
Lutheran Synod Quarterly



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LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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Foreword

In this Advent and Christmastide we behold the wonder of the incarnation. We see a little Child lying in the manger appearing completely helpless. But this little Child is none other than the very Son of God in human flesh. He came into the world on account of sin, your sins and mine, and the sins of the whole world. Our sins condemn us to eternal separation from God. Yet God in His great love would not let us die. He desired that we have forgiveness and eternal life. Therefore, He sent His only begotten Son to live a perfect life in our place and suffer and die for our sins. The treasure of forgiveness is present for us today in Word and Sacrament and is received through faith alone in the Savior. This is the wonderful gift of Christmas. This is the emphasis of the sermon by Professor John Moldstad, Jr., with this theme: *God's Grace Has Shined on Us*.

This past September shocking and horrific events occurred in our nation which we will never forget. Our nation's capital and largest city were attacked. This attack has been designated the "Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century." Many questions and concerns have arisen as a result of these events. In his chapel address at Bethany Lutheran College on September 13, 2001, President George Orvick spoke to these questions and concerns. His sermon offered the comfort and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As part of the sixtieth anniversary of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, which was originally named the *Clergy Bulletin*, we have included a number of articles from our history. In this *Quarterly* is found a sermon which was written by Pastor Justin A. Petersen at the commissioning of his son, Pastor Joseph Petersen, as missionary to Cornwall, England, in 1951.

Rev. Bruce Wilmot Adams of Glenowrie, South Australia, has written an article concerning *Abbot Patrick Hamilton (1503-1528) A Lutheran Ambassador to the Scots*. This article gives considerable information pertaining to the early history of Lutheranism in the British Isles.

Justification by faith alone is the central article of the Christian faith, it distinguishes the Christian religion from false religions, all of

which teach salvation by works. In his essay entitled *Justification is Complete* Professor Wilhelm Petersen points out the absolute importance of this doctrine for our salvation.

Some time ago the Doctrine Committee undertook, under the leadership of Pastor Paul Zager, a restudy of the Boy Scouts of America organizations—as well as those of the Girl Scouts. The results of that study were presented to the 2001 Synod Convention. In connection with this study Pastor Zager produced an excellent essay on the subject of scouting. The essay reaches the conclusion that the scouting organizations have not changed, and, therefore, they are organizations which we cannot use. Rather we will participate in the Lutheran Pioneers.

As Christians we live *in* this world but we are not to be part *of* the world. We have been called as Christ's own by faith. Because we belong to Christ, there naturally will be an antagonism between the Christian and the culture in which he lives. This conflict is the topic of the essay written by Pastor Edward Bryant, the Director of Development at Bethany Lutheran College.

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Christmas Sermon on Luke 1:26-38

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, we look forward with joyful hearts to the approaching celebration of your holy birth. We praise you for coming as one of us to lay down your life as a ransom for sinners. You gave your very life for our salvation! Hear our prayers and hymns of praise as we lift our voices to you. We confess that we often have been self-willed, turning back again and again to our sinful ways. Make us ready through sincere repentance to welcome you when you come again. Keep us always in your saving grace. Amen.

Text: *In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38)*

Years ago a cartoon pictured two pioneer settlers discussing local and world events. The caption under the picture was: "Hardin County, Kentucky, February 1809." One man says to the other, "Any news out your way, Bill?" Bill says, "Well, Joe Jones has gone down

to Washington to see President Madison inaugurated. I hear that this Napoleon Bonaparte fellow has captured most of Spain. But that's about it. Anything happening here?" "Naw, nothin' much, except there's a new baby boy out at Tom Lincoln's cabin. Nothin' much ever happens here. This place is pretty dull." ... Well, as you and I know, history was changed greatly by the life and work of Abraham Lincoln, that little baby born in Kentucky in relative insignificance.

We often do not know how significant a birth will be. It can happen in a "no-name" town—as far as the world is concerned. Such a "no-name" town appears in our text: Nazareth. Bethlehem, of course, was the place of Jesus' birth. Yet Nazareth was the place where the announcement was made, where the conception in the womb of the mother Mary took place, and where the special baby born to her made his home during his years of adolescence. "How could anything good ever come from that small town of Nazareth?" people would say. History — HIS STORY — has shown the foolishness of that saying.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, an angel named "Gabriel" appeared to her cousin Mary as she was dwelling in the town of Nazareth. Note that this young woman was a *virgin*. She had not had any sexual contact with a man, even though she was engaged to a man named Joseph. The angel informed Mary that she had been favored by God to be the mother of the Christ-child, the long-awaited Messiah who would be the Savior of the world. This child would be conceived in an entirely supernatural way. The Holy Spirit would come upon her. How necessary this method of conception was so that the child to be born of Mary would be holy in every way, completely without sin. The baby born of Mary would be fully God and fully man.

Why was Mary so favored? Why was God's grace especially shining on her at that moment in that little town of Nazareth? Was she the only virgin around the area at that time? Had she been more of a student of God's Word than others? Did she possibly have no sin, or at least an insignificant amount of it, compared to other people on the earth? Is it because of anything she did, that God favored her to be the mother of Jesus?

No. Mary did not *deserve* this special favor. She too was a sinner, just as we all are. In fact, this is why she was so astounded

that the angel would appear to her and bring the message from God that she would give birth to the Savior. We can imagine Mary thinking, “I’m a sinful human being, a creature of God that has gone astray with the rest of His creation; yet I am being so honored to be a participant in this great miracle of history!” Keep in mind that when Mary later visited Elizabeth she called God her own *Savior*. Never did she give the impression that she was so holy and so deserving of this honor.

Likewise, we do not deserve the birth of the Savior. God could have let us perish forever. Our sins are so heinous in his sight that his holiness would be repulsed by even one infraction of ours against his holy law. Yet, we have not had one infraction, but hundreds and thousands!

Consider that in one hour’s worth of time there can be dozens and dozens of thoughts going through our minds. Ten emails are on the screen. The telephone rings five or six times. We are fed information from television or radio. Maybe we have fretted over finances or medical matters. Maybe we have worried about fixing something. Possibly we have had evil thoughts about someone whose name came up or whose picture we suddenly noticed. In our high tech, fast track society literally a hundred different things can happen for us in just an hour’s worth of time. Imagine, then, the number of sins that take place upstairs in our skull in just one hour. Upon close examination we have to admit that many of our thoughts are unfitting for the Christian people we profess to be. The devil likes to try to lodge for a while on the couch of our brain. The psalmist says: “The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.” And Jesus stated: “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” Then, too, what about the wonderful and loving thoughts you and I should have been pondering during that hour’s worth of time? Do the blessed promises from God’s Word and our prayers to our Heavenly Father consume an hour of our time each day, or is it maybe closer to five minutes worth?

Yes, we are sinners just as Mary was a sinner. We, too, know that we were shapen in iniquity and in sin our mothers conceived us. But **GOD’S GRACE HAS SHINED ON US** nevertheless! As with Mary, who had the grace of all graces poured out on her that she

should be the mother of the Savior, you and I also have had **GOD'S GRACE SHINE ON US** by sending the Savior promised long ago.

I. God's grace has shined on us by giving us a King. When the angel spoke to Mary, he said: The holy one to be born "will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

In other words, the One conceived then and there in the womb of Mary was the One whom the Lord had promised on oath to David. He is the One that God would place on David's throne to rule forever over His people. In 2 Samuel 7 we read: "I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

When Jesus came, he indeed had a kingdom—but not of this world. He rules peoples' hearts. When people trust in him as the Savior — when they believe that through his powerful sacrifice their sins have been atoned for — these are members of his kingdom, a kingdom that lasts for eternity. By faith we sinners are adopted into his kingdom — his Holy Christian Church. "When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Do you see how **GOD'S GRACE HAS SHINED ON US?** When God had his grace shine on Mary at the little town of Nazareth, he also at that very time was shining his grace on you and me and all people. Through the birth of Jesus our heavenly Father was giving the world his greatest gift: the only-begotten Son of God who came in the flesh to win for all the forgiveness of sins. Through faith in this God-Man, all of us can be assured of obtaining eternal life in heaven. What a warm and brilliant ray has beamed on us, no less than on Mary!

When we talk about God's GRACE shining on us, it is important that we know what the word "grace" really means. In our confirmation classes we define the word as "God's undeserved love freely given." Or, assigning a word to each letter of the term, we define it as God's Riches At Christ's Expense. An illustration of grace is that of a beggar seeking alms on a street corner. He is absolutely poor and has nothing to offer by way of earning the money to be

placed into his little cup. But a kind-hearted person comes along and puts a \$100 bill into the cup. This is done simply as an act of grace. The beggar deserved nothing. He could not earn a thing. Yet, the gift is simply received as an act of love and mercy.

Plug ourselves into this. We were all beggars in the eyes of God. Even our good deeds are described in Scripture as “filthy rags.” We had no robe of righteousness to offer God on our own. We only had the clothes of a spiritual beggar fit for hell. But God came along in the course of history — at the time the Virgin Mary conceived a son in Nazareth — and placed into our possession not \$100, but a gift worth more than all the money in the world combined: the gift of eternal salvation. The person who gave the \$100 to the beggar probably did not have to sacrifice much to make the fine gesture. This was not the case with God’s gift of eternal salvation for us and all mankind. It cost Him plenty! It cost Him the life of His own Son! “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

Haven’t we freely received the gift of God’s grace? Aren’t we right now trusting that he has paid for all our sins by having his Son come to live and die for us?

II. God’s grace continues to shine on us through his royal Means.

In the case of Mary, God shined his grace on her by sending an angel and by having his Holy Spirit come upon her. Today, God does not have his grace shine on you and me by the appearance of Gabriel here in the sanctuary. But he sends his Holy Spirit, nonetheless. **GOD’S GRACE HAS SHINED ON US** today by announcing the Gospel to us — not by an angel, as the announcement was made to Mary, but by the use of his Means of Grace: his Word and Sacraments. These are the royal means of our King. This is how he comes to us today and will continue to come to us.

Unfortunately, the announcement of salvation for sinners often is despised and spurned by many in the world today. They want something more spectacular, something more fitting for a King. They often retort, “If God really wants me to believe all of this, why doesn’t

he send me an angel to let me know how true everything is in the Bible? *Then* I'd probably believe!" Isn't that the way the rich man in hell thought? He wanted Abraham to send someone from heaven to talk to his five unbelieving brothers back on earth. He figured they would surely believe if someone from the dead were to come back to life and talk to them. But Abraham replied that they already had Moses and the Prophets—the Scriptures, through which people are made wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Remember: "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21) Let us, then, never despise the ways in which our King wants to be known: Baptism, the preaching and the reading of the Word, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. These are the ways the royal announcement of God's GRACE is still coming to us today.

Before we close, there is one more important application for our lives. We are told Mary at first questioned the angel's announcement that she would have a child. "How will this be?" she said, "since I am a virgin?" Then, after the angel Gabriel explained the power of God to her, pointing out that the Holy Spirit would work this fantastic miracle in her, she replied: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

Like Mary, we may think that certain things are impossible ever to be accomplished in our lives, until we suddenly recall that it is GOD we are dealing with! Is there something troubling you in your life right now? Might it be a problem that appears so large in your mind that you are seriously doubting it can be resolved? Might you even be wondering how the **GRACE OF GOD CAN SHINE ON YOU** as you think of the predicament you may be in? Are you fearful for our country? Have the strikes of the terrorists made you question the almighty power of God and his providence?

Then realize, just as Mary did, that God is so powerful there is nothing he cannot do. More importantly, if he has promised to do it, then it is as good as done! He promised Mary a baby would be conceived and born in a remarkable way, and it was. He has promised you and me that His grace is shining on us, and it is—through His Word and Sacraments. "With God nothing is impossible!" Like Mary, may we humbly acknowledge his work in our lives and may we continue to trust in his power for the future.

As we prepare for celebrating Christmas this week, observe carefully what the event is all about: **GOD'S GRACE HAS SHINED ON US!** His grace has shined on us by sending the Savior King promised long ago, but also by announcing the Gospel to us today. This Gospel in Word and Sacraments is his royal means of ruling our hearts and lives. What a blessed King we have! Amen.

Sermon on Romans 8:28

by George M. Orvick

Text: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

It is my privilege to welcome you on behalf of the people who own and operate this school, namely the members of the Evangelical Lutheran synod. Let me say that Bethany is a good place to be when tragedy strikes. Why? Because we are surrounded by fellow believers and we have the Word of God daily before us to guide our thinking.

We are here at Bethany to learn. Therefore we might ask: What can we learn from this terrible event? All of us have probably asked, Why? Why does God allow such things to happen? Where shall we turn for answers? We have only one place to go and that is to the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible doesn't answer all questions about the problem of good and evil, but it does give us a place to stand, a foundation for our faith, if you will.

We learn what is the cause of all the tragedy in the world. The cause is simply this: The total corruption of the human nature of the whole human race is so terrible that we cannot ever understand it. The Bible says, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) "By one man sin came into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12) All of the evil in the world is the result of man's fall into sin. That is why we have death and destruction, wars and rumors of wars, cancer, and all kinds of sickness, trouble and strife. That is why evil men crash airplanes into buildings and kill thousands of people.

But we must remember this: God is not the author of evil! We must not blame God. God didn't steer the airplanes into the World Trade Center. The Bible says, "The Lord our God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (Psalm 145:17) It is the Devil and fallen sinful man who are the cause of evil. The Devil is the old evil foe who wants nothing more than to destroy us.

Why does God not do something to control such mad people? Why doesn't He restrain them, stop them, and destroy them? The answer is: He has done something about it. God could have destroyed His creation. One theologian said, "I would have kicked the world to pieces." But God did not. Instead, out of His great love, He still provides and cares for His own as a father cares for His children. He causes all things to work together for their good. He still is the Good Shepherd who leads them.

But we still haven't answered the question, Why? Why did He not stop those evildoers in this case?

The answer is this: God allows wicked men to go so far and then he stops them, and causes the result to turn out for the good of His believers. This we see in the case of Joseph. God allowed his wicked brothers to sell him into slavery. But later God caused Joseph to become the ruler of Egypt and to save his brethren from starvation. And Joseph said, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

Hitler was going to establish a 1000-year Reich or kingdom. God allowed him about 20 years. Stalin was going to destroy God, religion and everything associated with it. God allowed him about 40 years.

Can we understand this? Why does God allow evil to happen? Our Explanation of the Catechism gives a good answer: "No, the ways of God's providence are often hidden from our eyes, but we are assured that they are always the kindest and the best." (ELS Catechism, question 129) The Bible says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) After all, who are we? We are like tiny, little specks in the vast universe. How can we presume to know the mind of God? To God all the oceans of the earth are like a drop in a bucket. We can see this only by faith. Only by faith alone can we even begin to grasp those things which are in the mind of God.

However, how can we know beyond a doubt that God loves us and cares for us? In this: He sent His only begotten Son to be our

Saviour. Luther says, If you want to know the mind of God, how he feels about you, about the world, about man's sad condition, don't indulge in idle speculation. Look in the manger! There you have all the answer you need. There in the Christ Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, you learn how God cares for you, how He loves the world, and how He has redeemed you from sin and opened the door of heaven for you.

Likewise, look at the Cross! There you see His love for you. His Son dies for you. The holy innocent Son of God suffers and dies for you. God caused the evil crucifixion to turn into a blessing for us. Here on the cross the Son of God paid for your sins with His innocent suffering and death so that you may have eternal life.

And if you know that and believe that, what more do you need? Amen.

Sermon on Isaiah 35

by Justin A. Petersen

Prayer: God of all grace, God of our Fathers, God of our children, our God, let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it, to the praise of the glory of Thy grace, and to the salvation of many blood-bought souls, also in Cornwall, England. We ask it all in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Text: *The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong; do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isaiah 35)*

These were the holy words, Holy Father, sanctify Thou us through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth. Dearly beloved fellow-redeemed, grace and peace be multiplied unto you all! Amen.

It is with a sense of holy awe and wonder, of pardonable pride and justifiable joy, intermingled with a feeling of fear and trembling, that I ascended this pulpit, to proclaim the Word of God on what well might become an historic event in the mission history of our Norwegian Synod.

May our Heavenly Father, for the sake of His dear Son, our Saviour, pour out His Holy Spirit upon us in ever increasing measure, warming our oft lukewarm hearts, stirring up our sluggish spirits, inciting us to united action, as our gracious God richly blesses the preaching and hearing of His Word upon our hearts now and always!

Life consists in no little degree of contrasts, crass, clashing contrasts at times. This is true not only with life in general, but also with life in the spiritual sphere.

In the immediately preceding chapter, the eye beholds a dreary and discouraging picture — that of a populous and formerly fertile country converted into a wilderness; whereas here in our chapter we behold, by way of contrast, a dry, desolate desert converted into a fertile, fruitful region, beautiful to behold, enviable to enjoy.

There is something so delightfully refreshing about this picture, which God, the Holy Ghost, the artist of artists, paints for us in our text: A desert blossoming as a rose. We hear singing and rejoicing. We gaze at the glory of Lebanon, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. We behold the garden of grace, its trees heavily laden with the fruits of the preaching of the Gospel. We tread together the highway to heaven, called *the way of holiness* . . . whereon *the redeemed shall walk*. We lift up our eyes to the end of the road. We catch glimpses of the garden of glory.

Hark! On the distance we even hear faint echoes of the celestial songs of the elect of the Lord, now safely home in Zion above, *with everlasting joy upon their heads*; and over and above all, we see even now in faith the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God.

Brethren, God wants us to feast our eyes on this picture. And we, too, want to do so, for we all sorely need — and not least you our young missionary with helpmeet at side, strangers in a strange land, far separated from near and dear ones in family and former congregations — the refreshment it imparts, and continue to need it, till traveling days, working days be done.

And so we pray: God, our God, let our eyes never be diverted from this delightful oasis in the wilderness of this world!

But now to view the picture itself more closely, though time will allow of glimpses only. We view it under the title:

THE GLORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSION WORK

1. As to its Message, and
2. As to its Fruits.

I. The desert described in the preceding chapter is a picture of the world as we find it after the Fall. There we behold the fatal fruits of the depraved heart of natural man, *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. Dark beyond description this picture. Pity us all had we no other picture!

But our chapter replaces, thank God, this pathetic picture with a most pleasing one. A marvelous, revolutionary change has occurred. God, our faithful God, has *not* forgotten His promises. God, our gracious God, has *not* forsaken His people. Out of the welter of this wicked world, He has reserved and preserved unto Himself *a remnant according to the election of grace*, not only out of Israel of old, but out from among all the nations of the earth, through the preaching of the Gospel of grace.

Hard hearts have been crushed, hearts that feared and fled from God in terror have been drawn to Him in faith and love. And the result? *The desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose, blossoms abundantly*. These self-same hearts, once desert places, now possess all the God-given glory of Lebanon:

How strong and stately the cedars of Lebanon!
 How excellent Carmel, famed for its splendor!
 How excellent Sharon, famed for its fertility!
 No roses were more beautiful than the roses of Sharon.

Need I say that these beautiful descriptions, couched in figurative language, so dear to the Oriental heart, are applied here by the prophet, aye, by God Himself, to the invisible Church, the Communion of Saints, to all believers in the Christ of God? For only

such see, with the eyes of faith, the Lord in the beauty of His holiness, and in the glory of His grace.

But what is it now that has wrought this wonderful change? What is it, we repeat, that has brought the saints to see such sights? One thing only, and again we repeat for emphasis' sake: The Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus, the good glad tidings of forgiveness of sins through the work of our God-man substitute Jesus Christ; the Gospel which in a few words is concentrated and crowned in the central doctrine of the Bible, a poor, lost sinner's justification in the sight of the holy God in heaven by grace alone through faith, without the works of the Law, this gem of gems in the dazzling diadem of divine doctrines. For that is just what the Gospel is, viz., GRACE, grace full and free, grace *for all*, and *all grace* for all. Here in the Gospel we have the pleasure of pleasures, and the treasure of treasures, the sinner's sole but sure shield and staff, his present grace, his future glory.

"For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation," as we have learned in our Catechism. To which Dr. F. Pieper eloquently adds: "This one gift is the key to all other spiritual gifts. It opens the vast treasure house of all the mercies and favors of God. It causes the pearly gates of heaven to swing on their starry hinges, opened wide for pardoned sinners to enter."

God's glory, always great, is never greater than when revealed in His grace toward unworthy, loveless sinners, a grace whose Gospel proclaims in accents sweet and persuasive: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished. That her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

And it is just this Gospel, than which there is no other, that through our young missionary we are to bring to the people of Cornwall!

Fellow-redeemed sinners, has this Gospel of God's grace been permitted to do its work in *your* heart? Have your eyes been opened to see the glory of this grace in the face of Jesus Christ? If not before,

then God grant that your eyes might be opened to see this grace NOW, and your heart opened to receive this grace NOW!

Again, it is just this grace of God which causes the desert-heart of natural man to *rejoice, and blossom as the rose*. Furthermore, it is this Gospel which alone can, and most surely will, make us faithful and fruitful in our service of God. It is the motive power which alone can and will make us mission minded all.

How can it be otherwise? *For the love of Christ constraineth us*. Mission work will then not be regarded as more drudgery or duty; no, it will be our desire, our delight. For having been given so much, we cannot but give in return. Having ourselves been saved, we cannot but want to serve, our hearts all the while harping an eternal *Glory to God alone!*

Nor can Christian mission work fail of fruits, glorious fruits. To this encouraging truth we now turn.

II. Great and glorious indeed shall be the fruits of preaching the Gospel of God's grace to souls who through the preaching of the Law have been brought to feel their sin-need. Listen to but some of the promises of our text: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped ... the lame man shall leap as an hart ... the tongue of the dumb shall sing*. Why, practically our whole chapter is devoted to a description of the fruits of the Gospel, all crowned, as it were, with the pleasant prospect: *And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose*.

So it was in the days of our text. Cf. Isaiah 60:1-6. So it was in the days of our Lord. So it has ever been, and so it ever will be, whenever and wherever the glad tidings of Gospel-grace is preached.

True, this is not always seen by the physical eye. The world, of course, is blind to it. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. (I Corinthians 2:14) The spiritually bankrupt world scorns and scraps the riches of God's grace. The course of the Gospel through the world has ever been marked by suffering and shame, poverty and persecution. It seems doomed to certain defeat. The world derides, even denies the very thought that the preaching of the Gospel can possibly bear the fresh,

fair fruits of our text. But it is true just the same, and 'tis seen by all those who in faith have learned to reconcile the contrasts again — and seeing, they marvel. The world with its brain and brawn, its education and culture seems to achieve so much by way of fruits — or does it? Whereas, the Christian Church with its preaching of a Saviour slain seems to get little or nowhere — or doesn't it?

We know it does. Our faithful God has promised it, *For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen.* Our Covenant-God has spoken, and shall He not keep faith? This one too: *And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*

True, the fulfillment of these promises of God often seem so slow. As God's thoughts are not always our thoughts, so His ways are not always our ways. It may appear at times as though God knows little and cares less about the condition of His church militant, and the afflictions of His people. It seems at times as though God is sleeping, and His church dying, if not already dead. But God is ever at work in and through His Word. Christ rules even in the midst of His enemies. Wherever the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, is proclaimed, this Gospel which in itself has the miraculous, marvelous power to break the hardest and often the most stubborn heart — there hearts will be brought to receive, rest in, and rejoice over the glorious glad tidings that "I, too, have a gracious Savior; I, too, have a reconciled Father in Heaven." True — and so sad that it is true! Many will reject and even revile the Gospel, but some will always hear and heed, love and live that Gospel, as the angels anthem and the devils rage.

The progress of Christian mission work has often been slow, despairingly, seemingly almost hopelessly slow at times. The history of missions records many instances thereof. Just this one here: That of Missionary Schreuder's mission activities in Zululand, Africa. He labored there almost fifteen long years before there appeared any fruits. His consecrated, generous backers in the homeland, Norway, were growing somewhat discouraged. Then, at long last, the happy news reached them that Schreuder had instructed and baptized a 14-15 year old Zulu girl. The drooping spirits of the mission friends were revived. Joyful enthusiasm prevailed. Landstad tuned his harp and sang:

Opløft dit syn, o kristen sjæl!
 Det dugger over dal og fjeld,
 Det vaares allevegne!
 Gud har sin milde haand oplukt,
 Den gode saed har baaret frugt
 I verdens fjerne egne.
 Lover Herren!
 Sjaele bundne
 Nu gjenfundne,
 Frelste føres,
 Glaedesang i himlen høres.

The beginning had been made, and from now on the mission work in Zululand *blossomed as the rose*.

No, the work of Christian missions *cannot* fail, for it is God's own work. And before God's work can fail, God Himself must fail. Neither will our work in Cornwall fail. Why, we can *already* point to fruits: The Joseph Pedlar family (Mr. Pedlar, who has labored faithfully and stubbornly in Cornwall for years must almost be regarded as the father of Lutheran mission work in his homeland.) There is Desmond Jose, instructed in our Catechism by our emissary to Cornwall, who is now preparing himself for the Gospel ministry at our Bethany College and Seminary, and who hopes to bring the pure Word back to his countrymen. There are also other hopeful prospects. We can as a synod, therefore, with confidence, courage, aye cheer, put our hand to the plow in Cornwall, the task which is being formally inaugurated today with the commissioning of our first missionary to this distant land.

You, our young missionary, will undoubtedly meet up with many obstacles and discouragements. You will find many desert places in Cornwall. You will traverse much wilderness land, much burnt-over ground, than which there is no harder ground for mission work. Work-righteousness churches will rise up in determined opposition. Formidable and fierce are the many enemies that will combine, in unholy alliance, to block the course of the Gospel. There's the wicked and wily trinity of evil: the devil, the world, and our own flesh, this internal enemy which every heart, even the Christian heart, harbors, our own flesh which so often causes us to fail God and one another through "misbelief, despair, and other shameful sin and vice." But

shall these enemies stop us, shall they cause us to fail our God and the souls which He has entrusted to our spiritual care? God forbid!

We must confess with shame, alas, that we have in the past failed our Covenant-God many times, as individuals and as a synod. Mission interest, as well as mission fever, has been, and is, at a low ebb among us. There are too many desert places in our congregations and in our hearts. Of this we need to repent, not only in word, but in spirit and in truth, a repentance that will prove itself in our lives.

We need, *sorely* need, a revival in the true Scriptural sense among us. May we experience it in ever-increasing degree in these pre-centennial months! Oh, that the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord. Cf. Acts 3:19. Oh, that the voice of the turtledove might be heard more among us! Oh, for more love for the Gospel, more prayer for the Gospel, more giving of ourselves and ours for the Gospel. Oh, that the desert places among us might rejoice and blossom as the rose. Brethren, we must shake off this lethargy, this indifference, this ingratitude, otherwise it may come to this that the candle-stick of the pure Gospel — God forbid! — may be removed from our altars.

And who knows but that our Cornwall mission, the first foreign mission of our own, may be just the stimulant and incentive we need in this direction! Who knows but that it may open up new horizons to us, both at home and abroad! Who knows but that Cornwall might sometime in the future serve as a base from which we might be able to do some effective mission work in the modernism-infected mother church of Norway!

Of this we can be certain: Our God will not, cannot fail us ever. His promises have never gone unredeemed. Neither will this one, *The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose*. His Word has never *returned void* (empty). And with this Word, this promise, we go forth, defying the very gates of hell. Relying on the promise of this Word, we shall commence, continue, and complete this our common cause — the salvation of blood-bought souls in Cornwall — to the glory of God!

And now for a final word of comfort and cheer, a word which these weak, wavering hearts of ours will need so sorely and so often, not least in our mission work — a word about the end of the journey. Our text touches that, too.

Whereas Scripture dwells chiefly on the things pertaining to the way to God and glory, it does not fail to dwell, and delightfully so, upon the *end* of the way.

How wise our God is! Were it not for the strait and narrow way, which He so clearly points out in His Word, none of us could, of course, ever reach its glorious goal. How tenderly thoughtful also is our God! For were it not for the occasional glimpses which He gives us of the glorious goal awaiting us at the end of the journey, HEAVEN, we must needs stagger and stumble under the weight of the cross, grow fainter and fainter under the fierce rays of the sun of affliction — and at last succumb.

One such glimpse of the glory awaiting all true children of God, here pilgrims and strangers, is given us in the last verse of our chapter: *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* Nor will we forget Revelation 7.

Fellow redeemed, this is no dream, no delusion. No, this is reality, glorious reality, and we shall experience it some day, some of us likely quite soon.

How tempted we are to tarry at length before this pleasant picture, as the three once desired to tarry on the Holy Mount! But, brethren, we have work to do while yet in the valley of the shadow, while yet wearily wending our way through the wilderness of this world. This is not time for rest; this is the time for work.

A charge I have to keep,
A soul I have to save.

No, now is the time for work, and we must needs *work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.* Let us then, *all of us, be up and doing. Let us, all of us, be about our Father's business. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

Shall we falter, shall we flinch, shall we fail? No, in the strength of God's grace *made perfect in weakness*, we cannot, we must not, we will not fail.

And when we are tempted, as often we will be, to faintheartedness, let us ever and anon turn our thoughts, fix our eyes, steadfastly set our hearts on the goal—the final, eternal redemption of our souls—on Beulah land, the throne, the saints, the robes, the palms, the crowns, the glory, our God and our Savior face to face, the bliss, the joy, the thanksgiving, the praise for ever, and ever, and ever.

O happy day when we shall stand
Amid the heavenly throng,
And sing with hosts from every land
:: The new celestial song ::

(ELH #590)

But surely we desire to make a beginning even now, do we not? “Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee and saying: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that came, and that comes, and that will come, in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.” Amen! (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XI, No. 6 [February 1952] pp. 73-77)

Historical Note

Until the middle of the last century all world mission endeavors of the ELS had been in conjunction with its sister synods. But in 1950 the ELS undertook a foreign mission project on its own. Mr. Joseph Pedlar, a native of Cornwall, England, who was converted and theologically trained in the United States, had preached for some years in his native Cornwall as a staunch confessional Lutheran layman. Pleas from him and others in Cornwall reached the ELS in 1949. Pastor Joseph Petersen received a call to serve as a missionary in Cornwall. His efforts were concentrated in three places: Goonhavern, Redruth and Falmouth. Work continued in Cornwall until 1959 when this mission field became a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England.

Abbot Patrick Hamilton (1503-1528) A Lutheran Ambassador to the Scots

by Bruce W. Adams

Charles Colson warned in 1993, “Take away a society’s common history, and you take away that which binds it together. Take away a sense of history, and you eviscerate the Christian faith, which is a religion of historical fact.”¹ Though a postmodern society has striven to dissolve a sense of history, Gene E. Veith contends that, “The combination of social changes, technological developments, and postmodernist ideology has undermined the very principle of a unified national culture and has driven individuals to find identification in subcultures.”²

One expression of these emerging sub-cultures is the spirited renaissance of a Scottish patriotism and cultural identity, appealing to people of both Scottish and non-Scottish descent. In a recent issue of the quality “SCOTS” magazine (published and printed in Vowral, N. S. W., Australia), it is estimated that there are forty million people of Scottish descent settled throughout the world. For confessional Lutherans this offers a sizeable mission challenge.

During St. Paul’s historic mission in Athens, the Apostle assessed the religious and cultural situation, reasoning with the Jews and god-fearing Gentiles in the synagogues, and in the market-place (Acts 17:16, 17). Then he advanced to withstanding the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who disputed with him (Acts 17:18-21). While never conforming the Word of God to the specific culture, the Apostle adopted a certain cultural framework in which to present the message of the cross and resurrection.

Our Lord’s commission to the Apostles remains explicit: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Consequently, for Lutherans of confessional conviction there exists the expectation of reclaiming Luther’s Scottish connection, undergirded by the historic fact of the unwavering support in Scotland for a Lutheran reformation. Listed on the honour roll of distinguished Scottish Lutheran pastors of the sixteenth century were: Patrick Hamilton,

John Fyfe, Alexander Alane, John MacAlpine, John Gau, Alexander Sexton, Henry Forrest, and Walter Milne.

Being the first native Scot to embrace Luther's Scriptural doctrines, Abbot Patrick Hamilton deserves overdue recognition as the father of the Lutheran reformation in Scotland and England. In his paper delivered in St. Andrews in July 1978 in commemoration of the 450th anniversary of Patrick Hamilton's death, Gerhard Müller offers the salutary conviction: "It is important to make the point that there were decades in which evangelical proclamation in Scotland was not prescribed by Geneva – whereby the lines of communication traversed France in the main. After all, young Scots were studying at Wittenberg ... At that time, people were also not afraid to avail themselves of the labours of Englishmen who shared the same language, such as Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, just as by the same token, the Englishman, John Firth, translated Patrick Hamilton's 'Loci Communes' into English 'to the profit of my nation,' as he himself writes in his preface. Thereby the text has been passed on to us."³

Hamilton's Preparation

Patrick was born in 1503 in 'Patrickholm,' nearby Stonehouse, Glasgow. Of the royal Stuart lineage, he was the son of Sir Patrick Hamilton of Kincavel, who was the son of Lord Hamilton by a sister of King James III of Scotland. His mother was Catherine Stewart, a daughter of the Duke of Albany, the second son of James II.

By education and training he was prepared for a high office within the realm. To enable him to study abroad his parents obtained an ecclesiastical benefice. By entitlement Patrick was appointed the titular abbot of an Augustinian monastery in Fearn (Ferne) in Ross-shire. This enabled him in 1517 to travel to Paris to study at the College of Mataigu. There Abbot Hamilton pursued studies under the tutelage of another Scot, John Major, a distinguished humanist and theologian; later to lecture at the prominent University of St. Andrews (founded 1413). In 1520 Patrick graduated in Master of Arts at the University of Paris. After further study at Louvain, where the English reformer, Robert Barnes, was probably in residence, he

returned to Scotland, being incorporated into the University of St. Andrews on June 9, 1523. According to the biographer of Patrick Hamilton, Peter Lorimer, it was during the young scholar's residence in Paris that "the impulse was propagated to the University from a soul more immensely potent and world-subduing than the polished and timid scholar of Rotterdam. In 1519 the strong hand of Luther knocked violently at its gates, and the sound reverberated through all its studious halls and cloisters."⁴

Apart from being a keen student, a recognized scholar, and tutor at St. Andrews, Hamilton's musical talents found expression in his composition of a Mass to be sung in the impressive cathedral in honour of the angels. As a priest of the Church it must also be assumed that he progressively matured as an advocate of Lutheran reform within the Scottish Church. Archbishop James Beaton detected Hamilton "to be inflamed with Lutheran heresy" in 1527. In consequence he fled his homeland for Wittenberg, where he was cordially received by Luther and Melancthon. After a brief stay in Wittenberg, Hamilton was recommended to attend the newly-founded University of Marburg (May 30, 1527), where his preceptors became Herman von Busche and Francis Lambert of Avignon, a former Franciscan friar. Lambert had become "at that time an exponent of Luther's doctrine, which Hamilton assimilated readily."⁵

Whilst in Marburg Abbot Hamilton drafted the Theses of his first academic Disputation. The Theses which were originally written in Latin, came to be known as "Patrick's Places." they were translated into English and published by the English reformer John Frith "to the profit of my nation." Frith claimed that the short Treatise contained "the pith of all Divinity." (see Prefix) Accordingly, Patrick's "Loci Communes" Gerhard Müller deemed worthy to be "linked to Melancthon's 'Loci Communes' of 1521 and the Confessio Augustana of 1530."⁶

Hamilton's Profession of Faith

Like many a treasure, Hamilton's Profession of the Faith is contained in a small parcel. To read "Patrick's Places" is to become attuned to the ministry of the Holy Spirit addressing man's deepest

thoughts whilst searching the Scriptures of God. They breathe the pristine purity of the reformation in its formative years. It was never the purpose of the Scottish reformer to dismantle the Church (see AC. XV), but to recall the Western Church to the pure Gospel of God's grace in Christ.

The Treatise lists eight propositions that pertain to the Law and ten that pertain to the Gospel. The law/gospel motif is obvious throughout, as detected by Carl R. Trueman: "In 'Patrick's Places' discussion of the law precedes that of the gospel, pointing towards the Lutheran nature of the treatise."⁷ Through a series of logical syllogisms Hamilton expounded Law and Gospel; the Person and Work of Christ; the *theologia crucis*; Justification by faith alone, with faith's living expression in godly works; and culminating in the basic need of every living person to believe in Christ: "He that believes in Christ, the Son of God is saved (Galatians 3) ... he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be condemned (Mark 16)." Combining scholarship with missionary zeal Patrick also emphasized the mission vocation in a winsome sentence: "He is a good and gentle Lord, for he does all for naught. Let us, I beseech you therefore, follow His footsteps, whom all the world ought to praise and worship. Amen!"

Peter Lorimer refers to the importance of this unique Manifesto by the Scottish reformer: "'Patrick's Places,' brief as they are, have an historical importance as well as a biographic interest. They were the earliest doctrinal production of the Scottish Reformation, as they determine with primary authority the theological type and the religious spirit which marked the Reformation in its earliest stage."⁸ James E. McGoldrick summarized the theological emphases of "Patrick's Places": "This treatise expounds the Lutheran understanding of salvation in accordance with the Wittenberg Reformer's distinction between the law and the gospel. Justification *sola fide*, through faith alone, is the theme of the work ... Patrick Hamilton had by this time become a Lutheran champion of salvation *sola gratia*, by grace alone."⁹ Of "Patrick's Places," the Scottish church historian, J. H. S. Burleigh asserts that "certainly they contain the pure milk of the Lutheran Word."¹⁰

Hamilton's Pain and Martyrdom

Against advice, but with a burning resolution to preach the Word of God in his native Scotland, Abbot Patrick set foot once more on Scottish soil. As he has confessed and documented in written word, so this gentle pastor of the church determined to "follow his footsteps, whom all the world ought to praise and worship."

Upon his arrival in Scotland from Germany, Hamilton journeyed to his family home in Kincavel, owned by his elder brother, Sir James Hamilton. His sister, Catherine, was a young woman of spirit and accomplishment. The family reunion eventuated in the autumn of 1527. Peter Lorimer is assured from a source that "Hamilton preached in the adjoining burgh of Linlithgow."¹¹ It was the custom of the royal family to worship in the parish church of St. Michael. If not large, the church of St. Michael was marked by sheer beauty, containing as many as sixteen altars erected in its aisles and side chapels. Without doubt, "Hamilton was the first to preach in Scotland, 1528, the doctrines of the German reformer."¹² From a later convert, Alexander Alane (Alesius), we discover that Patrick married a young woman of noble rank, remaining in Kincavel until mid-January 1528.

It remained the implacable resolve of Archbishop James Beaton of St. Andrews to stamp out the "Lutheran heresy," though he was politically cautious to act because of Hamilton's powerful royal connections. Not only in Kincavel was the Scottish Lutheran reformer exercising a profound influence, but also in St. Andrews University. N. S. Tjernagel, quoting from Alesius, states that Hamilton "Taught and disputed openly in the university on all points in which he conceived a reformation to be necessary in the church's doctrines, and in the administration of the sacraments and other rites."¹³ This proved all too much for Beaton. Inveigled to meet with the Archbishop for a conference on the night of 27 February, 1528, Hamilton was apprehended and incarcerated in a foul prison in the castle. Canon Alexander Alane of the Augustinian Order was elected to convince Patrick of his errors. But the efforts of Alane to refute his friend led him to be refuted. In the words of Alexander Mitchell, "Alesius, struck and embarrassed ... felt as if the 'morning star was rising in his heart.'"¹⁴

Because of the influence Patrick Hamilton has been exerting in the country and within St. Andrews University, Archbishop Beaton was all the more constrained to instigate his trial and death. Charged on thirteen counts of heresy Hamilton was convicted to stand trial before a convention of bishops and clergy. It is of utmost significance that the charges against the reformer excluded any mention of the denial of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, which a Baptist scholar like James McGoldrick discerned to "be an indication that he espoused Luther's view."¹⁵ Hamilton refused to recant any of the charges aimed at the renunciation of his Lutheran teaching. With courage born of faith, Patrick exclaimed, "As to my confession I will not deny it for awe of your fire, for my confession and belief in Jesus Christ ... I will rather be content that my body burn in this fire for my confession of my faith in Christ than my soul should burn in the fire of Hell for denying the same."¹⁶

As a consequence the council declared the noble Patrick Hamilton "to be inflamed with heresy, disputing, holding, and maintaining divers heresies of Martin Luther ... and therefore to be condemned and punished ... by this our sentence definitive, depriving and sentencing him to be deprived of all dignities, honours, orders, offices, and benefices of the church: and therefore do judge and pronounce him to be delivered over to the secular power to be punished, and his goods to be confiscated."¹⁷ This grave sentence was read in the impressive metropolitan cathedral of St. Andrews on the last day of February, 1528.

Carrying in his hand his Bible, Abbot Hamilton, confessor and saint of God, was led to the stake for burning before the College of St. Salvator. One observer of the martyrdom was a Lutheran, by name, John Johnson. He noted the victim's patience, pain and Christian grace during a slow and lingering death, protracted over six hours: "but in all his cruel pains offended them never in word or sign; but continually prayed for them, and gave thanks unto God which made him worthy to suffer in his name."¹⁸ A final action in the trough of agony was for Hamilton to raise three fingers of his burning hand and repeat, "How long, Lord, shall darkness overwhelm this realm? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of men?" Then, like St. Stephen, he cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." On the footpath to this

day, just without the gate of St. Salvator's College, two letters "PH" signify the exact locus where Patrick Hamilton died for the testimony of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. Such a hallowed piece of ground remains an abiding testimony as to where Britain's first Lutheran martyr suffered and died for the Faith.

Epilogue

James E. McGoldrick concludes: "Patrick Hamilton, despite the brevity of his life and the violence of his death, became a significant figure in history of Britain's Protestantism, English as well as Scottish."¹⁹ One correction needs to be added. Hamilton was not a Protestant, but a Lutheran confessor.

According to the Scottish Calvinist reformer, John Knox, John Lindsay quipped to Archbishop Beaton during the fiery martyrdom, "for the reik (smoke) of Master Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon."²⁰ How true!

That Abbot Patrick Hamilton should be recognized as a key reformer at this time of the reformation, not only in Scotland and England, but also in Europe is being readily accepted by modern church historians. Gerhard Müller summarizes the import of "Patrick's Places" as "a confession, a creed, by means of which their author wishes to preach, evangelize, and to liberate men from false conceptions and bring them to a proper understanding of the Law, Gospel, and Faith and hence to the saving faith."²¹ Scripture was always his authority.

Scotland is a land that possesses a unique though not insular cultural heritage. It has an appeal which is being embraced in almost every country and continent, retaining a charm which captivates all peoples. A Scottish Lutheran, such as Patrick Hamilton, forms a link for Lutherans today with this ancient culture opening an avenue to communicate the gospel. "Contextualization" is the title given to this form of evangelism, with its proclamation of the *theologia crucis*, which at the same time reflects St. Paul's own cultural sensitivity (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

In a significant article, William B. Kessel concludes that, "Christ's Great Commission gave the church its marching orders to proclaim the Gospel to all people of the earth. World-wide people

have different cultures. Such differences, however, need not be construed as insurmountable barriers to evangelism. Jesus and the early apostles were aware of cultural differences, and yet, the multi-cultural church grew. Without compromising doctrine the Christian church can enjoy unity with diversity.”²²

Endnotes

¹ Charles Colson, *The Body* (Reading, England: Word Publishing, Nelson Word Ltd, 1993), pp. 233, 234.

² Gene E. Veith, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994) p. 144.

³ Gerhard Müller, "Protestant Theology in Scotland and Germany in the Early Days of the Reformation" *Scottish Church History Society Records*, Vol. 22, 1986, p. 104.

⁴ Peter Lorimer, *Memoirs of Patrick Hamilton* (Edinburgh: Thos. Constable & Co., 1867) p.38.

⁵ *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (T. T. Clarke, 1993) p. 499.

⁶ Gerhard Müller, op. cit. p. 104.

⁷ Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy – Salvation and English Reformers 1525-1556* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p. 121.

⁸ Peter Lorimer, op. cit. p. 97.

⁹ *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, op. cit. p. 499.

¹⁰ John H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (Oxford: University Press, 1961) p. 121.

¹¹ Peter Lorimer, op. cit. p. 105.

¹² W. Stephens, *History of the Scottish Church* (Edinburgh, 1894) p. 504.

¹³ N. S. Tjernagel, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 3, July 1977, p. 229.

¹⁴ Alexander F. Mitchell, *The Scottish Reformation* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1900) p. 243.

¹⁵ James E. McGoldrick, *Luther's Scottish Connection* (London, Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989) p. 31.

¹⁶ Tom Steel, *Scotland's Story* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1985) p. 74.

¹⁷ John Howie of Lochgoin, *The Scots Worthies* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1870) pp. 14, 15.

¹⁸ James K. Cameron, "John Johnson's A Comfortable Exhortation of Our Most Holy Faith and Her Fruits" *Extract from Studies in Church*

History (Basil Blackwell, 1979) p. 138.

¹⁹ James E. McGoldrick, op. cit. p. 54.

²⁰ John Knox, *The Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) p. 10.

²¹ Gerhard Müller, op. cit. pp. 109-110.

²² William B. Kessel, "Share the Promise: Culture to Culture," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, September, 1996, Vol. 36, No. 3, p. 73.

History (Basil Blackwell, 1979) p. 138.

¹⁹ James E. McGoldrick, *op. cit.* p. 54.

²⁰ John Knox, *The Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) p. 10.

²¹ Gerhard Müller, *op. cit.* pp. 109-110.

²² William B. Kessel, "Share the Promise: Culture to Culture," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, September, 1996, Vol. 36, No. 3, p. 73.

Justification is Complete

by Wilhelm W. Petersen

The doctrine of justification is the central teaching of Scripture. It distinguishes the Christian religion from false religions, all of which teach salvation by works. It gives enduring comfort to penitent sinners and gives all glory to God. No wonder that Luther said: "Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed." (SA II, p. 292)

The Nature of Man and the Nature of God

In order to understand and appreciate the doctrine of justification we must, first of all, know and believe what the Bible says about the nature of man and the nature of God. As a result of the fall of Adam and Eve into sin all men are born with original sin and are subject to death and eternal damnation. Scripture does not depict sin as merely a weakness or a deficiency, as is the prevailing attitude of our time. It has been noted that "one of the prime deficiencies of our underprivileged age is an almost total absence of the sense of sin. Luther's 'terrors of conscience' and his quest 'for a gracious God' are perceived today, patronizingly, as something scarcely comprehensible, something from another, and strangely antiquated, world. The 'modern' instinct is to assign the problem to the level of chemo or psychotherapy for guilt feelings!" (*Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, March, 1978, p. 46)

The Bible, however, teaches that sin is utter corruption, a complete falling away from God, and therefore man is spiritually dead, blind, and an enemy of God. In the Smalcald Articles Luther writes: "This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand. It must be believed because of the revelation of the Scriptures." (SA, III, p. 302) Therefore by nature man is totally unable to save himself from this lost condition, and to complicate the situation the Bible describes God as holy and just and therefore must punish sin. Being holy, God cannot have fellowship with unforgiven

sin and being just he must condemn the guilty sinner. His holy law demands perfection and will not settle for anything less. Therein lies man's dilemma. However, God is also loving and merciful and in his boundless mercy he has revealed a way whereby his wrath and justice have been satisfied; therefore he can and does forgive sin.

This way, or plan, was conceived in eternity and revealed in time when sin entered into the world. Appearing to our first parents and Satan in the Garden of Eden the Lord God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15) In time someone would be born of a woman who would destroy Satan's power over man. This was fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and on the basis of his redemptive work God has justified the world; this is a complete justification.

Terminology Used in the Doctrine of Justification

The terminology in presenting the doctrine of justification is "By Grace, For Christ's Sake, Through Faith." The Formula of Concord says "The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith which accepts these in the promise of the Gospel." (SD III, p. 543) The term "by grace" is the favor Dei, that is, the undeserved favor of God. Grace denotes God's gracious disposition which for Christ's sake he cherishes in himself toward sinful mankind and by which he in his heart does not charge men with their sins, but forgives them. Luther describes grace as follows: "Grace in this sense has some synonyms in Scripture which also express God's feelings in Christ toward lost mankind, namely God's love, mercy, and kindness." These terms, as Luther says, "lead us into the Father's heart" and "make God sweet to us" and "we ought to go to sleep and arise with these words." Grace was the refrain of Luther's theology. He wrote: "A good song may well be sung often. Grace consists in this that God is merciful to us, shows himself gracious for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgives all sins, and will not impute them unto us for eternal death. This is grace: The forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, the covering up of all sins." (LW 22, 139)

The term grace in Scripture sometimes signifies the gifts which are conferred upon us by benevolence. It designates something in man, namely good qualities and good works, which God works in man. For example, the apostle Peter writes: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:10-11) Here the grace of God is the gift received; not the favor Dei forgiving sins, but the ability which God gives, the ability inhering in the Christian to teach what is right and to serve one another. Grace in this sense is a gift of grace, grace residing in the individual, infused grace.

But grace in this sense (infused) is never regarded in Scripture as a cause which moves God to save sinful man. For this, Scripture knows only one cause: divine grace, and when Scripture speaks of this cause it clearly places the grace of God in opposition to all works of men. The sharp distinction between divine grace (favor Dei) and the gifts of grace (infused) is very important in the doctrine of justification. To base justification, in whole or in part, on grace in the sense of infused grace is really basing it on salvation by works and the Christian doctrine of salvation by grace is cast aside, as St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4)

This saving grace is not an absolute grace, or a fiat of the divine will, but it is a grace in Christ, a grace gained by his vicarious satisfaction. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24) God's gracious disposition springs entirely from the redemption of Christ. Christ's merit and God's grace are indissolubly joined to each other. Outside of Christ, God "is a consuming fire." Grace without Christ's satisfaction is a non-ens (no such thing). Luther says that whoever believes in such a grace "is living in an air castle and is dealing with heathen concepts." A characteristic of heathen religions is that they would believe in God without "the cost," without the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Regarding the cost Luther says: "I have often said before that faith in God alone is not sufficient, but the cost must also be there. The Turks and Jews also believe in God, but without the means and the cost. What, then is the cost: That the Gospel shows . . . Christ here teaches us that we are not lost, but have eternal life, that is, that God so loved us that he was ready to pay the price of thrusting his only, his dearest Child into our misery, hell, and death, and having him drink that cup. In that way we shall be saved." (Sermons of Martin Luther, Vol. 3, p. 342-343)

We cannot, therefore, speak of the grace of God and our salvation apart from the price which our Savior paid for it. This is the very basis of our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins." "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22b) The prophet Isaiah also wrote of the cost: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah. 53:5) Commenting on this passage Luther writes: "On his shoulders, not on mine, lie all my sins. For 'the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all' and 'for the transgressions of his people he was stricken.' Therefore when you say that I am a sinner, you do not frighten me; but you bring me immense consolation." (LW 26, 37)

The saving grace concept fails if Christ and his work do not occupy the center of our theology and that is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) To speculate as to whether God could be gracious by virtue of his divine sovereignty is foolish. Here again Luther has good advice: "Will you prescribe to God how he should do things? You should leap for joy that he does it, in whatever manner he will, only that you obtain it." All who teach a grace of God apart from Christ's work have renounced the Christian faith. Article IV of the Augsburg Confession teaches "that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by his death, has made satisfaction

for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight.” (Tappert, p. 30)

“Through faith” designates faith as the empty hand that reaches out and accepts the forgiveness of sins. We do not say that we are saved on account of our faith, for that would make faith a cause of our justification, but we are saved through faith. Faith is the instrument which accepts what God offers and this faith is also a gift of God’s grace, worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. As Lutherans we confess in Article V of the Augsburg Confession: “That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel.”

This triad “by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith” affirms that “we must seek our entire righteousness apart from our own and all other human merits, works, virtues, and worthiness and that our righteousness rest solely and alone on the Lord Christ.” (SD III, 549) This truth must be maintained against Roman Catholic theology (or any theology which injects works of any kind in our justification before God) which makes “infused grace” together with Christ’s merit the cause of justification, and against all enthusiasm and decision theology which bases justification on the “Christ in us” rather than the “Christ outside us,” and against any false theology which would eliminate Christ’s vicarious satisfaction.

Justification is a Judicial or Forensic Act

Edward Preuss in his monumental treatise on *Justification of the Sinner before God* observes that the verb “justify” in the Greek occurs 38 times in the New Testament and in all these 38 passages it signifies a forensic act. It means to regard as righteous, to declare righteous, not to infuse righteousness. Justification, therefore, is not a physical or medical act by which the unrighteous man is changed by an inward transformation into a righteous man, but it is a judicial act by which a person who is in himself unrighteous is declared righteous.

While justification is a judicial act, it differs from declarations handed down in human courts wherein the judge pronounces the

innocent man innocent and the guilty man guilty. If a human judge pronounces the guilty righteous, then he is an abomination in the sight of God. But this very thing which the judge does not do God does when he justifies a man through the Gospel and faith. God pronounces the “ungodly” righteous, as Paul says in Romans 4:5, where he writes: “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” Our Confessions also call attention to the difference between the forensic act in the divine justification and in the civil courts. Commenting on Romans 5:1, the Apology says: “In this passage ‘justify’ is used in a judicial way to mean ‘absolve a guilty man and pronounce him righteous,’ and to do so on account of someone else’s righteousness, namely Christ’s, which is communicated to us through faith. Since in this passage our righteousness is the imputation of someone else’s righteousness, we must speak of righteousness in a different way here from the philosophical or judicial investigation of a man’s own righteousness.” (Ap Art. IV, p. 154)

The reason a holy and just God can do this is because of the redemptive work of his Son. Jesus willingly placed himself under the law, became our substitute, was made the one great Sinner by imputation and therefore, as Luther says, “became the greatest of all sinners for he took the place of all sinners and thus became guilty of all sins of the world,” was cursed and condemned in our stead, paid the penalty of the law for us by suffering and dying on the cross, even suffered the torment of hell for us. And when this was all done, when divine justice was satisfied, he was released again. God raised him from the dead, thus putting the divine stamp of approval upon his work. And because of this saving work of his Son, God has justified the ungodly; he has pronounced every sinner to be guiltless and holy, or, in other words, he has forgiven all sin.

Note that the justifying does not follow the believing. If it did, it would be a conditional justification, and the meaning would be that if the ungodly believes, then God will justify him. But that is not what the text says. Besides, how can I depend or rely on anything that is not a fact, that has not taken place? No, first God justifies the ungodly, and then the ungodly have something to believe. Without a justification before faith there can be no justification by faith.

The statement “God justifies the ungodly” is not cumbered with any conditions; there are no ifs or provideds, none whatsoever. God justifies the ungodly regardless of his behavior and therefore the ungodly is justified whether he believes it or not. Justification is an accomplished fact. Therefore Jesus uses the past tense: “For God loved the world” and “The Son of Man came.” Likewise, St. Paul: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” So when the ungodly believes “his faith is counted to him for righteousness,” he is in possession of the righteousness which God demands, the perfect righteousness that opens the door of heaven. With the apostle Paul he can say that he is in possession of “the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” (Philippians 3:9b)

It is therefore Scriptural to say “God justifies” and “faith justifies.” These two statements denote the same thing, only from different viewpoints. God, on the basis of Christ’s saving work, pronounces and declares the ungodly righteous, and faith accepts that declaration. Thus he applies it to himself and now faith has that righteousness for its own. So faith justifies, as Paul says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

In Luther’s day there was a man named Osiander who denied justification by faith alone. He called it a “horrible doctrine” to teach that justify means “to declare righteous.” He held that it means “to make righteous” and in so doing he was teaching Roman Catholic doctrine, even though he called himself a Lutheran. Like Rome, he based the assurance of forgiveness, in part, on sanctification and good works. Luther’s doctrine of justification was based on Christ “outside us,” while Osiander based it on the Christ “in us,” the indwelling of Christ’s divine nature. Luther summed it up as follows: “It is certain that Christ, or the righteousness of Christ, since it is outside and foreign to us, cannot be apprehended by our works; but faith, which is poured into us by the Holy Spirit through hearing Christ, this faith apprehends Christ.” (LW 34, 153)

The Apology also speaks of justification in the forensic sense when it says: “To be justified” here does not mean that a wicked man is made righteous but that he is pronounced righteous in a forensic way, just as in the passage (Romans 2:13), “the doers of the law will

be justified.” As these words, “the doers of the law will be justified,” contain nothing contrary to our position, so we maintain the same about James’s words, “A man is justified by works and not by faith alone,” for men who have faith and good works are certainly pronounced righteous. As we have said, the good works of the saints are righteous and please God because of faith. James preaches only the works that faith produces, as he shows when he says of Abraham, “Faith was active along with his works” (2:22). In this sense it is said, “The doers of the law will be justified;” that is, God pronounces righteous those who believe him from their heart and then have good fruits, which please him because of faith and therefore are a keeping of the law. (Apology IV, 143 — Tappert ed.)

Scripture emphasizes the truth that the justification of sinners before God is by faith alone, apart from the works of the law. Hence justification is not partly by faith and partly by works, but by faith alone, as the Lutheran church teaches.

The term “by faith alone” does not exclude God’s grace, Christ’s merit, means of grace, but, on the contrary, includes these as prerequisites. Because we are justified by grace, for Christ’s sake, therefore we are justified alone, to the exclusion of works. Faith is always the instrument that receives what God offers (gives). Faith is the poor sinner’s hand which merely grasps and makes one’s own what is already prepared and at hand.

This “faith alone” which justifies the sinner in the sight of a holy God is also a gift of God’s grace worked in the heart by the Gospel. The Gospel is a powerful means of grace, for it is not only an invitation, but also transportation, that is, it actually brings us to faith and in possession of the righteousness of Christ which covers all our sins. This is of great comfort to the individual. If salvation depended in the least upon the works of the law we could never be certain of it.

No Degrees in Justification

Justification is not a gradual process, as Rome teaches. According to Catholic theology justification is a process extending throughout man’s life on earth and beyond that into purgatory. Faith is merely the beginning or root of justification and belongs with

numerous other acts merely to the preparation for justification. The Roman doctrine of justification may be summarized as follows: Christ's merit enables man to earn his own salvation, first *meritum de congruo* (a reward earned by free will), later *meritum de condigo* (a reward earned by a work prompted by the Holy Ghost.)

Because the Roman Catholics confound justification with sanctification they teach that there are degrees of justification. While there are degrees of sanctification, there are no degrees of justification. God does not forgive partially, but the Bible teaches that when God justifies a man, he justifies him completely. If God forgives only partially, then all the texts which speak of the all-sufficient atonement through the blood of Christ become uncertain. If there is anything taught clearly in God's Word it is God's full and free forgiveness. 1 John 1:7 says, "and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Our Confessions also teach a complete justification. "Justification is the approval of the entire person." (Ap IV, p. 137) The Smalcald Articles say: "By faith we get a new and clean heart and . . . God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our mediator. Although the sin in our flesh has not been completely removed or eradicated, he will not count or consider it." (SA XIII, p. 315)

The fact remains that justification as the imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ is incapable of growth or degrees, but from beginning to end is perfect in itself. There are indeed degrees of faith, but no degree of justification, because also the weak faith apprehends the righteousness of Christ, which needs no perfecting through our faith or our works.

It is this truth that the Formula of Concord has in mind when it says: "We also believe, teach and confess that, although the genuinely believing and truly regenerated persons retain much weakness and many shortcomings down to their graves, they still have no reason to doubt either the righteousness which is reckoned to them through faith or the salvation of their souls, but they must regard it as certain that for Christ's sake, on the basis of the promises and the Word of the holy Gospel, they have a gracious God." (FC Ep, p. 474)

The *Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism* gives a beautiful summary of what it means to be justified: "To be justified means that God by grace imputed to me the righteousness of Christ, and acquitted me of the guilt and punishment of my sin, so that he regards me in Christ as though I had never sinned."

Justification is For All

Justification is not only complete but it has also been obtained for all people, not one single person excluded. Because of the atoning work of his Son God has by a forensic act declared the whole world to be righteous, justified, not guilty. St. Paul writes, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24) And again, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

The Testimony of the Old Testament

When sin entered into the world God in his justice could have condemned mankind to eternal perdition, but in his grace and mercy he promised our first parents and their descendents a Savior. That promise, given in the Garden of Eden, was repeated by the prophets down through the years and finally fulfilled in the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem. The Lord said to Abraham, "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," (Genesis 12:3b), and later he said to Abraham, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 22:18)

The Savior was promised not only to the Israelites, but also to all nations. The Prophet Isaiah invited all people to God's saving grace when he wrote, "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!" (Isaiah 45:22) Dr. August Pieper in his commentary on this passage says, "The invitation includes the ends of the earth, all nations without exception." (*Is. II*, p. 287) Thus it is very clear from the Old Testament that the promise of a Savior was intended for all people. The same is true of the New Testament.

The Testimony of the New Testament

What the Old Testament prophets foretold about the Savior of the world was fulfilled in the New Testament. The angel announced the birth of the Savior to the shepherds. The message of the angels to the frightened shepherds was “*I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.* For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10)

Forty days later his parents, Joseph and Mary, brought the Christ Child to the temple in Jerusalem. When Simeon, an Old Testament believer who was waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, saw the Christ Child, he took him in his arms, praised God, and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5) Jesus himself declared the Gospel to the whole world by his words on the cross when he cried, “It is finished.” He thereby declared that he had finished the work of redemption. By his perfect life he had fulfilled the law in man’s stead and by his death on the cross he suffered the punishment which mankind deserved and thus paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

His Redemptive Work Is the Basis for Universal Justification

It is on the basis of Christ’s redemptive work that God the Father declared the world forgiven, and this declaration is apart from and prior to faith. Our faith has absolutely nothing to do with this universal declaration. We have been forgiven whether we believe it or not. It is true, however, that this forgiveness will not benefit us unless we believe it, but the fact remains that we have been forgiven. What God told Isaiah to proclaim to the people of his day will be true

until the end of time, namely, “‘Comfort, yes, comfort My people!’ says your God. ‘Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’” (Isaiah 40:1,2) The Apostle Paul echoes the same truth when he writes, “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” (Romans 5:20)

Refusal to believe that you have been forgiven forfeits your personal possession of this forgiveness, but it does not change the fact that you have been forgiven. The worst thing a person can do to himself is to reject this precious gift, for in so doing he deprives himself of that forgiveness which has been obtained for him. It is sad, but true, to say that people who die in unbelief lie in hell with their sins forgiven; the reason they are there is that they rejected the forgiveness which had been won for them. Luther put it this way: “A king gives you a castle; if you do not accept it, then it is not the king’s fault, nor is he guilty of a lie. But you have deceived yourself and the fault is yours. The king certainly gave it to you.” (LW 40, 367)

In the *Explanation of Luther’s Catechism* under the heading The Forgiveness of Sins we have this question and answer which sums it up well: “How can God declare the sinner righteous?” The answer, “God can declare sinners righteous, because on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ, he has acquitted all men of the guilt and punishment of their sins, and has imputed to them the righteousness of Christ; he therefore regards them in Christ as though they had never sinned.” (general or objective justification) The same *Explanation of the Catechism* has this question and answer which follows the one on objective justification: “How do you receive this forgiveness or justification?” “I receive this justification when the Holy Ghost through the means of grace leads me, the sinner, to believe that God has forgiven all my sins for Christ’s sake.” (personal or subjective justification) It is this “objective justification” which we are to believe in order to be individually “justified by faith.”

An illustration from our national history will help to put this in perspective: On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which set all the slaves free. This was an objective fact and it took on subjective dimensions as each slave received the benefit of this proclamation. In this announcement

we have a telling parallel to what God the Father accomplished by way of his proclamation that all men are righteous on account of the work of Jesus Christ. The decision, validated by the raising of his Son from the dead, is known as objective justification. The fact of universal reconciliation or objective justification is a clear teaching of Scripture. It could not be expressed more clearly than in these words of St. Paul: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ." The benefits of this reconciliation are extended to everyone in the world, and when they are appropriated by faith, then the individual is personally justified before God. This is known as subjective justification.

Universal Justification and Universal Reconciliation are One and the Same

We speak of universal justification as well a universal reconciliation. Both terms refer to the same act of God in Christ; in fact the two terms correspond to each other, they are practically interchangeable. St. Paul sums it up nicely when he writes: "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:9-11)

The apostle says the same thing in his second letter to the Corinthians: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation . . . For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:17ff)

It is this central doctrine of Scripture—justification by grace through faith alone—which Rome officially condemned at the Council of Trent, a council that began in 1545. In the Sixth Session, which deals with justification, it is stated in canons 11 and 12:

If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of

sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema. (Session 6, canon 11)

If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema. (Session 6, canon 12)

It is therefore mind-boggling that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at its 1997 Church Assembly declared that the differences in the doctrine of justification between Catholics and Lutherans are no longer a cause for division or condemnation between the churches. Dr. Robert Preus in his book *Justification and Rome* correctly observes “that after all the many Lutheran/Roman Catholic negotiations and dialogues, the controversy has not been settled ... but there has been a settlement of a different kind. The settlement is an amalgam of the old Lutheran and Roman Catholic definitions, or rather, a pasting together of the two disparate sets of definitions — sort of like a treaty. Neither side gives up its set of definitions and meanings. The treaty provides that the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic will no longer battle over words, meanings, and definitions, but each will keep his own. And this is the agreement, the settlement, the consensus. After four and half centuries the two church bodies have debated and conversed and fought to a draw. Neither side wins over the other or loses to the other. (Preus, *Justification and Rome*, p. 111)

One of the greatest sins of the Roman Catholic Church is that by its doctrine of justification it keeps distressed consciences in perpetual doubt, hindering them from being sure of salvation. In a letter to an Augustinian friar named Spenlein, who was in great agony concerning his state of grace, Luther wrote as follows: “Therefore, my dear friar, learn Christ and Him crucified. Learn to praise him, and despairing of yourself, say, ‘Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given to me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.’ Beware of

aspiring to such purity that you will not wish to be looked upon as a sinner, or to be one. For Christ dwells among sinners. Meditate on this love of his and you will see sweet consolation. For why was it necessary for him to die if we can obtain a good conscience by our works and afflictions? Accordingly you will find peace only in him and only when you despair of yourself and your own works. Besides, you will learn from him that just as he has received you, so he has made your sins his own and made his righteousness yours.” (LW 48, 12)

What Luther wrote to his troubled friend is the most beautiful Gospel that can be preached. For it declares that Christ has come in behalf of everybody, that he has born every man’s sins, that he calls everyone to believe on him, to rejoice and rest assured that his sins are forgiven and that in the hour of death he will depart saved.

The Enduring Comfort of Knowing and Believing that Justification Is for All

Dr. Edward Preuss in his monograph on Justification has some excellent quotations regarding this matter that justification is for all. We would share some of these with our readers: “Forgiveness of sins has no plus and no minus; God freely forgives all, exhibiting to all the same fullness of mercy. Therefore, Scripture testifies that all who are justified, Jews and Gentiles, men and women, those of little faith and those of strong faith, are just as righteous as Abraham, the father of all them that believe.” (Henry Hoepfner) “The forgiveness of sins in this life is perfect, so that no condemnation remains. Consequently also justification is perfect, it being nothing else than the forgiveness of sins.” (Scherzen) “Just as the merit of Christ is conveyed to the believers in its entirety and at the same time, so also all sins are forgiven at the same time.” (Fresenius) (Preuss, *Justification of the Sinner Before God*, pp. 56, 57)

In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* Melancthon calls the doctrine of justification the main teaching of Christian doctrine, which, when understood rightly, illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation that they need.” (Ap IV, p. 2) Luther in the *Smalcald Articles* on the

office and work of Christ for our redemption, says, “The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ our God and Lord, ‘was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.’ (Romans 4:25) He alone is ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.’ (John 1:29) ‘the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.’ (Isaiah 53:6) Moreover ‘all have sinned,’ and ‘being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.’” (Romans 3:23-25) Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised [nor can any believer concede or permit anything contrary to it,] even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, ‘there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’ (Acts 4:12) ‘and by his stripes we are healed.’” (Isaiah 53:5) (SA, II, II, 1, 3, 5)

To Luther the centrality of the doctrine of justification is essential to the work of the theologian. He writes, “There is one article and one rule of theology, and this is true faith in Christ. Whoever doesn’t hold this article and this rule is no theologian. All other articles flow into and out of this one; without it the others are meaningless. The devil has tried from the very beginning to deride this article and to put his own wisdom in its place. However, this article has a good savor for all who are afflicted, downcast, troubled, and tempted, and these are the ones who understand the gospel.” (LW 54, 157)

It is of utmost importance that we hold to the chief article of our faith, namely that God justifies the unrighteous, that God, reconciled to all the world by the blood of Jesus, in the Gospel offers to everyone who hears it the forgiveness of sins out of undeserved grace and without setting up the slightest condition which we are supposed to fulfill, so all that he hears he need only believe in his heart and be fully assured that he has forgiveness of all sin and is saved.

Juxtaposition is a good word to describe “the blessed exchange” which our gracious Lord made. He positioned his Son next to each one of us, then took our sins and placed them on Christ and took his righteousness and placed it on us. Luther put it this way: “If the sins of the entire world are on that one man, Jesus Christ, then they are not on the world. Again, if Christ himself is made guilty of all the sins that we have committed, then we are absolved from all sins, not through our own works or merits but through him.” (LW 26, 280)

A former professor of this writer described the comfort of justification in these words: “The Biblical doctrine of justification is simply this that when Christ died for our sins, that is, for the sins of the whole world, God declared the whole world forgiven (justified) and now God wants us to believe this. Others say: ‘Believe and you shall be justified.’ God says, ‘Believe that you have been justified.’ And the thing is as simple as that — but what a difference when death stares a person in the face.”

The doctrine of justification gives enduring comfort to penitent sinners for it assures them that all sins have been forgiven and that they can live confidently and die peacefully. This grant us dear Father in heaven.

The Christian and Scouting: How Compatible?

by Paul R. Zager

The issue of Scouting has been questioned among some Lutherans at least since the days of the Synodical Conference. Written evaluations by earlier pastors from the ELS and WELS can still be found with a little searching. Although the movement had been accepted within the LC-MS even before the breakup of the Synodical Conference, it has continued to be rejected as a viable youth program within the ELS and WELS.

It should be noted from the outset that Girl Scouts/Girl Guides is a completely separate organization from the Boy Scouts. Both organizations are world wide in scope, and both organizations have similar views regarding religion. However, it cannot be assumed that detailed statements about religion from the Boy Scout organization are valid statements for the Girl Scout organization as well. Each group must stand or fall based on its own written statements, just as we expect any church or sect must be evaluated based on its own written confession of faith.

Why a study of this issue?

Over the course of the last twenty years or so, rumors have abounded in our pastoral circles that the Scouting organizations themselves have actually changed their stance on matters of religion for the better, becoming virtually neutral on the issue. Based on these rumors, some have alleged that the old taboos against Boy Scouting and Girl Scouting are no longer appropriate.

This evaluation of the two Scouting organizations is undertaken on behalf of the synod's Doctrine Committee at the request of one of our ELS congregations. It is based on current materials purchased from the Boy Scouts of America and from the Girl Scouts during the course of the year 2000. These materials are now available through the seminary library.

In some sections of this paper, the quoting of Scout materials may seem tedious. However, it is important for the organizations each to speak for themselves, in their own words, lest one charge us with unfair assumptions or with the use of outdated statements and positions from past generations of scouting.

It is on the basis of these statements that the organizations must be judged as to how religious they actually are. It is worth noting that over the years our ELS and other confessional Lutheran synods have made a distinction between having religious practices included incidentally in an organization's activity and having religious elements included as an intrinsic part of the organization and its purpose. The statements included in this paper — quoted from primary Scout sources — indicate that religion has been and still is an intrinsic part of Scouting, not merely an optional appendage. For that reason, joining in with the activities of the group becomes a matter of unionism. Only if it is actually true that Scouting has dropped religion as an integral part of the organization, can we say that it is no longer a problem for our congregation members to be involved with either Scouting organization.

Is there any truth to the claim of change in the Scout organizations' approach to religion and religious participation by the children? In a word, yes. In the most recent handbooks for Webelos and in the general handbooks for the older boys compared with books from the 1980s there is far less material to be found when trying to discern what is required to earn the organization's awards for religion. This might be the basis for the assumptions some have made that the organization is actually less interested in the religious involvement and development of the boys. In a later section, explanatory materials from the Girls Handbooks, which help explain the scout oath and promise, *at first glance* make it sound like one need not bring God into the program at all, if that is desired.

But while it is true that the general handbooks now have less to say about religion than they have in the past, we can hardly conclude that the group no longer provides religious guidance. In lieu of the rather sparse but unbiblical information formerly given in the general handbook, there are now dozens of separate publications from a variety of sects and cults, each describing its view of religion and how it

should be taught and practiced. These materials are not only sold by the two Scouting organizations, but also sanctioned by them.

What this actually does is inundate the Scout with more religious instruction than he might have received in the past, not less. Some examples follow below.

This illustration from the *Parvuli Dei* activity booklet for Roman Catholic Cub Scouts and Webelos clearly teaches not only that God's family is the Catholic Church (first paragraph, note capital "C"), but also that the Pope is head of the church. (tree illustration)

The *Ad Altare Dei* program for older Catholic Boy Scouts adds further detail. For instance, Instruction #5 states: "The use of a Catholic Bible is required for this program." (page 3) In section two, Chapter 2, page 12, it points to Abraham as an example of someone who responded with obedience to God after being "initiated" into God's family. Nowhere is Genesis 15:6 mentioned, where we hear that "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness." Page 31 of the *Ad Altare Dei* booklet contains four separate points which discuss the sacrifice of the Old Testament passover and lead the Scout toward concluding that Jesus is now sacrificed in a similar way in the mass.

While this is all clearly written by Roman Catholic authors, it is approved by the Boy Scout organization for use by its members. They are thus condoning three specific false doctrines here (among others).

Material approved by the organization for protestant Cub Scouts, Webelos and Boy Scouts comes in many cases from a generic group called Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y.). *God and Me* (grades 13) and *God and Family* (grades 4&5) are two of the programs which are published by this group for use with Scouting. Without being specific here, suffice it to say that these booklets simply use Bible stories and references as examples of doing good works, which the child should then emulate in his own life. Looking at the few examples of these materials which are on hand at the seminary library will be adequate to show the Law oriented emphasis which these programs impose on the children.

The specifically Lutheran materials which were reviewed also fall short of Biblical accuracy. While the picture here does not prescribe

anything in particular, it certainly does describe something with which we cannot agree. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then this picture from the *Lutheran Living Faith Candidate's Workbook* (grades 9–12) (p. 10) is a lengthy essay which goes contrary to God's will regarding the role of women in the church. In *The Junior Girl Scout Handbook*, a section titled "What's Fair for Girls" (page 52) asks these questions: "Do you get called on in class as often as boys do? Do some adults expect you to have only certain careers when you grow up just because you're a girl? ..." While certainly not specific, the context of the statement gives the impression that a girl should be able to grow up and choose any career she wants, regardless of any historically earlier gender limitations. As played out by the parents of some girls who are in Scouting, this has been reflected in irate questions about why confirmation age girls were being taught they could not serve as pastors.

On the previous page (9) of the *Lutheran Living Faith Candidate's Workbook*, one of the elective activities proposed for the Scout is to "Visit a worship service in the congregations of at least three other denominations." How wise is this in light of Romans 16:17? On page 12, the Scout is offered the activity of joining in a CROP walk. CROP has in the recent past supported armed rebel insurgencies and the abortion efforts of the March of Dimes.

Pages 13-15 follow the heading "Activity Area D Congregational Outreach". For us, the very thought of congregational outreach would lead us to think of evangelism projects. But two and one half pages of activity here — in which the scout is supposed to join — are related to social "ministries" only. Like the generic protestant materials, these "Lutheran" materials are geared toward leading the Scout to believe his/her religion is a matter of doing good works.

But perhaps the most interesting example reviewed for this study — because it is the most blatant example of condoning *any* religion under the umbrella of scouting — is the material from the Islamic Committee on Scouting. This brief two-page pamphlet indicates that deism is still alive and well as a part of the Scout organization. While one might make a feeble argument that the Roman Catholic, generic protestant and Lutheran materials all at least point

the Scout to the triune God (an argument which could probably be refuted from primary Lutheran and Roman sources) that clearly cannot be the case for the Islamic material.

When one notes that similar religious award emblems can be earned in Unity Churches, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Zoroastrian and Reorganized Latter Day Saints churches, page 413–418 in *The Boy Scout Handbook*, we begin to see what kind of “religion” the Scouts condone and encourage. A similar list in the *Cadette Girl Scout Handbook*, page 140, omits Hindu, but includes Unitarian Universalist, while *The Guide For Junior Girl Scout Leaders*, pages 32-33, also includes Hindu.

In light of these few examples, let's consider again the recent claim that there is no longer a problem with religion within the Scouting organizations. The concerns which we have are not related to some of the excellent programs and positions held by Scouting. The recent stand the Boy Scouts have taken against homosexuality within the organization is commendable. In continuing to promote patriotism and loyalty to friends and family, Scouting also emphasizes desirable directions to follow. Even the problematic matter of “doing a good turn daily” would go a long way toward improving civility and civic righteousness in our society.

But in all of this there is a great measure of similarity to the same issues we have trouble with in organizations such as the Freemasons, Elks, Moose and other lodges. In all of these groups, including the Scouts, religion is not merely tolerated. It is promoted and encouraged. Among the purposes of Cub Scouting, the *Bear Cub Scout Book* lists: “Positively influencing character development and encouraging spiritual growth.” Similarly, in the 1999 Annual Report of the Girl Scouts of the USA, page 1, a letter from National President Connie L. Matsui states that the Girl Scouts is a place where Girl Scouts “grow strong in mind, **in spirit** and in sense of self.” (emphasis added) Unfortunately, the spiritual growth which ends up being promoted flows from a generic deism, since all such groups are unwilling to pick Biblical Christianity as the one religion and say that it is right while the rest are wrong.

The materials used within scouting in the year 2000 are still rife with such deism. Consider again a statement from the *Bear Cub*

Scout Book (p. 26). “Many signs remind us of God. Among them are a six-pointed star, a cross, and a crescent. There are many other religious symbols. One of them might appear on a special emblem you may earn to wear on your uniform. Learn about your faith from your rabbi, minister, priest, imam, elder, or other religious leader.” *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders* (p. 47) gives the same kind of generic encouragement to “be religious,” regardless of the religion involved. “Each girl is encouraged to become a strong member of her own religious group. Religious recognition programs have been developed and are handled by the various religious groups.”

What is troubling here is not the fact that children are being taught something religious. Lutheran Pioneers has this as a core part of its program and we endorse it! The problem with the Scout approach is that practically anything religious qualifies for endorsement by the organizations. There is no distinction between true, Biblical religion and false religion.

Scouting even manages to take a swipe at Genesis and the many other sections of scripture which describe God’s supernatural creation of the universe. The *Webelos Scout Book* includes these statements: (pages 363–365) “Mountains have been formed over millions of years.” “A fossil is a trace of animal or plant life from millions of years ago that has hardened in a rock.” “Fossils show us what plants and trees lived millions of years ago and where. They show the changes that have happened through the years.” While such statements might at best leave room for some form of theistic evolution, they do not leave room for the statements of the Bible concerning creation.

Scouting in its own words: The Promise, Law, etc.

The words of the Scout Promise, Law and Motto are consistent, though not identical, across all age levels of scouting. The explanations of the words of the promise and law vary more clearly from one age group to another. Also, while there are similarities evident between the Girl Scout and Boy Scout statements, they are not identical. The official wording follows.

Cub Scout Promise: “ I _____, promise to do my best, to do my duty to God and my country, to help other people, and to obey the law of the pack.”

Cub Scout Law: “The Cub Scout follows Akela. The Cub Scout helps the pack go. The pack helps the Cub Scout grow. The Cub Scout gives goodwill.”

Cub Scout Motto: “Do your best”

found in the: *Wolf Cub Scout Book*, 1999, pages 19–25
Bear Cub Scout Book, 1999, pages 15–18
Webelos Scout Book, 1999, pages 7–10

Note: materials dating from 1984–1987 have the same wording, except that the Webelos level at that point in history used the wording of the older level boys as found in the Boy Scout Handbook, below.

Boy Scout Oath or Promise: On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout law;
To help other people at all times;
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake and morally straight.

Boy Scout Law: A Scout is trustworthy, loyal,
helpful, friendly, courteous, kind,
obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave,
clean, and reverent.

Boy Scout Motto: “Be prepared”

Boy Scout Slogan: “Do a good turn daily”

Note: this wording is the same as that which was used in the 1979 *Boy Scout Handbook*, and by earlier Webelos handbooks.

Girls

The Girl Scout Promise: On my honor, I will try:
 To serve God and my country,
 To help people at all times,
 And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Law: I will do my best to be
 honest and fair
 friendly and helpful
 considerate and caring
 courageous and strong, and
 responsible for what I say and do,
 and to respect myself and others,
 use resources wisely,
 make the world a better place,
 and be a sister to every Girl Scout

The Girl Scout Motto: “Be Prepared”

The Girl Scout Slogan: “Do a good turn daily”

Who is a Daisy Girl Scout?, 1993, page 17 (Promise and Law only)

Junior Girl Scout Handbook, 1994, pages 12–13

Cadet Girl Scout Handbook, 1995, pages 11, 17

The Guide For Junior Girl Scout Leaders, 2000, pages 5, 74

The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders, 1995, pages 7–8

1999 Annual Report of Girl Scouts of the USA, last printed page of printed internet document

Explanatory Materials for the Scout Law and Promise from the Scout Books

The explanatory materials for these statements have been alluded to earlier. It seems that the younger the intended reading audience is, the worse these materials sound. The attempt to write in clear simple language undoubtedly makes it harder to obscure meanings behind vague wording.

The *Boy Scout Handbook* (1998, p. 45) explains “doing my duty to God” this way: “Your family and religious leaders teach you about God and the ways you can serve. You do your duty to God by following the wisdom of those teachings every day and by respecting and defending the rights of others to practice their own beliefs.” The same book (p. 54) goes into a bit more detail when describing the portion of the Scout Law which asserts that “A Scout is reverent.”

A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others.

Wonders all around us remind us of our faith in God. We find it in the tiny secrets of creation and in the great mysteries of the universe. It exists in the kindness of people and in the teachings of our families and religious leaders. We show our reverence by living our lives according to the ideals of our beliefs.

Throughout your life you will encounter people expressing their reverence in many different ways. The Constitution of the United States guarantees each of us the freedom to believe and worship as we wish without government interference. It is your duty to respect and defend others’ rights to their religious beliefs even when they differ from your own.

We should keep in mind what the Bible says about doing what is described above. Hebrews 11:6 teaches us that “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Yet the Scouting material is saying that all Scouts — whether Christian or not — not only will be but *must be* reverent as described above. The same can be said for the section of the Scout law which says “A Scout is clean.”

There's another kind of dirt, though, that can't be scrubbed away. It is the kind that shows up in foul language and harmful thoughts and actions.

Swearwords and dirty stories are often used as weapons to ridicule other people and hurt their feelings. The same is true of racial slurs and jokes that make fun of ethnic groups or people with physical or mental limitations. A Scout knows there is no kindness or honor in such tasteless behavior. He avoids it in his own words and deeds.

But how can he, if he is not a Christian? It is simply an impossibility for the Scout merely because he is a Scout to be mentally, morally and spiritually clean. The Scout Law is demanding something which the Scout cannot deliver, unless the Scout has been empowered by Christ to live a godly life.

On another subject, the *Boy Scout Handbook* (p. 376) notes that "for most religions" sex is allowed only between two people who are married to each other. It's interesting that they are allowing for a religion based exception here. It would be fine for a Boy Scout — according to this wording — to have sexual relations apart from marriage, as long as one's religion said that practice was permitted.

At younger levels, there is not as much detail, but nonetheless, there is instruction for how the older Cub Scout can live up to his promise to "do my duty." (p. 7, *Webelos Scout Book*) "Your duty to God is done with God's help. That means you practice your religion at home, in your church or synagogue or other religious group, and in everything you do." This is put even more simply for the youngest Cub Scouts at the Wolf level (*Wolf Cub Scout Book*, p. 19): "Duty to God means: Put God first. Do what you know God wants you to do."

The Law orientation of this clearly does not invite the Scout to trust God for forgiveness, or to look to Him for mercy. Duty to God never defines who God is, so apparently obedience to any "god" and his rules is acceptable.

In the meantime, the Girl Scout is told "to serve God..." But this is watered down by adding: "(To go along with their beliefs, some girls may choose to say a word or phrase other than God. What are some ways you can live by your beliefs?)" *Junior Girl Scout Handbook*, 1999, page 12. As it was with the boys, notice again that "God" is

not only not defined, but is purposely left open to the broadest, most inclusive definition possible. Older, "cadette" girl scouts are told: "The word "God" in the Promise has always been used to represent the spiritual foundation of the Girl Scout movement. Since Girl Scouting is for all girls, girls whose beliefs are expressed by a word or phrase other than "God" may substitute that for the word "God" when they say the Girl Scout Promise. When written, the word "God" is always in the promise." *Cadette Girl Scout Handbook*, 1999, page 11; *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders*, 1995, page 7.

As noted above, the same references found in the youth books are sometimes found in the leaders' materials, too. In reference to the above quote about which word a girl should use in reference to God, the leader's book goes on to say: "You will not find a list of appropriate substitutions from which to choose. The way a girl fulfills her beliefs is an individual matter and is not defined by Girl Scouting. You are not expected to judge the suitability of the word she has chosen." *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders*, 1995, page 7. Such "toleration" is one part of "The Four Girl Scout Program Goals." "2. Girls will relate to others with increasing understanding, skill and respect. Girl Scouting will: ... Promote an understanding and appreciation of individual, cultural, religious and racial differences." *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders*, 1995, page 10. While it is likely beneficial that all Christians have an understanding of the religious beliefs held by other people, it is questionable that we should have an appreciation of those nonbiblical beliefs. How could a Christian Girl Scout appreciate a set of beliefs which would cause her nonChristian Girl Scout friend to be condemned eternally?

Girl Scout leaders are supposed to have a number of qualities which will enable them to be effective leaders for the girls. Among them are listed: "Does not make value judgments." "Answers a question with another question that helps the participant to reach her own conclusion." *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders*, 1995, page 22. From the Biblical viewpoint, this fits the definition of sin which we find in I John: "Sin is lawlessness." Having only my own opinion as a standard for living my life, or using that personal opinion as the final judge to determine whether God's

standards are appropriate for my life or not, is the same as saying that God's standards don't count. That is lawlessness. "Sin is lawlessness."

While acknowledging that the Girl Scouts do not develop or run the programs behind the religious awards a Girl Scout can earn, nonetheless, the Senior Girl Scout leader is instructed: "Each girl is encouraged to become a strong member of her own religious group." *The Guide for Cadette and Senior Girl Scout Leaders*, 1995, page 47. Theoretically at least, "her own religious group" could include anything from mainstream Baptist sects, to Wicca or even Satanism.

In a booklet titled *Contemporary Issues, Preventing Teenage Pregnancy, Decisions for your Life*, 1989, Girl Scouts of America, page 5, Girl Scout leaders are reminded to take this same wide view of religion and also apply it to moral issues such as abortion and pre-marital sex:

"Girl Scout leaders and other adults working with girls should remember that religious, ethical, and cultural views on premarital sexual activity, contraception, and abortion vary widely among individuals and communities. It is essential for adults working with girls to respect these varying opinions and not advocate their own position on these issues during Girl Scout activities." Thus, if it is common and accepted in a given community for young women to give birth to several babies as a status symbol or initiation rite into a gang, that practice would have to be accepted within that community.

With such advice, a Girl Scout leader who is Christian could at best only present God's instruction from Scripture as one alternative among many. "Thy Word is truth!" could no longer be tolerated even in the midst of what God's Word would label as gross immorality.

Most recently, the Girl Scouts of America have made it clear that this policy of broad tolerance is also to be applied to the subject of homosexuality. The American Family Association's *AFA Journal* reported in its February 2001 issue that the national PTA organization was joining with the Girl Scouts, YWCA and other organizations in helping to produce and promote a video for nationwide use in grade schools called *That's a Family!* "In offering these portraits of family diversity, the internet homepage of *That's a Family!* suggests that families headed by homosexual couples (top left and bottom right) are no different than families linked by marriage, blood or adoption

— such as single parent families (upper right) or families in which children are raised by grandparents (bottom middle.)”

“My dads are gay, and gay means when two men or two women love each other,” says one girl in *That’s a Family!* as she looks into the camera. It’s sort of like having a mom and dad who love each other. It’s just that it’s a man and a man or a woman and a woman.”

“The screening of the video in December was through the White House Office of Public Liaison, where Ben Johnson, assistant to the president, welcomed the representatives of more than 100 national organizations. Besides the National PTA, **among those in attendance were Girl Scouts of America**, (emphasis added) Young Women’s Christian Association, National Education Association (NEA), and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. **All pledged to use the video to promote tolerance**, (emphasis added) according to Women’s Educational Media (WEM), which funded the production and distribution of both *It’s Elementary* and *That’s a Family!*”

While this stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by the Boy Scouts of America toward homosexuality, it seems to be about the only discernible area where there is strong disagreement between the two organizations. Although leader’s materials for the Boy Scouts were not available for this study, the content of the youth material (not to mention the similarity to the approach which the Girl Scouts take) would suggest that any leader material for the Boy Scouts would follow this same direction as that of the Girl Scouts in any other area.

Our response to all this

Whenever we consider the religious statements made by other churches or organizations which hold to religious tenets, we must make those considerations in light of God’s Word. Merely reacting on the basis of a personal feeling would leave us no better off than if we were ourselves fully involved in a Christ compromising organization.

The Scripture quotations which follow are accompanied by brief comments regarding the applicability to the various Scouting organizations.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6:14-17

The very presence of religious awards for participants in religions like Unity, Ba'hai and Islam should be reason enough for the Christian not to be "yoked together" in Scouting, since adherents to these idolatrous religions are involved in Scouting and may very well be taking part in district wide or national gatherings of Scouts, including involvement in planned religious/worship activities. The question St. Paul sets before the Corinthians and before us, "What agreement is there ...," is clearly rhetorical, not analytical. We are simply to recognize the lack of agreement in faith and not be yoked together, rather than participate together in religious expression to see what, if any, agreement we might be able to find.

I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

More than once the argument has been made that the number of Scouts from Islamic or Hindu heritage is quite small. Moreover,

the Scouts argue, you should be able to form your own troop within your church, or at least a gathering of similar churches.

But as can be seen from the materials available for Lutheran scouts to earn their religion awards, there is no distinction in Scouting between Lutheran Synods. To the Scouts, Lutheran is Lutheran is Lutheran. The materials were prepared by a joint commission of the LC-MS and ELCA. (see letterhead on inside back cover of *Lutheran Living Faith Candidate's Workbook*)

Paul's words here remind us that while we can't get away completely from people who belong to other religions [idolatrous], or practice willfully sinful lifestyles [immoral], we can see to it that we don't practice our faith with those who dilute their faith by participating in an organization which indicates that one religion is as valid as another [Scouts.]

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. Romans 16:17

Some of the statements from the Scouts we have already seen above are certainly "contrary to the teaching you have learned." Joining such an organization clearly goes against God's instruction here to "Keep away from them." Certainly the meaning of Romans 16:17 is well known among us. If it is only a question whether the Scouts "cause divisions and put obstacles in our way that are contrary to the teaching we have learned," then the Scout quotes we have seen should make it easy for us to determine how we as Christians should react when expected to participate with them or tolerate them.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:22-23

Do the Scouts honor the Son when they encourage some in their midst to worship a God which does not even include Him? Jewish or Islamic Scouts don't have two thirds or one third of a true God because they include something which sounds a little like the Father

from an Old Testament perspective. All they have is a false God. See below.

No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

It is said more than once in the Scout quotations that it is a goal of Scouting to provide a spiritual basis for the scout's life. These words of Jesus guarantee that Scouting will miss the target. By their own definition they will not define God as the triune God, nor insist that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Therefore, anyone seeking God through Scouting will not find the Father.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

See above

Without faith it is impossible to serve God. Hebrews 11:6

The entire concept of "doing a good turn daily" stands or falls on this Bible verse. The Scout promise, law and motto are nullified by this one Bible verse. Only those Scouts who are Christian could have any hope at all of living up to the promise they are asked to make. Anyone else can perform only acts of "civic righteousness" which God will not accept.

How shall we apply this information in practice?

If the local, "liberal" Roman Catholic priest offered to come to your confirmation class and tell your students about Roman Catholicism, you would deem it inappropriate and turn down the offer. Yet, I sense we are lulled into complacency by some of the admirable traits of Scouting. Patriotism, loyalty... even the Boy Scout's stand against homosexuality are all admirable. But we have seen that the Scouts have a desire to instill a deistic faith in their member boys and girls. You wish to pass on the saving faith in Jesus Christ to your boys and girls. The two goals are not compatible.

Concerned instruction on the part of the pastor will strive to point out the known and verifiable shortcomings of Scouting to parents and children alike. Just as a pastor serving in Utah had better be informed about Mormonism and know how to refute it, so our pastors need to be aware of what Scouting is saying, and be able from Scripture to refute it.

One goal of this study document was to use the most recently available materials from the Scout organizations, so that any findings, accusations or conclusions would be based on material still in use by the Scouts. Obviously, study documents age. The Boy Scouts are already about to release a new revision of their handbook. When using this document, our pastors or laymen would do well to remember that this was up to date at the beginning of the year 2001. Things can change. Before insisting that the Scouts are wrong because the Scouts [“insert name of objectionable practice here!”], make sure that they are still actually doing or requiring it, by looking in the most recent materials you can find. Chances are good that the problems will still be the same several years from now. After all, nothing changed for the better in the Boy Scout materials between 1984 and 2001. Nonetheless, we discredit ourselves if we don't show from current practice that a problem exists.

Even if we have no Scouts in our congregation, and no one even considering joining, we would also do well to make sure we are carefully teaching our members what the Scriptures say about the doctrine of fellowship. If our members already know what God says about joining in with false worship, and if the Holy Spirit through the Word has already convinced our members to accept that instruction, then all we have left to do at that point is the relatively easy task of showing our members from the Scouts' own printed material what some of the problems are.

But in all of this we also do well to be careful how quickly we take any disciplinary action if we find out a family is involved in Scouting. More often than not, it is the child not the parent who is actually involved in Scouting. Yet, the child is a minor. It may be as much or more the parents' desire than it is the child's desire to be involved in the Scouts. The child might be expected by the parent to participate because it is convenient for the parent(s) to have the child

occupied certain days or nights during the week. At the other extreme, in the Christian home where there might be at least some understanding of the problems with Scouts, it should at the very least be the Christian parent's responsibility to tell the child "No!" if the child is the one who truly wants to be a Scout. But so often today, even Christian parents abdicate their parental authority and simply let the child make such choices, without even taking the time to explain problems or voice objections. In either case, it is as much if not more the parent's problem than the child's, when one of our children becomes involved in the Scouts.

Therefore, in all of this the pastor will want to strike a careful balance between losing contact with souls vs. letting Scouting make a case for itself in the congregation. So often, a relatively small proportion of the child's life will be connected with Scouting before other activities take over and push the desire for Scouting out of the child's life. While we cannot condone even a year or two of Scouting activity, we should also consider the importance of the child continuing to hear the Word of God, and continuing to be involved in the church up to the age where he/she can begin confirmation instruction. If insistence on immediate withdrawal from Scouting jeopardizes the child's continuing in God's Word, the dilemma the pastor faces is not an easy one. Knowledge of each child and the child's parents will help inform the pastor how and how fast he will deal with the problem with each child/family which presents itself.

But deal with it we must. In an earlier period of our Synod's history, our pastors were urged not to overlook this issue, but to recognize it for the false worship which it included, and keep it out of our congregations.

***The Report of the Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin
Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee
on Scouting***

A. After discussing the Scout movement in the aforementioned meetings we are of the conviction that in some of the fundamental features of the Scout program there are religious elements with which

a Christian cannot identify himself without offending against the Word of God.

1. In its mandatory Scout oath and law, Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion. cf. Romans 8:8; John 3:6;
2. By means of its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to train character without the motivation of the Gospel. cf. Galatians 2:19-20; Galatians 3:10; Ephesians 2: 8-10; John 15:5;
3. The “Scout oath or promise” is an oath condemned by the Word of God. Matthew 5:33–37; James 5:12; Matthew 23: 16–22;
4. The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties or the God whom he is to serve. cf. 2 John 9–10; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18.

B. After discussing the Scout movement in the aforementioned meetings we are also of the conviction —

1. That these objectionable features have not been removed by any changes that have been made in the organization and program of Scouting;
2. That our objections to Scouting are not invalidated by anything that the Word of God teaches concerning the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness;
3. That the objectionable features of Scouting are still not excluded by the provisions which this organization makes for operating Scout troops under the control of Lutheran pastors and congregations;
4. That membership of Lutheran troops in the national Scout organization vitiates the clear testimony to sin and grace which the Christian Church owes to the world.

Prof. Carl Lawrenz (Wis.)

Pastor M.H. Otto (Norw.)

Pastor W. O. Pless (Wis.)

Prof. Walter A. Schumann (Wis.)

Pastor H. Shiley (Wis.)

Pastor M. Tweit (Nor.)

Pastor H.E.C. Wicke, (Wis.)

Respectfully submitted by the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting.

Arthur J. Meyer, Chairman
Carl Lawrenz, Secretary

(Proceedings of the Forty–Second Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, assembled at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, August 12–15, 1952)

In addition, Norman A. Madson, writing in the *Lutheran Sentinel*, “informed its readers regarding the objectionable elements of Scouting. An article . . . entitled ‘Scouting Not the Solution’ referred to an article by a former scout master who contended that scouting is not the answer because it does not win boys for Christ.” (quoted by Armin W. Schuetze in *The Synodical Conference, Ecumenical Endeavor*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2000; page 243.) Thus it is nothing new that our generation of ELS pastors and congregations must deal with this issue. Since the time these earlier fathers of the synod, Pastors Otto, Tweit and Madson, dealt with the problem, the deistic basis and works righteousness of the errors in Scouting have not gone away. The evidence of that is before us. God grant us wisdom and courage to deal with it accordingly.

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The Pastor and the Culture Wars

by Edward Bryant

Outline

- I. What do we mean by the “culture wars”?
 - A. Culture is everything not biologically inherited.
 - B. The “culture wars” are the efforts to create acceptance within our culture of behaviors previously considered wrong and reprehensible, and further to protect these behaviors legally.
 - C. Examples
- II. How do these involve the pastor in his role as shepherd and soul-healer?
 - A. Ephesians 6 – “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”
 1. Satan seeks to corrupt.
 2. The sharpest darts are saved for the exclusiveness of Christianity.
 - B. Our flock is affected by the culture wars.
 1. Pastors are obliged to warn their flocks of the real nature of the conflict.
 2. Accept behaviors as permissible
 3. Rejection of absolutes and of normative character of Scripture
 4. Our flock are tempted.
 5. Our flock will fall.
 6. We are required to teach the “whole counsel of God.”
 - C. Examples
 1. Divorce
 2. Pornography
 3. Abortion
 4. Cohabitation

5. Stewardship

- D. Our flock will struggle with legal and moral dilemmas.
 - 1. Apartment rental and marital status
 - 2. Medical professionals
 - 3. Pharmacists
 - 4. Small businesses and “advocacy” products
 - 5. Domestic partnership laws
 - 6. Diversity training
 - 7. Political Issues

III. How do the culture wars involve the pastor in the relationship between the two kingdoms?

- A. The church is built by the word of God, not by power.
- B. Morality (not religion) is a legitimate concern of the state.
- C. Many immoral activities are also illegal. Christian citizens have a role in deciding which ones.
- D. There are risks to legalizing immorality.

IV. Conclusion

I. What do we mean by the “culture wars?”

In the early 1970s, prior to the Roe vs. Wade decision coming from the Supreme Court, the voters in Washington State considered a ballot item on the subject of abortion. As the different advocacy groups prepared for the campaign, the churches were subjected to numerous pressures. While the pro-life groups distributed fact sheets for churches to use to inform their members, the “Every Child Should Be Wanted” campaign threatened churches with loss of tax exemption if they entered into the fray.

In our own particular circle of churches, little was said about the issue. One particular pastor, when encouraged to bring the matter up in a sermon, replied that abortion had now become a political issue, and that the church was to be silent on political issues. The abortion initiative did pass, making Washington the first state in which abortion was legal.

This event amounted to one battle, skirmish really, in what have come to be called the “culture wars.” “Culture wars” may be defined as “the efforts to create acceptance within our culture of

behaviors previously considered wrong and reprehensible, and further to protect these behaviors legally, versus efforts to retain cultural standards with a distinctly moral basis.”

This paper is not the place to explore all the motives for such efforts. Culture is defined as “all that is not biologically inherited,” so it is inevitable that we all seek to pass on some things – our way of cooking, our style of house, a preference for Ford or General Motors.

The culture wars, however, reflect certain characteristics that guarantee conflict. First, the culture wars deal with behaviors, not just opinions. Second, the behaviors are not morally neutral, are not a matter of taste or preference. Third, there is a reversal of moral values, so that what was wrong is now protected, and in some cases promoted.

Anecdotes abound which recount instances of the conflict.

The catholic couple who were fined for refusing to rent their room to a cohabiting couple.

The school principle who was dismissed for dismissing an openly homosexual teacher.

The second grade teacher who successfully sued to retain her position after being dismissed for moonlighting legally as a prostitute.

The numerous employees required to undergo “diversity training,” where they are subjected to techniques of group dynamics to change their opinion on such issues as homosexuality.

The employee disciplined for pinning a *B.C.* comic strip with a Christian message outside his cubicle, while Buddhist and pagan decorations were permitted.

The television show in which the antagonist is a “homophobic” (i.e. Christian) character, who is reformed and acknowledges the error of his ways by the end of the show.

Et cetera.

The anecdotes are just incidents in a general decline of decency and a general increase in toleration toward vices of all kinds. There is

not only a general sense, but a measurable reality that vices such as fornication, adultery, abortion, euthanasia, homosexual practices, drug use, and other vices are portrayed as normal behavior in the mainstream media. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan referred to the trend as “defining deviancy down,” so that the most deviant behavior would appear normal.

One of the most startling features of this movement is that there are powerful and well-funded organizations engaged in this process of corruption. Such organizations include People for the American Way, Planned Parenthood, and the American Civil Liberties Union, as well as less “main stream” organizations like Act Up!, the National Man-Boy Love Association, and the like. To these must be added government entities at all levels that sponsor “gay pride” events or otherwise foster hostility toward traditional morality, favor toward vice, or both. Probably most troubling are those schools where “diversity training” systematically teaches that disapproval of actions on the basis of “sexual orientation or marital status” is in itself wrong, and subject to punishment if voiced.

Our culture is also imbued with a crass materialism. The source is ideologically different and morally it is more ambiguous, because possessing property is not discretely sinful, as is, e.g., fornication. Nevertheless it should also be considered along with the concept of a culture war. As we look at the Scriptural references to the corruption of a culture, covetousness looms large, as a kind of idolatry.

One legitimate question is whether anything new is happening, or whether this is just as it has always been. It would be naïve to say that such trends have never been observed before. Surely a reading of Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians¹, or the first two chapters of Romans² would dispense with that myth. What is “new” is really new to this culture, this country, and this generation.

As the definition of the “cultural wars” implies, the notable features of this movement in our culture are

A concerted effort to change the cultural mores.

Legal protection.

Hostility toward Biblical morality and the Christian faith.

Recent technological changes which assure that our flock is affected by these trends.

II. How do the culture wars involve the pastor in his role as shepherd and soul-healer?

The pastor recognizes that however these issues are framed in cultural or sociological terms, the “culture wars” are part of that same conflict that began in Eden. There the old serpent led our parents into sin and so alienated them from God. God in turn restored them through the preaching of the gospel. The battle, then, is the great conflict that is portrayed in the Revelation of St. John, or that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6:

Ephesians 6:10-12: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Those who seek freedom from moral restraint do not necessarily know what they are doing. Some may know, on one level or another, but many who promote the corruption of our people view restrictions on abortion as an insufferable intrusion of government, or any restraint upon pornography or other sexual activities as clear violations of rights under the first amendment. The deceiver has done his work well.

Regardless of whether people are pawns or witting accomplices of evil, pastors recognize the “cloven hoof” imprinted upon many of the events of our day. One example arose this last fall, during the presidential election. The question was raised as to why the religion of Senator Joseph Lieberman was “good,” i.e. politically correct, while the religion of Governor George Bush was not. *Slate*, an internet magazine, ran a story on the question and presented the answer this way: The religion of Senator Lieberman, like many religions, was inclusive, accepting of any who had good intentions, did good things,

etc. Christianity, however, was exclusive, withholding approval of any who were not Christians and insisting that they were destined for hell.

This same point has been made repeatedly and has found its way into the literature of the “politics of oppression.” TRUE religion is inclusive (the argument goes), which is why Christians lose claim to acceptance by contemporary culture; Christians are by definition oppressive.

This point illustrates how those leading the culture wars are dangerous to our flocks – not merely because they offer temptations to sin, but because they attack Christ as the only Lord and Savior of the world. We have a religious difference with the leaders of the culture wars, not just a political or moral difference. Because of that, Pastors have an obligation to warn their flocks of the real nature of the culture wars, as well as the real nature of other assaults upon the gospel.³

With that in mind, consider how our flock is affected by this assault.

Consciences are deadened. Exposure to sin deadens the conscience; it silences the testimony of the law in the hearts of the people. While we warn with Isaiah (Isaiah 59:2), “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (NKJV), the force of that warning is diminished as the message is pounded out day after day that the sins of the flesh are the norm. Who of us hasn’t had to deal with a couple who is living in fornication but has no pangs of conscience whatsoever? There is a concerted effort to cast the practice of homosexuality in the most romantic terms, so that our people, especially those who have no idea of the behaviors involved, view it as simply one way that people are made. We are becoming like Corinth, where Paul had to call on even the Christians to cease their fornication.

The normative character of Scripture is undermined. Another effect of the culture wars is that our people are less inclined to accept Scripture as the norm. So many appeals are made to what *seems* or to what *feels* right or true that Scripture and principles of all kinds are abandoned. Witness the arguments for stem cell research using the bodies of aborted children: Old people with Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease might be helped, therefore we need to proceed.

Evil is done to people in the world. Still another effect of the culture wars is that the devil succeeds in his efforts to hurt and harm God's creation. Children are killed in the womb. Marriages are destroyed. Children are born without families to tend them, resulting in poverty and delinquency. Disease is spread. Innocence is lost.

Our flock are tempted – and fall. One of the big differences between the pietists and reformed on the one hand, and Lutherans on the other is the approach toward our own sin, and the sin of our flocks. As Lutherans, we know that there is only one righteousness that counts with God. It is as Paul puts it (Philippians 3:9), “not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” NKJV

So our concern is not just that our flock will fall into sin more easily – it isn't their own innocence that makes them acceptable to God anyway. Our concern is that they be led into the sins of the flesh and thereby into a faithless impenitence, as Paul warns (Galatians 5:19-21):

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. NKJV

Our Savior Himself gave the same warning in very practical terms in Luke 8:11-14:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. NKJV

As shepherds, we can recognize that when one side prevails in the culture wars, it is that much easier for our people to be led into “unbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice.” Particular vices have their own greater temptation to unbelief.

We will have members who live in sins of the flesh, which the devil uses to encourage impenitence. It is hard to repent of something that feels so good, and besides, who can feel guilty for taking a few drinks, or perusing some of the “eye candy” on the internet?

We will have members who participate in abortions, a sin which the devil particularly uses to tempt to despair (It is hopeless to try to bring the child back.).

Our people will take the “easy” option of unscriptural divorce and persist in impenitence while wallowing in the self-righteous condemnation of a spouse.

Our people will become consumed with materialism and spend all that God gives them on themselves, forgetting that He has given it to accomplish His good will in the world. In the name of “good stewardship” our people will insist on spending every Sunday using their expensive toys.

We are in danger, too.

How shall we respond to the culture wars?

At the level of our preaching and soul healing, we continue to preach the whole counsel of God.

We must use the law rightly. The greatest temptation for us, as Walther warned in *Law and Gospel*, is to use the law to frighten/cajole/intimidate our people into avoiding or escaping the sins that are becoming more prevalent. But we may also be tempted to misuse the law in other ways. We might use “third person” law to talk about the terrible things that “they” do, rather than confronting our people with their own sins. We may be tempted to “soft-pedal” the law. How jarring does it sound to say something like “Those who are impenitent of (living in) homosexual acts, or of cohabitation, or of wrongful divorce will go to hell.”

We must use the gospel rightly. I’m not going to write a précis of *Law and Gospel*, but just make a few comments.

The gospel is not conditional. It may mean that, like Jesus, we are among those whose reputations bear labels such as drunkard,

philanderer, homosexual, baby-killer, or porn addict. Christ did die for these people, and He calls them to repentance not just by convicting them through the law, but by calling them through the gospel. We may struggle to be sure that Christ and his church do not appear to approve of such iniquity, but we will not say “You can be forgiven IF.”

The gospel is not mixed with the law. The gospel announces a righteousness apart from the law. We need to remember that God approves and accepts believers as fully and completely righteous and acceptable beings. In them He is “well pleased,” because they have the righteousness of the One in whom the Father announced He was “well pleased.” So we need to clearly proclaim (Romans 8:1), “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” NKJV

Law and gospel being faithfully proclaimed to our flock, and to all who will listen, we will find that God creates a group of people who are filled with zeal to serve Him.⁴ I believe that this is what gives rise to so many questions relative to the culture wars – our people challenge us to do what is right, to “live our faith,” and wonder why we aren’t leading the charge. There are always those, of course, who seem to be retarded in their sanctification, just as Jesus says in the parable of the sower that some bring forth fruit to a lesser degree than others. But we also have those who earnestly desire to glorify their Savior in every aspect of their lives. As the cultural tide flows, they find themselves in conflict with the world and their own consciences. Due to our position in life, we don’t always have to deal with the same difficulties that our people do. Consider the following cases regarding which our people have come to us for guidance:

We have members who have apartments for rent. The couple renting their duplex across the street isn’t married. What’s more, they leave little to the imagination as to what they use the bedrooms for when they have friends over. Upon evicting the tenants, our members find that they are in violation of the law for discriminating on the basis of marital status. Should our members fight or obey the law or get out of the business?

The young officer at the naval hospital is an excellent professional and has ambitions to reach flag rank eventually. She has been asked to participate in abortion procedures as part of her training. While she can't actually be required to perform abortions, the proficiency report written by her superior will most certainly damn her with faint praise. What should she do?

The pharmacist receives a prescription for the "morning after" pill. Believing that this is merely an early abortifacient, the pharmacist declines to fill the prescription. The patient is on public assistance and has the weight of the federal government saying, "Thou shalt not discriminate in filling prescriptions!" Should he fill the prescription?

Another one of our members tries a new ice cream product in his convenience store. He then discovers that the producer dedicates a percentage of sales to support homosexual advocacy. Should he drop the product?

One of our churches is in a municipality that has a very active homosexual lobby, and the municipality is requiring that all employers providing health insurance must include coverage for abortion procedures and for "domestic partners" in the same way as for spouses. The effect of these laws is to reduce the stigma attached to homosexual couples, and to promote the idea that such couples are normal. Should the church, or employers within the church refuse to participate?

A human resources supervisor (our parishioner) in a large corporation must administer "diversity sensitivity training" for many of the departments in his company. The particular curriculum used specifically states that Christian proscription of homosexuality is responsible for violence against homosexuals, and that therefore no such religious expressions would be tolerated by any employee. Should the parishioner administer the program, or quit, or just refuse?

A parishioner sits on the local school board. The board has historically had Planned Parenthood present the sessions on human sexuality to all seventh graders, as well as to the family – living classes in the high school. Your parishioner and one other member have proposed a regulation that would replace Planned Parenthood with a curriculum that would clearly teach the benefits of premarital abstinence, that premarital abstinence is preferable to premarital sexual

activity, and that sex outside of marriage is immoral. Is this a confusion of the two kingdoms?

In all of these cases, our members come with similar concerns. In their day-to-day life and witness, they do not want to be party to the sins of others, nor do they want to promote those things that Scripture condemns as wrong. Here are some of the passages that they point to:

Ephesians 5:12: For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. NKJV

1 Timothy 5:22: Do not ... share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. NKJV

1 Corinthians 5:1-2: It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. NKJV

Matthew 5:11-16: Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. NKJV

Psalms 82:3-4: Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked. NKJV

Romans 1:28-32: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-

mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. NKJV

What shall we tell them? Just as the reformation princes had more to lose than an obscure priest or monk did, so our people show great courage and risk much to engage in the culture war – especially when they seek to retake ground already lost. The question is not only what we shall tell our members, but also what responsibility we have to deal with such issues ourselves.

Over the years issues such as this seem to sort themselves out and the principles involved repeat themselves. Yes, this is law, so while it serves to answer our members' questions about what they should do, it will also condemn. We always need to be careful that the gospel predominates in all our dealings with God's people.

Let's look at some of these principles.

We mustn't deny our Savior. Matthew 10:32-33 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." NKJV

More important than personal peace or prosperity is our witness of God's truth to others, so we should speak and not be silent.

There is also forgiveness for those who deny our Savior. Luke 22:31-32: " And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and **when you have returned to Me**, strengthen your brethren.'" NKJV (Emphasis mine.)

If Satan cannot lead us into indifference toward right and wrong, he will seek to lead us into despair on the basis of right and wrong. We must assure our people that God doesn't accept us because we somehow "get it right" in every situation. He forgives us purely for the sake of Christ our Savior.

We are in the world. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10: "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world,

or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” NKJV

While our people may be troubled in their consciences about the behavior of those around them, and feel an obligation to “do something about it,” the fact is that we cannot avoid rampant immorality. As Jesus reminded the Pharisees, we are defiled by what comes out of us, by what WE do and say and think.

We are not to be of the world. We need to exercise church discipline.

1 Corinthians 5:11-13: But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.” NKJV

There is a difference between witnessing the sin that is in the world and tolerating sin (and impenitence) within the church. A bold witness is surely needed in the world, and the Holy Spirit does work through people to convict the world of sin.⁵ What’s more, as the salt of the earth, Christians should influence the whole culture in which they live. Nevertheless, our first responsibility is within the church. We are not called upon to confront every sinner for every sin.

In deciding what God would have us do, let us first consider what is our station in life. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (quoted previously) makes this clear in contrasting our role in the church with our role outside the church. We may have other responsibilities as parents, school board members, legislators, or administrators. Not everything is everyone’s responsibility. This will be examined again under the matter of the “two kingdoms.”

Pastors are to uphold righteousness – for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of those who are victims of iniquity, and for the sake of those who are iniquitous. While all Christians have a responsibility to bear witness to the truth, this is especially the case

for pastors. We already cited Ezekiel in footnote #3. Consider also Luke 17:1-4:

Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." NKJV

While arguably this refers to any Christian, including parents, it is particularly so for those whose office is the preaching and teaching of the word of God.

We are to contend for the faith. Jude 3: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." NKJV

Finally, this is what the culture wars are all about, contending for the faith against the numerous spiritual perils.

III. How do the culture wars involve the pastor in the relationship between the two kingdoms?

This is a major area of discussion in itself, but it is commended to our attention here because of the tactics taken to disengage Christians, the clergy, and the church from participation in the marketplace of ideas. In many circles, the establishment clause of the constitution far outweighs the prohibition clause, so that the "separation of church and state" becomes an excuse for marginalizing religion. The alternative proposed by many evangelicals is not satisfactory either – using the power of the sword to advance the church, or, at the least, promote unionistic practices.

The church is built by the word of God, not by power. Romans 10:17: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." NKJV

The proper understanding of the separation of church and state hinges on what God says about how He brings people into the church – through word and sacrament. From a Christian point of view, the best thing a government can do is permit free course of the gospel.

Morality (not religion) is a legitimate concern of the state. The essential function of the government is given to us in Romans 13:3-4:

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. NKJV

Here the Scriptures make it clear that good and evil play a part in the decisions of government. The argument that any reference to morality introduces religion into law is specious. Former President Ronald Reagan answered well when being criticized for taking a stand against abortion. He was accused of trying to make a religious issue into a law. His answer was that it is not a religious issue, but a moral issue. One doesn't need to be a Christian to recognize morality, as Paul says,

Romans 2:14-15: When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them. NKJV

Because of the darkness and spiritual blindness of the human heart, the morality translated into law is not necessarily in harmony with the Scriptures. Nevertheless, the natural law has returned again and again to protect lawful authority, life, family, property, and reputation.

Pastors should be clear that Christian citizens are not wrong when they seek to reflect morality in the laws of the state. Of course the morality of the Christian will be informed by the Bible, but because

of the natural law it will not necessarily be different from what a citizen of another religion values as moral. Put another way, guiding law by morality is not the same as mixing church and state.

Many immoral activities are also illegal. Christian citizens have a role in deciding which ones. The fact that something is immoral does not mean that it must be illegal. By divine inspiration, Moses himself passed down the sixth commandment at the same time as he codified the rules for divorce. This did not put the stamp of approval on such divorce, however, as Jesus says,

Matthew 19:8-9: He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." NKJV

Historically, we can make the observation that the ability to legislate with reference to the natural law decreases as the personal morality of a people decreases. Studies of English society have correlated the decrease in crime at various times in English history with the increase in church attendance, particularly in Sunday school.

It is not incumbent upon Christians, then, to insist on a particular law for moral reasons. This is in the sphere of reason, as in the case of Moses. Christians who are faithful to Holy Scripture acknowledge the sanctity of human life, but they are not bound, therefore, to a particular form of law protecting it. They acknowledge that drug intoxication is wrong but may differ as to whether making drugs illegal is the best way to deal with the issue.

There are risks to legalizing immorality. One of the results of the culture war has been the legalization of all sorts of immoral acts. Pornography, homosexuality, no-fault divorce, abortion, euthanasia, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, and many other vices have become legal either *de facto* or *de jure*. While we cannot bind the conscience of a Christian citizen or magistrate to pass any specific law, experience shows the sorrowful effects of legitimizing vice. The largest single group of poor today is the single mom with child(ren). Broken homes

cause untold trauma. Sadly, Christians are led to view many sins as trivial because they are not illegal, and fall into a life of impenitence.

While stopping short of advocating particular laws, or even a particular political system, pastors do well to counsel their flock that opposing evil on a legal basis is not mixing church and state. Just as any citizen is free to inform his or her actions by a basic philosophy, so Christians also should feel free to do so.

V. Conclusion

“Culture wars” is a term in common usage for the age-old conflict that Satan has brought into the world with his evil and rebellion. One dimension of this conflict is played out throughout society on a moral basis, so that Christians may be allied with others who are guided by natural law to forge a society where people are protected from the grossest outbursts of evil. One result of the struggle in this dimension might be well-behaved unbelievers.

The other dimension, and most important to pastors, is the struggle for the souls of sinners, all of whom have been redeemed by our Savior Jesus Christ. Faith is more important than mere good behavior. Grace alone saves, through faith, and faith alone will bring forth those works that are precious to our Father in heaven.

Endnotes

¹ 1 Corinthians 5:1: It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife! NKJV

1 Corinthians 6:13-18: Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

² Romans 1:20-32: For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness,

covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

³ Ezekiel 3:17-22: Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. "Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. "Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul." Then the hand of the Lord was upon me there, and He said to me, "Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you." NKJV

Galatians 1:6-10: I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. NKJV

⁴ Titus 2:11-15: For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,

we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. NKJV

⁵ John 16:8: And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. NKJV

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Errata

Note the following correction in the 2001 Synod Convention essay by Rev. Mark Bartels, entitled, "The Truth Shall Set You Free: A Critique of Postmodernism."

On page 45, line 6, strike:

Stanley Grenz, a postmodern evangelical, in an essay entitled, "To Boldly Go Where No Evangelical has Gone Before" writes, "Since truth is not eternal ..."

Replace with:

Evangelical theologian Stanley Grenz describes this aspect of postmodernism, as paraphrased by fellow evangelical Millard Erickson: "Since truth is not eternal ..."