passing on” or “passing away.” Platitudes and cosmetics serve to domesticate death. The sites of these practices are called “funeral homes” or “funeral parlors.” Metal burial vaults and caskets with innerspring mattresses lined with satin seem as irrelevant at death as fur-lined bathtubs during our lifetime. It is pagan to make the body of the deceased an object on display for spectators. It is pagan to “view the remains” to see if they “look natural,” especially when morticians remove all evidence of death to soften its horror. No wonder George Buttrick once said, “There is nothing more incongruous than dressing up a corpse in a tuxedo!”<sup>18</sup>

Cremation, indeed, has some positive elements. “Cremation can be a way of affirming the resurrection and facilitating grief work.”<sup>19</sup> Cremation teaches that the all-powerful God is able to restore and raise to life every body, not just those neatly buried. Cremation helps put the stark finality of death more in focus. (Some may need to “view” the body before cremation to assure themselves that their loved one has indeed died.) Cremation even helps get visitation back into the home and the worship service back into the church, since the funeral home becomes less a center of activity.

### *III. The Gospel Message after the Funeral*

The luncheon following many memorial or funeral services brings a message all its own. It tells everyone that life goes on. The living need to return to the lives God has called them to live. Therefore, they gather for food and fellowship, to continue sustaining their bodies and their souls.

What begins at the luncheon in a small way continues as the spouse and family of the departed, along with fellow Christians in the church, get back to the business of living. The work of the church militant goes on.

The pastor's role in death does not end at the funeral service either. Though the Bible does not command any specifics for the minister of Christ in regard to ministering to the living who remain, there is something he can and should do. He reflects the compassion of Christ toward the family and friends most affected by a death. He "mourns with those who mourn." He tries to understand the tug of emotions at this time, empathizing with their huge loss and yet holding before them the great power of Christ to restore the fallen. One of the great joys of the ministry comes when he can reassure grieving family and friends that Christ dries tears and replaces grief with joy. Therefore, he ought to seize every opportunity to be with the family and friends of the departed – not only before and during, but also after the funeral— to share sin and grace in all of its profound force and beauty.

In fact, the time after the funeral may be the most important time for the pastor to offer support.

Unresolved grief is literally deadly! Many physical as well as mental disorders can be traced to grief that had not been worked through.

In several recent national surveys of church members regarding death and funeral practices, many of those surveyed indicated that their minister had not given them the pastoral care and grief therapy needed following the death of a loved one. Some indicated that the pastor did not call again after the death and funeral, or only once. Many clergy find it helpful to the bereaved if they call again in the afternoon or evening of the funeral for a visit with the family and friends and again as needed.

Ministers come and go from churches. The names of many are forgotten. But one never forgets the minister who conducts a meaningful funeral service for an aged parent, a child struck down in an accident, or a close friend.<sup>20</sup>

The process of coping with death has been outlined in much material about grief. Shock, denial, anger, depression, panic, and guilt may all precede acceptance of the death. "There is *separation*: the loss of living presence painfully reinforced by the cold body in the

casket, the absence of familiar reminders, the friendly conversations in past tense. There is *transition*: the 'up in the air,' suspended time at a standstill sort of feeling. There is *incorporation*: the pulls toward reentering, at some future point, the mainstream of living without him, without her."<sup>21</sup> The pastor can help the family get through these times.

The congregation can help too. Congregations will do well to consider having grief support groups. Many times our people will seek out these groups anyway, but they will find them in other churches. We may not personally feel the need for such support, but some of our members may. It is a great way to continue to preach the gospel after the funeral.

### *Conclusion*

It is clear that funeral practice is coming under pressure from various directions. The declining moral values of the world and changing technology are creating pressure on the traditional funeral service. Sorting through matters to determine which are essential and which are *adiaphora* is a growing job for the pastor.

Yet the pastor can decipher these changing customs more easily by remaining focused on what is the center of the funeral service. He will want to realize that every part of the funeral service sends a message, which must not be in opposition to the wonderfully comforting message of the gospel. While he will listen to requests from the family for input into the funeral and work to remain abreast of trends, he must defend his call as the pastor and remain in charge of the service.

As a pastor assesses his circumstances, he will see that he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ at a funeral service long before it actually begins, while it is going on, and after it is over. This is a huge task, but a rewarding one, and one in which God will certainly provide strength and blessing.



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, *Funeral Customs the World Over* (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, Inc., 1960), p.757.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 759.

<sup>3</sup> From an AP News Release by John Kekis, "And now, live on the Internet: Funerals," February 24, 2000. "Fred Ferguson, a second-generation funeral director, is offering to broadcast funerals on the Internet.... 'What you are dealing with here is the front end of a trend. Death is different now than it was 50 years ago because family, friends and relatives are more scattered,' said Kelly Smith of the Wisconsin-based National Funeral Directors Association. 'The need for this kind of service is greater.'"

<sup>4</sup> Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974), p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Robert G. Johnston, *Funeral Practices* (paper delivered at the Florida Pastoral Conference of the WELS, 1984), pp. 11,12.

<sup>6</sup> *Middler Homiletics*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1977, pp. 3,4.

<sup>7</sup> Rueben C. Baerwald, *Hope in Grief* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 8,9.

<sup>8</sup> C. Fox, "A Do-It-Yourself Funeral," *Life*, 22:3, March 1999, pp. 72-79.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>11</sup> John C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 306.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wels.net/sab/frm-qa.html>.

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<sup>14</sup> "Cremation or Burial," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XVIII, No. 9, September 1947, p. 699.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cremation.org>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.celebratelife.net/page2.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Richard L. Morgan, "Cremation," *The Christian Ministry*, 15:3, May 1984, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. , p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Perry H. Biddle, Jr., "Funerals that Witness to the Christian Faith," *The Christian Ministry*, January 1983, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> M. Mahan Siler, "Rites of Passage," *Review and Expositor*, 65:1, Winter 1988, p. 59.

# Notes and Commentary on Joshua 24:14-15

by Adolph L. Harstad

## *Joshua's Exhortation and Witness Concerning Covenant Loyalty (24:14-15)*

Joshua 24:14      וְעַתָּה יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וְעָבְדוּ אֹתוֹ  
בְּתַמְסֵן וּבְאֵמֶת וְחִסְרוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵימָם  
אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר  
וּבַמִּצְרַיִם וְעָבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה

Joshua 24:15      וְאֵם רַע בְּעֵינֵיכֶם לְעַבֵּד אֶת־יְהוָה  
בַּחֲרוּ לָכֵן הַיּוֹם אֶת־מִי תַעֲבֹדוּ- אִם  
אֶת־אֱלֹהֵימָם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר  
בְּעֵבֶר [מִעֵבֶר] הַנָּהָר וְאִם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי  
הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר אִתְּם יִשְׁבִּיט בְּאַרְצְכֶם  
וְאֲנֹכִי וּבֵיתִי נַעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה

Translation: "Now, therefore, revere the LORD and serve him with integrity and faithfulness. Get rid of the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if it is evil in your view to serve the LORD, then choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your fathers served that were beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

### Notes

**Now, therefore/וְעַתָּה** - The term וְעַתָּה functions as a major textual marker or "macrosyntactic sign" (Waltke and O'Connor 634). It is an expression that ties together a portion of a text to organize the material for the hearer and reader in contexts involving discourse. The speaker may insert this and other major markers "in order to highlight for the hearer the beginning, transitions, climaxes, and con-

clusions of his address” (Wolfgang Schneider, quoted in WO, 634). **הַעֲמִידָה** appears in Joshua at 1:2; 2:12; 3:12; 9:6,11,12,19,23; 13:7, 14:10 (2x),12; 22:4(2x), 24:14,23. The expression here shows that Joshua has arrived at a climax in his address before Israel and that he is about to say something of great importance.

**with integrity and faithfulness** - See below for each term. The two expressions together can be understood as an hendiadys. So TANAKH: “with undivided loyalty.” Other translations: “in sincerity and in faithfulness” (NRSV): “completely and sincerely” (NAB).

**with integrity/בְּתָמִים** - The form of the Hebrew word **תָּמִים** is singular, though it may appear plural. The plural adds a second “im.” The term **תָּמִים**/*tamim* is an adjective that is used substantively here. The basic meaning of the verb from which it is derived is “to be complete, finished.” In this context, *tamim* refers to “what is complete, entirely in accord with truth and fact; integrity” (BDB 1071). The English word “integrity” serves well as a translation because, like the Hebrew, it has the idea of “wholeness, completeness” at its center. The Hebrew word “shalom” has the same basic meaning. The word occurs 91 times in the OT and twice in Josh: 10:13 [“whole day”] and 24:14. (Even-Shoshan 1232-1233)

**and (with) faithfulness/וּבְאֵמֶת** - Or “and with truth.” The basic idea of the word *emet* is “firmness.” The term may be a contraction of *emeneth*, with the nun being lost, and thus from *amen*, which we have taken into English. The word *emet* can mean the following: 1. reliability, sureness 2. stability, continuance 3. faithfulness, reliability 4. truth. The word occurs in the OT 127 times, and three times in Josh: 2:12 (“trustworthy sign”); 2:14 “faithful kindness” 24:14 “faithfulness”). (ES 92-93)

**get rid of/וְהִסִּירָהוּ** - The form is a Hiphil imperative plural of **סָרַר**. In Qal it means “turn aside,” and in Hiphil “remove, take away; put aside = leave undone; retract (words); reject (prayer)” etc. (BDB 693-694; ES 805-807). The term occurs in Joshua at 7:13; 11:15; 24:14, 23.

Christians in their new lives are to get rid of things associated with the kingdom of darkness. In Acts 19:19, new Christians burned their old sorcery documents, expensive as they were.

In the hymn “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” Christians express their “good riddance” wish concerning any modern “god” of the heart that stands between them and their Savior: “Hence, all earthly treasure! Jesus is my pleasure, Jesus is my choice. Hence, all empty glory ...” (LW 270; CW 349; ELH 264)

**the river** - The Euphrates.

**it is evil/רע** - The form can be Qal perfect 3ms, or a noun, or an adjective. The adjective has a number of nuances: 1. bad, disagreeable 2. bad, unpleasant 3. evil, displeasing 4. bad of its kind 5. bad in sense of low value 6. worse in comp. 7. sad, unhappy 8. evil/hurtful 9. bad, unkind 10 ethically bad, evil, wicked. While the word does not always have the meaning of ethically bad/evil, in this context with its strong sarcasm it seems reasonable to translate as “evil.” NRSV: “Now if you are unwilling to serve.” TANAKH: “Or, if you are loathe to serve.” Beck: “But if you think it is bad to serve.” GW: “But if you don’t want to serve.”

**in your view/בְּעֵינֵיכֶם** - Literally, “in your eyes.”

**to serve the LORD** - For notes on the verb serve/עבד, see at 22:5.

An infinitive construct here serves as the grammatical subject of the sentence. Another example of this structure is Gen 2:18: “To be alone for the man is not good.” (Williams #192; WO 69)

**if it is evil in your view to serve the LORD** - The whole expression is designed to bring horror to the hearers by presenting an absurd possibility. It has its effect, as their response in vv 16ff will soon show.

Something evil to worship the LORD, the covenant God of free and

faithful grace? Unbelievers do indeed consider the revealed faith to be evil. Now is that the way you see it, Israel? Then, quick, go find some gods, and make your best selection from among them. Choose lots of them. And if you worry that you might have missed an important one, maybe build an altar to “the unknown god.” If you still want to be called a “monotheist,” then select just one out of all of them. That is something of the spirit in which Joshua speaks before Israel.

**then** - This is the start of the apodosis. No word marks this explicitly in the Hebrew. The protasis of the conditional sentence started with “but if.”

**whom/אֵת־מִי־אֲדָרֶשׁ** - Or “whomever,” since this is the “indefinite” use of *ym/who* and it is the direct object of “serve.” (WO 321)

**whether/אִם...אִם** - “Whether ... or.” The expression is apparently an ellipsis (Williams #591). The full expression would seemingly be: “If you choose ... then serve them; and if you choose ... then serve them.” The choice between two sets of foreign gods may actually seem attractive to the “old nature” living in the world and led by it. But it is absurd to the “new nature” who loves the LORD and delights in his covenant. The new nature is to drown the old so that the believer in Israel shouts, “This choice is utterly revolting!”

**that were beyond the river** - See the BHS apparatus criticus. The Kethiv has **ב** “in the region beyond.” The Qere has **מ** (מִ) “from the region beyond.” The question remains what this relative clause modifies, “fathers” or “gods.” Our translation retains the ambiguity.

**the gods of the Amorites** - The worthless nature of these gods is apparent from the way their adherents worshipped them. By liturgical fornication, the Canaanites hoped to “jump-start” their gods into action. Their sex acts were designed to coax their gods into the idea of fertility and cause their fields and flocks to be productive. See also Isaiah’s sarcastic words about Canaanite gods in Is 44:12-20.

**in whose land you are living** - While this relative clause seems to



modify “the Amorites,” syntactically it can also modify “the gods” (“the gods in whose land ...”). To speak of the land as belonging to these gods would continue the sarcasm of Joshua. See the same ambiguity in the preceding relative clause.

**But as for me/וְאֲנִי** - The Hebrew is a waw + the independent personal pronoun for “I.” The waw in this context has a powerful adversative force! The independent pronoun in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence implies independent action and leadership on the part of Joshua. Joshua’s independent words and actions are shared by his “house.”

**my house/וּבֵיתִי** - “House” is a common metonymy for the inhabitants of a house. Compare the expression “house of Israel.” The Bible is silent about a wife and family of Joshua. We assume that the reference here is to them and any others living with them. The idea that “my house” could refer to the whole house of Israel here with Joshua as head of the “house” is contradicted by the dialogue that follows. In particular, the expression “we too” in v 18 speaks against it, as do the words of Joshua in v 19. His audience here is obviously not the same as “his house,” as he has used the expression.

The hymnist describes the atmosphere in a house without the LORD as “dark and poor and void” (ELH 190, LW 467, CW 506).

**we will serve the LORD/וְנַעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה** - While the Hebrew would allow the translation, “let us serve the LORD,” the context dictates otherwise. Israel’s response in v 18 shows that they have understood Joshua’s statement as a solid declaration, not as a pious wish.

### *Commentary*

The commentary above pointed out that Joshua seems to be following a pattern from near eastern treaty-making. A study of Hittite treaties shows elements that have parallels in our chapter. The second millennium treaty format was this:

1. TITLE that identified the chief partner in the treaty

2. HISTORICAL PROLOGUE that showed how past benefits from the chief partner should motivate the vassal to grateful obedience
3. STIPULATIONS/LAWS that governed the treaty relationship
4. DEPOSITION of the text in the vassal's chief temple
5. READING of the text, provision for regular reading as a reminder of terms
6. WITNESSES. The gods of both partners witness and guarantee the agreement.
7. BLESSINGS AND CURSES on those who obey or disobey the terms
8. OATH, CEREMONY, SANCTIONS. The latter involved the mention of coercive action against the treaty-breaker.

The first two elements have parallels in already-completed actions of Joshua. The reader may want to identify other parallels as the account continues through v 27.

The expression “now, therefore” (וְעַתָּה) that opens v 14 indicates that Joshua has come to the heart of the official business at hand. The term in Hebrew is used as a major syntactical marker to point out a transition or climax in dialogue.

Israel, Joshua declares, must continue to meet covenant requirements if the solemn pact is to remain in force. Joshua does not present a long list of regulations. The basic stipulation is summarized in the command: “revere the LORD and serve him with integrity and faithfulness.” Israel has no power of its own to muster up strength to do what Joshua says. But the gracious and powerful word of the LORD just spoken does have such power.

To revere (אָרַךְ) the LORD or fear him, as many translate the Hebrew verb, means to stand in awe of him, to honor him, to give him allegiance. The term in its general sense can include trusting, loving and worshipping. Fearing or revering the LORD in the case of his people is not the same as dreading him. This is obvious from Ps 130:4: “But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.” Forgiveness produces quite the opposite of dread.

To serve (עָבַד) the LORD in its general sense includes worship, trust, love and grateful obedience. Joshua uses the Hebrew word for “serve” seven times in verses 14 and 15, indicating that

servicing the LORD is at the center of the covenant for Israel. “Revere and serve” sums up the whole covenant relationship toward the LORD. The fact that Joshua uses the word “serve” by itself six times shows that even the single term can convey all that is involved in true worship of God under his covenant.

The phrase “with integrity and faithfulness” (בְּתַמָּוּת וּבְאֵמֶת) emphasizes that Israel’s reverence and serving is to be wholeheartedly for the LORD and for him alone. He will not share the affection of his people with other gods. He is “jealous God” (v 19). Undivided allegiance is critical to the covenant relationship.

At this same location at Shechem the greater “Joshua” discussed the same subject of worship with the Samaritan woman. Jesus’ words about true worship of the Father being a matter of “spirit and truth” are very similar to Joshua’s words about proper worship of YAHWEH. In the New Covenant era, even the old ceremonial stipulations for worship that were required of Israel became useless. The times, locations and forms of worship became things of Christian freedom. Jesus may have had this scene here at Shechem in mind as he proclaimed the true God of Israel to that woman seeking water and as he revealed himself as eternal thirst-quencher and the Messiah. (See Jn 4:1-26.)

To “revere the LORD and serve him with integrity and faithfulness” means that Israel must get rid of all idols, whether they are attitudes of the heart or tangible objects. Jacob had done that here at Shechem. If those gods disappeared when discarded and buried, what were they in the first place? (See Is 44:20 for Isaiah’s answer.) Together with the gods that Israel’s forefathers worshipped beyond the Euphrates, Joshua now mentions gods served in Egypt. During the 400 years in Egypt, at least some Israelites must have bent to strong cultural pressures and bowed before the sun gods Re, Atum, or Horus, the sky-goddess Nut, the guardian of the Nile, Khnum, or the sacred bull Apis. The golden calf episode of Exodus 32 demonstrated the influence of Egyptian religion, an elaborate system of local gods and celestial powers.

Does Israel cling to objects of wood, stone or metal as Joshua speaks here at Shechem? While the answer is not certain, the following suggest that he demands throwing away all false gods of the heart,

anything that keeps Israel from giving the YAHWEH undivided worship:

1. Josh 23:8 and 24:31 emphasize Israel's faithfulness at this time. That emphasis would seem strange if outward idolatry were now being practiced.
2. God's blessings came to a jarring halt when Achan took some of the forbidden booty of Jericho (ch 7). The covenant-breaking action of one man affected all Israel. We would expect the same fierce anger of God if outright worship of idols were going on now in the homes of Israel.
3. No discarding and burying of physical idols seems to take place after Joshua's words in verses 14 and 23. At least there is no mention of this as there was in the case of Jacob's family in Gen 35:1-4. This is admittedly an argument from silence.

The Canaanites and their gods are still in the vicinity. Those gods are of the same nature as the gods of Egypt and across the Euphrates - false nothings. Any lurking tendency to credit reality and power to such idols must be rooted out of the heart. In the future, as they settle in former Canaanite territory, God's people must also physically throw away those gods of the land. By his demand, Joshua is repeating the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3).

Secret trust in the powers of the occult. Haunting fears that chance and accident control life. Seeking security in mere things. All such idolatrous attitudes need to be torn from the heart and gotten rid of by those who belong to the LORD. He tolerates no rivals. As the one and only God, he is a "jealous God" (v 19; Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24).

Israel needs to draw the comparison between YAHWEH, the living God of free and faithful grace, on one hand, and idols made of wood, stone and metal on the other hand. The contrast is between gods who were powerless to help their clientele keep their land and the covenant LORD who has just given his people that same land - the gods who brought their people defeat and the God who brought them to Shechem. The two must be compared.

The author of Judges will soon tell of Israel's tragic rejection of the LORD and their worship of various Canaanite gods (Jud 2:11-13). Six hundred fifty years after this scene at Shechem, the prophet Hosea will write: "They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood" (Hos 4:12). "They offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf idols" (Hos 13:2). Human nature, the pressures of society and the great Deceiver are hard at work to blur spiritual vision.

In the broad context of 24:14-24 it is proper to say that the covenant nation must choose between the LORD and false gods. For evidence, see v 22 where Joshua says that they "have chosen" the LORD. In Deut 30:15-20 Moses had likewise told Israel to choose the LORD who is their life as opposed to other gods who would be the death of them. Here at Shechem we thus have another instance of the "as Moses, so Joshua" theme pervasive in our book.

In vv 14-15, however, Joshua does something quite different from Moses. He offers a different choice, both parts of which are utterly contemptible. In these two verses Joshua never uses the word "choose" in regard to what Israel is to do concerning the LORD. The words he employs in connection with Israel and the LORD are the imperatives "revere" and "serve." The word "choose" first enters the dialogue in a shocking way. If Israel considers it a bad proposition, an evil thing, to revere and serve the LORD, then she has a choice. The options are ugly. It is a choice between two groups of worthless gods. Shall I worship Mesopotamian idols or shall I serve Canaanite gods? After all, those who do not worship the LORD still have to worship something, don't they? Everybody is religious! But the spiritually dead can make only deadly hideous choices. The selections offered to Israel are designed by Joshua to sound absurd. He wants them to experience holy horror. To offer an analogy: Joshua is asking them to choose between eating garbage or dung. You have to eat something, don't you? Everyone gets hungry. Joshua and his family on their part will dine at a succulent feast of delicacies.

Those who look to Josh 24:15 to support their "decision theology" should look again at the actual choice called for. The decision here is to be made by the heathen about which worthless deities they prefer. No unbeliever by the strength of his will has ever chosen to serve the LORD. That power comes from God alone (Rom 8:7; Jn

15:16; 1 Cor 12:3). Even Israel as a nation had not chosen the LORD, as Moses made clear in Deut 7:7ff. The LORD had chosen the nation.

The choice imperative of Joshua in the first part of v 15 is followed by a choice declaration from his lips at the end of the verse. His affirmation is one of the best known and “choicest” statements of the entire Bible. Before all Israel he sounds this clear trumpet blast that has stirred God’s people for almost three and a half millennia: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” His words are a bold and unashamed profession of faith in the LORD and commitment to him and his covenant. Even if he has to stand alone, as he and Caleb indeed did earlier (Num 14:1-9), he will serve the LORD. Perhaps Joshua has consulted earlier in his tent with his “house” about this public confession of faith, because he includes them also in his resolve. Or perhaps he is saying that he will use his role as the head of his house to lead those under his spiritual care to serve the LORD as he does.

In confessing YAHWEH, Joshua is at the same time confessing Jesus, who is YAHWEH (Jn 8:58). Joshua’s bold confession may therefore remind the Christian of the promise of Jesus in Mt 10:32 and the words of Paul in Rom 10:9-11. The confession of Joshua may also remind Christians of the great confessions or testimony of individual believers over the centuries: Jesus before Pilate (1Tim 6:13); Peter (Mt 16:16; Jn 6:68); John the Baptizer (Jn 1:6-9); Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26:22-29); Christian martyrs as they faced death in the past and today; Luther at Worms, etc. For a spirited speech in the intertestamental period that reflects the words of Joshua here, see the address of Mattathias in 1 Macc 2:19-22.

Joshua, of course, wants all Israel to serve the LORD. But every good example starts as a sincere singular action. Even if no one follows his lead, that will not change his stance. What the LORD said at the start of Joshua’s service is still true at the end of his life. He follows the LORD “wholeheartedly” (Num 32:12).

What led Joshua to his bold confession?

YAHWEH himself. His undeserved love, powerful acts of rescue, fulfilled promises and covenant faithfulness - all those evidences of the LORD’s grace just reviewed in verses 2-13.

The Word of YAHWEH. The LORD promised Joshua in Josh 1:8 that when he meditated on the Torah of Moses, he would act faithfully. The inscriptured Word of the LORD is efficacious. It has the power to create and sustain faith and faithfulness. Joshua's confession at Shechem is evidence of this power of the Word.

The Spirit, who has worked in his heart. The Pentateuch revealed specifically that Joshua was a man in whom was the Spirit (Num 27:18). The Spirit working through the Word makes God's people bold to confess.

By his Spirit through his Word the LORD leads Christians to the same firm statement of faith as the record of his grace in Christ takes hold of hearts. In love he chose us, redeemed us through the blood of Christ, called us to saving faith by the gospel, washed us by Baptism, daily forgives us and lavishes on us all the riches of his grace (see Eph 1:3-14.). When we see the unmerited favor of the LORD toward us, we want to sing out:

Then here will I and mine today  
A solemn covenant make and say:  
Though all the world forsake Thy word,  
I and my house will serve the Lord.

# A Closer Look at the Sedes Doctrinae for the Public Ministry – 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

1 Corinthians 12:27 ὑμεῖς δέ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους.

1 Corinthians 12:28 Καὶ οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

1 Corinthians 12:29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μὴ πάντες προφήται; μὴ πάντες διδάσκαλοι; μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις;

1 Corinthians 12:30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν;

1 Corinthians 12:31 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι.

Translation: “*Now you are Christ’s body and members individually. And whom God appointed in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helpers, leaders, kinds of languages. Not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers, not all are miracles (workers of miracles), are they? Not all have gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak in languages, do they? Not all interpret, do they? Now seek zealously the greater gifts. And now I will show you the highest way.*”

The immediate context of this section is that of Christ’s body, the church, which is comprised of individual members with different gifts and abilities for service in God’s kingdom. For the Corinthian church in particular, where gifts and abilities were an issue, it was important to realize how the use of all God’s gifts serve in a unifying way for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. No feelings of superiority or inferiority were to be imposed. Paul writes: “*Now to each one*



*the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*

Within this context the apostle describes certain gifts/abilities in the church that God has appointed. The word he uses is ἔθετο, the aorist indicative of τίθημι. This is the same word that occurs in Acts 20:28 (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους), where it is used of God having established overseers for his flock. In 1 Timothy 2:7 Paul employs the word to describe his own calling as an apostle (εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη ἐγὼ κήρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος). With the use of the historical aorist here in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (used also in 12:18), the institution of the public ministry for the benefit of his church is being addressed.

Notice the list of those “appointed” or “established” in this realm of the public ministry:

- < apostles - undoubtedly referring to the 12 apostles (Matthias among the number) and others such as Paul (1 Timothy 2:7) and Barnabas (Acts 14:14)
- < prophets - the word order apparently indicating *N. T.* prophets intended
- < teachers - ones who publicly instruct in the Word, whether pastors or not
- < miracles - ones who, during the early church period, performed miracles in general
- < gifts of healing - ones who specifically did miracles involving physical restoration
- < helpers - (ἀντιλήμψεις); specific assistants; possibly like those in Acts 6 (?)
- < leaders - probably identifies so-called “lay leaders” who “play a vital role in keeping the congregation on a steady course” (Gregory Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary, CPH: 2000; p. 451)
- < kinds of languages - noting those who have linguistic abilities to communicate the Gospel among various ethnic groups

Concerning the gifts of miracles and healing, as well as the miraculous gift to communicate instantly in other foreign languages (no doubt mentioned last, since the Corinthians were tending to give it undue focus), suffice it to say that these were gifts which seem to have been limited to the apostolic era. In 2 Corinthians 12:12 we read: “*The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—*

were done among you with great perseverance.” Only when apostles had been on the scene in any given place do we find recorded in Acts and 1 Corinthians the miraculous gifts extended beyond the Twelve. At the time when the apostles’ era came to a halt, we have no indication that the so-called “miraculous gifts” continued in the life of the church. “We are compelled to conclude that the only means of distributing the prophetic gifts in the New Testament era was the apostolate, so that once the last apostle died, no more prophetic gifts were available” (D. Judisch’s, *An Evaluation of the Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*, Baker: 1978; p. 33).

In the above list of gifts we observe that teachers, helpers and leaders are of a more everyday nature and are gifts which continue in the church to the present. Although we cannot determine with absolute certainty the responsibilities which each of these forms/offices encompasses, yet we do know that these are gifts/ministries which the Lord himself has established for the good of his church [1 Corinthians 12:5, “*And there are differences of ministries (διακονιῶν), but the same Lord.*”] Thus, no single form of public ministry at the exclusion of others can be proven to have been instituted by God. But we do see that God has ordained *one* public ministry with various forms, even as there is *one* true church with many members in that body.

How did Martin Chemnitz understand this section of 1 Corinthians 12? In his *Examen*, under his discussion concerning the seven holy orders of the ministry canonized by Rome, Chemnitz refers to 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 as an example of the various forms of ministry apparent in the church at Corinth in Paul’s day: “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 thanks, **not in private exercises but in public assemblies of the church**” (Chemnitz’ *Examination of the Council of Trent, II*, Kramer edition, CPH: 1978; p. 683). After a lengthy treatment of the way in which the early church made use of numerous “orders” in the one public ministry, Chemnitz states: “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 just said" (*Ibid.*, p. 687 & 688). [emphasis added]

In summary, the list of gifts mentioned by Paul here in 1 Corinthians 12 shows that God has appointed (ἐθέτο) helpers and leaders in the work of the public ministry *no less than* he appointed apostles, prophets and teachers. These forms—obviously used for the building up of the church—are understood as utilizing the office of the keys *on behalf of the church and in the stead of Christ*, each according to its own “stall” determined by the specific call. God has instituted **one** divine public ministry, out of which **various forms** may arise as the church sees necessary.

# A Closer Look at the *Sedes Doctrinae* for the Public Ministry – Ephesians 4:11-12

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

**Ephesians 4:11** Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους,

**Ephesians 4:12** πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ . . .

Translation: “*And He gave some (to be) apostles, and some (to be) prophets, and some (to be) evangelists, and some (to be) shepherds/pastors and teachers, for the purpose of the preparation/equipping of the saints for the work of service/ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ...*”

**αὐτὸς** - The *Lord Jesus* is the one who places individuals in the office of the public ministry. This occurs when the divine call is extended.

**ἔδωκεν** - The aorist is constative: the fact is stressed, without denying that the event is also iterative in nature.

**τοὺς μὲν ... τοὺς δε** - Here we have an idiom: “some...others.” Does the fact that the last noun in the series (διδασκάλους) lacks the previous τοὺς δε mean that this noun is to be taken as a unit with ποιμένας? It is true that usually when there is one definite article for the two nouns there is a connection between the two. It can be demonstrated, however, that the Greek at times makes an exception. To change the syntax of the last item in a series is a common stylistic technique in Greek and especially in Paul.

A couple of examples are Galatians 3:28 and Romans 2:21-23. In Galatians 3:28 the οὐκ ... οὐδέ pattern is followed consistently in the

statement “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free...” But with the last items of the set οὐκ ... καί is found as the list concludes: neither male nor female.” Four articulated participles (ὁ διδάσκων, ὁ κηρύσσων, ὁ λέγων, ὁ βδελυσσόμενος) appear in Romans 2:21-22, but then—contra pattern—Paul finishes with a relative pronoun (ὃς) at the start of verse 23.

**ἀποστόλους** - The fact that apostles are mentioned first seems to imply that we are speaking only of the New Testament era. This is buttressed by the foregoing, where Jesus’ descent into hell and his ascension are discussed. In other words, we are looking at the time period basically beginning with Pentecost.

**προφήτας** - What precisely is meant by this term in relation to the *New Testament*? At least the example of Agabus comes to mind: Acts 11:28; 21:10,11.

**εὐαγγελιστάς** - We think here of Philip: Acts 8:6-14, 21:8. Also we find Timothy’s call specifically indicating he was to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). Obviously the office or form we have here is that of serving as missionary, especially doing pioneer work in bringing the Gospel to those who have not heard it before.

**ποιμένας** - The question arises: Are these “shepherds/pastors” given a separate designation in distinction from διδασκάλους? (We will discuss this further in a moment.) At the very least we can say that the “pastors” of the New Testament era apparently are those designated by the similar New Testament titles ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, and their function involves oversight of doctrine. (1 Peter 5:2-3)

**καὶ διδασκάλους** - Is the καί coordinate (“pastors *and* teachers” as two separate entities) or is it expegetical (“pastors, *that is,* teachers”)? The so-called “Granville Sharp Rule” comes into play. D. Wallace in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, defines this kind of construction: “In Greek, when two nouns are connected by καί and the article precedes only the first noun, there is a close connection between the two ... When the construction meets three specific

demands, then the two nouns *always* refer to the same person. When the construction does not meet these requirements, the noun may or may not refer to the same person(s)/object(s).” (p. 270) The three criteria are then listed as the following: a) neither of the substantives is impersonal; b) neither is plural; and c) neither is a proper name (p. 272). A clear example of a case where the Granville Sharp Rule applies is in 1 Peter 1:3, ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Here we have two personal names joined with καί, plus the definite article at the forefront. Since it meets the three criteria above, the translator can note that the terms “God and “Father” are here referring to the very same entity.

As an example of an *ambiguous* “Granville Sharp” passage, Wallace lists Ephesians 4:11. The reason this verse must be regarded as ambiguous in terms of fitting the rule is that the nouns are plural (pastors/teachers). Wallace states: “There are no clear examples of *nouns* being used in a plural [Granville Sharp construction.]” (p. 284) A case in point for illustrating the problem above is the expression τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν in Ephesians 2:20, where it appears that two distinct groups are indicated within the one category.

Wallace goes on to say that it is likely, however, that the ποιμένας were a part of the διδασκάλους. In other words, “Ephesians 4:11 seems to affirm that all pastors were to be teachers, although not all teachers were to be pastors.” (p. 284) In Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28-29, Hebrews 5:12, and James 3:1 we are left with the impression that the term “teachers” is not to be fully equated with the term “pastors.”

At best, one simply concludes that in Ephesians 4:11 there is not enough grammatical evidence to prove conclusively that the two plural substantives must refer to the very same entity. Since the evidence is lacking grammatically, we cannot dogmatically *insist* that the terms “pastors” and “teachers” in this verse signify only one office.

πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων - Literally we translate: “for the purpose of the completion/preparation of the saints.” Here the genitive is objective, for preparing *the saints* is the issue. The various offices/forms of public ministry given in Ephesians 4:11 all serve the purpose of fully preparing the believers spiritually as they comprise the entire work/mission of the Holy Christian Church.

εἰς ἔργον διακονίας - This phrase (“for the work of service”) has been taken by some to refer to “ministry work” in the sense that *all* Christians are—to a greater or lesser degree—public ministers. This is erroneous. A *call* is needed for one to be in the work of the public ministry. (Rom. 10:15ff.) We look upon the genitive διακονίας as descriptive: “ministering/serving work.” (Although it has no definite article, ἔργον is followed by the genitive, thereby making this a *definite* kind of work.) Lenski in his commentary on Ephesians remarks: “It is a task of ministering to each other, for ‘ministry’ signifies a service rendered to benefit others. All the saints have this blessed work to do and are to get their complete outfit for it from the apostles, etc., given to the church, i.e., from the Word.” (p. 530)

εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ - We classify the two genitives as objective and subjective, respectively. The building of Christ’s body, the church, is the goal of all the service/work of the believers. Not merely numerical concern but internal edification is indicated by the following verse (13).

### *Conclusion*

There is a *mandate* for the public ministry. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the one who establishes the public ministry and is thus the one who divinely calls those who serve. Such calling is done via the church. The institution of the public ministry does not come about simply as a workable system set up by the church for the sake of good order. Nevertheless, in this divinely established public ministry for the New Testament, we can see that various offices/forms are enumerated. It would be legalistic to insist that *only* the role of the pastor can do *all* teaching in the domain of the church. Certainly he is one who teaches (1 Timothy 3:2), but this does not preclude the church from calling teachers apart from the pastoral office to train fellow believers so that all may work together in building up the body of Christ. This spiritual training always is done by God’s divinely appointed means, Word and Sacrament.

# **Book Review:**

## **Servant of the Word – The Life and Ministry of C.F.W. Walther**

*by Paul G. Madson*

August R. Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 295 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at  
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$22.99

This book is a survey of the life and ministry of C.F.W. Walther, founder and first president of the Missouri Synod, who has often been called “the Luther of America.” The biographer, Dr. August R. Suelflow, served for many years as consultant for the Concordia Historical Institute, and therefore had ready access to the letters and other historical material from Dr. Walther’s life. (Dr. Suelflow was taken to his heavenly home shortly before this biography was published.)

Several Walther biographies have been written, but this one presents a fresh account of the young pastor from Saxony who became the leading exponent of Luther’s teaching and the Lutheran Confessions in this country. This refreshingly informative biography has indeed provided the reader “with much more than the typical window into Walther’s theology” (Preface).

The book covers Walther’s life from the time of his birth in Langenchursdorf, Germany on October 25, 1811 to his death in St. Louis on May 7, 1887. It offers interesting glimpses of his early childhood and of his student days. Other fascinating information about Walther’s personal life is presented in a chapter on the home and family he established, information that includes portions of correspondence with his wife and children. He is pictured as a “rather small man” in stature but certainly not in intellect and character. He endured much hardship and frequent illness during his life, so it is



remarkable that he reached the age of 75.

As we would expect, the major portion of the book is devoted to Dr. Walther's ministry. It began in Germany where he served a church for two years before he joined the immigrants on the Johann Georg and sailed for America. He arrived at St. Louis in February 1839, and took charge of two churches in Perry County, Missouri. It wasn't long before trouble arose with the immigration leader, Martin Stephan. In the confusion that followed this episode Walther produced eight theses in which he established the Scriptural doctrine of the Church. Later he would elaborate on these principles in several books.

From the beginning Walther was interested in Christian education for the children and he also established a youth society. The major portion of his ministry was spent as theological instructor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for thirty-seven years (thirty-three of which he served as president). The reader is made aware of Dr. Walther's leadership role in unifying those Lutherans who wished to remain true to Scripture teaching and the Lutheran Confessions. He was a most knowledgeable and perceptive writer on many doctrinal matters. One of the most difficult controversies that arose among Lutherans during his time, and in which Walther displayed a steady-hand, was on the doctrine of election. This doctrine, as all his theology, was based on justification by faith. In his writings his emphasis on justification overshadows all other church doctrines.

One is reminded also that Walther lived during a most traumatic time for our country, the Civil War. The seminary teaching was interrupted for several months, because of this strife. It has occurred to this reviewer that there is a parallel in the lives of the two men who at that time meant so much to their respective domains – one to the nation and the other to the Church. Whereas the country would owe a debt of gratitude to President Lincoln, in a far more significant way the Lutheran Church would owe a debt of gratitude to C.F.W. Walther. In reality, it is gratitude to God for having so richly blessed the ministry of this "Servant of the Word."

## **Book Review:**

# **The Pentecostal and Charismatics – A Confessional Lutheran Evaluation**

*by John A. Moldstad, Jr.*

Arthur J. Clement, *The Pentecostals and Charismatics – A Confessional Lutheran Evaluation*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 236 pp.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at  
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$11.99

The poisonous spirit of the fanatics of Luther's day, of Parham's Bethel College experience of the 1900s, and of the "Praise the Lord" movement of the '70s still is blowing in the wind today. The method is quieter and more mainstream, but the same insidious disdain for the ordained means of grace is alive and well. Pastor Clement's book on the charismatics presents a good overview of the development of Pentecostalism in the USA. In Part 2 he lists the specific teachings and practices which are characteristic of the charismatics. Then in the final portion of the book (82 pages) the author gives the proper Scriptural evaluation of the charismatic claims.

Clement admirably deals with a dichotomy that exists among conservative Lutheran scholars in explaining the gift of "tongues" found in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. He says: "Those who disagree with the movement [the charismatic] often argue in two different directions. For example, in dealing with speaking in tongues, they refer to Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians and encourage Pentecostals and charismatics to take Paul's advice. Side-by-side with this argument, they express the opinion that Pentecostals and charismatics are tapping into a false spirit" (p. 152). In other words, are the "tongues" of Acts and of 1 Corinthians the very same in nature, namely known foreign languages? Clement lets it be known where he stands on the issue: "We believe that Scripture indicates

that the gift of tongues God gave the church at Corinth is the same gift God had given the church at Pentecost" (p. 161).

"The charismatic or Pentecostal, having shut himself off from the means of grace, awaits a direct outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Since he does not confess the power of Baptism, he cannot ask God to give him the Spirit and then go to the source of the Spirit, which is the gospel in Word and sacraments" (p. 143). Yes, let the warning bell keep sounding! Charismatic influence dominant in the '70s and early '80s still snatches unsuspecting souls today. But the welfare of these precious, redeemed souls is at stake! Christ crucified is evidenced for every sinner only in the objective God-ordained means of grace. As Luther said in his Smalcald Articles, "Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil" (SA, III, VIII, 10).

The author's earlier offering on this subject, *Pentecost or Pretense* (NPH: 1981), is no longer in print. By adding *The Pentecostals and Charismatics* to your personal library you will be better equipped to deal with any who are dabbling with the devilish charm of fanaticism.

# Book Review:

## Christ and Culture in Dialogue

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Angus Menuge, *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*. St Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1999. 332 pp.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at  
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$19.95

What did Paul mean when he said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 8:22)? How does a Christian give witness to the message of Christ crucified amidst a multicultural landscape vastly different from his own comfort zone? How does he do this without implying or imposing a new set of laws for the potential convert and yet remain faithful to the injunction to "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" (2 Timothy 3:14)?

A new book published by the Concordia Academic Press attempts to wade through the murky waters and chart a course between two extremes, one labeled "Christian fundamentalism" and the other dubbed "cultural fundamentalism." Serving as the editor, Menuge offers a collection of essays delivered at the Lecture Series on Christianity and Culture at Concordia University Wisconsin in the fall of 1996. The catalyst for the lectures was H. Richard Niebuhr's classic text: *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr had erected five paradigms as a way of capturing history's answer to the question, "What is the Christian's response to culture?" The five which Niebuhr listed were: 1. Christ against culture, epitomized—for example—by the Amish and the Mennonite communities and their withdrawal from "the world." 2. Christ of culture, as seen by the deists Locke, Kant and Jefferson, who were interested in accommodating Christian elements to what appeared to be philosophically reasonable to the mainstream. 3. Christ above culture, having its greatest proponent in Thomas Aquinas who held that "the church must be viewed as simultaneously in and beyond

the world, leading people to salvation in heaven yet encouraging all that is best in this world's culture" (p. 39). 4. Christ and culture in paradox, which Niebuhr contended was Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. 5. Christ the transformer of culture, which Menuge suggests "is similar to the preceding except that it is more optimistic about the ability of Christians to improve culture" (p. 42).

The essays are authored by the following: Martin Marty, Alberto Garcia, Robert Kolb, Gene Veith, Wayne Martindale, Victor Raj, William Cario, Michael Ward, Gary Locklair, Timothy Maschke, Joel Heck, Patrick Riley, Robert Benne and the editor.

In the foreword we find Carl Braaten inquiring, "What shall we do in a situation where culture drives the church, when the church becomes an agency for the religious culture of today? Traditional beliefs, rituals, symbols, sacraments, and practices are set aside wholesale to appeal to the consumers of American religion; what remains is Christianity-lite" (p. 12).

Two essays in particular, each drawing from a different perspective, make interesting food for thought among any who are hungry to debate the relationship between liturgy and culture. In "The Transcultural Nature of Liturgical Worship" T. Maschke rightly contends that, because true Lutheran liturgy is Gospel centered/Means of Grace oriented it is "ecumenically evangelical." He insists that "[I]iturgical worship was not for Luther, nor is it for Lutherans, a vehicle for entertaining people, nor a rote routine mindlessly (and heartlessly) followed by the worshippers, but instead provides an opportunity for people to hear God's Word of promise and express appreciations [sic] for the blessings received from a great and gracious giver—God. This pattern is not a Germanic need nor a culturally rooted expression, but a biblically evangelical opportunity and privilege which God gives to His people" (p. 243). J. Heck's "Cultural Obstacles to Evangelism" uses Acts 15:19 ("We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.") to stress that "Christians should not allow tradition, customs, or culture to stand in the way of communication of the Gospel" (p. 264). In order to have "a truly missionary attitude," Heck says that the church, alongside of its traditional liturgical service, should "offer worship services in a style that the non-Christian understands, without changing the biblical content

of the services themselves” (p. 266). He suggests “incorporating an upbeat style of music” without incorporating the words of the latest sleaze song, but “using the cultural music style to convey the biblical concepts” (p. 267). In light of the fact that he quotes Robert Schuller favorably (“find a need and fill it”) one has to wonder what kind of substance possibly would be sacrificed in Heck’s scenario. How does the church adapt to cultural tastes in things purely peripheral without compromising true *Gottesdienst*?

If you are looking for a book which will stimulate good discussion in pastoral study groups, or one which will simply serve to inform on the theological/cultural battleground, *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* may fit the bill.



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