

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 49

JUNE 2009

NUMBER 2

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.Sermon Series: The Ten Commandments

Frank Gantt

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The Sixth Commandment: *You shall not commit adultery.*

Readings: Genesis 2:4-25, Ephesians 5:1-33

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:27-30

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Take a look in your bulletin today and you will see that we have come to a commandment that makes many people uncomfortable. That is because of the tendency to reduce this commandment down to one thing—sex—and a discussion about sex tends to make people uncomfortable.

First of all, let’s make it clear that sex, according to its divine intent, is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a beautiful part of the first human-to-human institution and a gift of God to be treasured highly. While sex is an act of intimacy and any discussion of it should remain modest and decent, it is the world’s abuse of sex that has made it an uncomfortable subject.

Secondly, saying that the Sixth Commandment deals with sex is like saying that the Atlantic Ocean is water. Though true, there is so much more to it than that. The Sixth Commandment, like all of the other commandments, goes beyond what is superficially recognized by the world. All that is included in God’s Sixth Commandment to us makes it a huge topic. When we talk about its meaning and applications, we are talking about God’s will concerning our clothing, dating, and what He says concerning general purity of living. It is where God speaks to us about what to look for in a spouse. It is how God directs His will for us inside of marriage. It tells us what we should teach our children—each new generation—about these things. The Sixth Commandment addresses all of this and everything else involved with this important aspect of our lives.

Truth be told, when I began preparing for this sermon, I was uncomfortable too, but not because I was afraid to mention sex in a sermon. It was because this commandment applies to so many areas of our

lives that I was afraid my sermon would end up being an hour and a half long. You can relax, because our text for today helps us take a more focused look at the commandment. It is found in a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We read from Matthew 5:27-30:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Before we get into a discussion of our text, let me give you some startling statistics. For every 100 marriages 56 will end in divorce; for those who have yet to marry, 84% have already engaged in some level of sexual activity; 22 out of 1,000 young ladies between the ages of fifteen and seventeen are currently pregnant; 22% of children under the age of five have little to no contact with their fathers; 63% of married couples say they live in troubled marriages. Perhaps these statistics do not shock you! They should, because they do not pertain to the general population of the United States, as you may have guessed. They are only statistics of those who profess to be Christian. I could go on with statistics about living together outside of marriage, infidelity on the part of spouses, and the blatant disregard that so many professing Christians have for God's explicitly stated boundaries in the area of sexual relations. But I won't, since it won't do us any good.

So why bring up the ones that I did? I did so just to make a point, the point being that even among professing Christians, violations against the Sixth Commandment are rampant. That this is true can be due to only one reason. Some may argue that the reason is that young people aren't aware of the dangers of sexual activity; so they advocate more sex education in the public schools, which has only contributed to an increase in sexual activity. Some would say it is because of an increase in sexual content on television, the Internet, and magazines. Yet cable companies, Internet providers, and other media outlets continue to thrive, even as the church laments these trends. There are also those who would say that the primary culprit for these statistics is the lack of role models, which vaguely touches on the truth, but still doesn't quite get to the bottom of it. The real reason for these statistics (are you ready for this?) is a lack of understanding about one's relationship to Christ.

Remember that these are trends among confessing Christians. But the trends differ very little from those who do not profess to be Christian. In other words, many who profess to be Christian act, and apparently think, much like those who do not know Christ and His love. Let's consider the connection from our New Testament lesson, which says that the husband-wife relationship is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His believers. If I were to ask you to draw a picture of my dad, how would you do? Some of you have met him, but only briefly. Some of you have never seen him. How would you do under those circumstances? The same applies to marriage and all that goes with it; unless we know Christ, our view of marriage and its blessings will be marred and ugly.

This is where our text comes in. The opening verses are a bit intriguing because Jesus quotes what we know as the Sixth Commandment, but then He continues with an adversative "but." "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you. . . .*" Jesus isn't contradicting God when He says, "*But I say to you.*" That's what the Jews were doing. They were teaching that just by refraining from a very limited definition of adultery, which they had determined, they were therefore guiltless of violating the commandment. As long as they never had sex outside of marriage, they were deemed innocent in regards to the Sixth Commandment. As the Giver of the commandment, however, and speaking with divine authority, Jesus teaches a broader application of the commandment's requirements, which can only be grasped through a proper relationship with Him.

Think about that for a moment, and think about the way marriage is practiced throughout the world. On one end of the spectrum we have the United States and the European nations with their

rampant and increasing perversions. In other cultures around the world there is perhaps a lower level of divorce and fornication, but then we notice things like the oppression of women and polygamy. The latter do not know the love of Christ; so they have no standard for husbands toward their wives. The former twist and manipulate the love of Christ into a license for all manner of filth. The point is that the key to the Sixth Commandment is Christ. This simplifies it for us because when we know Christ—that is, truly know Him and His love—the Sixth Commandment takes on a whole new beauty.

Now what does it mean *to know Christ and His love*? Quite simply, it is to believe that He is the One who has loved us and given Himself for us upon the cross. And to know by faith that He has sanctified and cleansed us with the washing of water by the Word that He might present us to Himself a glorious church, and to know that by His accomplished work on the cross we have no spot or wrinkle of sin that blemishes our souls, but that we are now holy and without blemish in His sight. To know Christ and His love is to trust that He is our Way to the Father and He is the Savior of our souls and bodies, not because we were worthy to have Him as such, but because His love for us is that great. In love He joined Himself to us, became one of us, and claimed us to be one in Him. To know His love is to rest securely in His promises: “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” and “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine*” (Heb. 13:5, Isa. 43:1).

It is this knowledge of Christ and His love that alone can bring about a proper understanding and appreciation for marriage, sexual intimacy, and physical modesty and decency. No program or class of sex education can do what is needed because they cannot change the heart. In our text Jesus speaks of plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand when they cause us to sin. That sounds extreme until one actually realizes what Jesus is saying. He says, “*If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. . . . If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you.*” The point that He makes is certainly valid: it’s better to spend seventy years or so on the earth blind or handicapped than to spend eternity in hell. Jesus, however, is not advocating self-mutilation as a means to chastity and purity.

On another occasion Jesus pointed out that it is actually the sinful heart that brings forth every type of sin in our lives. So let’s apply what Jesus says to the state of our own hearts: *if your heart causes you to sin, cut it out and cast it from you.* Of course, we aren’t talking about the organ pumping blood throughout our bodies. We are talking about that inner being, so dead in trespasses and sins, which leaves us helpless because we have no way of reaching that wretched man inside of us or doing anything about the corruption it causes within. But Christ can, and this is His promise to those who in contrition and repentance seek His mercy and grace: “*Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart*” (Jer. 24:7).

The bottom line is that to be faithful to our marriage vows—all of them, not just the part about keeping yourself only to your spouse—and to raise children who are chaste and decent in their speech, dress, and actions and to be a people conforming to an accurate picture of Christ and the Church, we have to reach the heart. The only instrument for reaching the heart of sinful man is God’s Word. It alone can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. It alone can apply the healing balm of God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus. It alone is able to cover our shamefulfulness with the robes of Christ’s righteousness, which He provided through the shedding of His blood on Calvary and gave to us at our baptisms.

To this end we therefore pray: Lord Jesus, we would not have known love apart from Your love for us. We would not have known true pleasure apart from the pleasure of being in Your presence. We pray, keep all of our Christian spouses true to their marriage vows, not only in connection with sexual relations, but in every aspect of their marriages. Cause husbands to cherish and honor their wives as You have each one of us. Cause wives to respect their husbands as the Church submits to You. Our children and youth we also commit to Your care in this matter. Keep them from every form of impurity and immorality and show them the joy of remaining pure until such a time as You give to them a spouse. Open all of our eyes and hearts to the various means that the devil uses to warp and twist this relationship that You instituted for Your glory and our good. This we ask in Your name. AMEN!

How Do the Words of Paul, “I Am Made All Things to All Men,” Apply to Us in Our Ministry?

Egbert Albrecht

* The following article originally appeared in the December 1985 issue of the *Journal* (25:4, pp. 2-14). It is offered here in memoriam, with a Works Cited section at the end and citations given according to MLA guidelines. Unless noted otherwise, the author’s use of the King James Version is retained throughout this reprint.

The name of Paul the apostle appears in the New Testament more often than any other, apart from that of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit caused his name to be recorded 54 times in the book of Acts, 10 times in the epistles, and numerous times in the form of pronouns scattered throughout both. Paul stands out as one of the prominent men in the New Testament. In his early adult life he was a Pharisee and an enemy of the Gospel, but the Lord made him His chosen vessel to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world. He preached justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith all the way from Jerusalem to Rome. Most people acquainted with the New Testament regard him as the greatest missionary the Christian Church has ever had.

Paul did not have this exalted opinion of himself. To the Corinthians he wrote: “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:3-5). The world in which he carried on his ministry was full of heathen temples, altars, priests, and worship supported by governments. He turned that world upside down with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To many it was a “foolish” message that he proclaimed, since it told of a Christ born in a stable, reared in an unknown town, of One who associated with fishermen, tax collectors, and harlots, was arrested, condemned, and crucified. This message of Christ crucified for sinners poured contempt upon the salvation that was devised by the world and based on its good works. It left no room for lust and sensual living. It lumped all men together under the condemnation of God and offered them but one hope—forgiveness of sins and eternal life through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

But oh, what a powerful message the Gospel is! It robbed Athena of Athens and her Parthenon of their glory; it dimmed the splendor of “great” Diana and her temple in Ephesus; it caused magicians’ books to be burned; it toppled the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome from their heavens. Paul raised the banner of the cross over a world that had been lost in sin, given wholly to idolatry. And it is no wonder, for Jesus Christ is the holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God and separate from sinners. When He spoke, the winds and the waves obeyed Him; the sick, the lame, and the palsied were healed; even the dead came back to life. When He died on the cross, it was not because someone had taken His life from Him, but because He laid it down of Himself. He came into the world to fulfill the Law for sinners, to suffer and die for their sin and guilt. When He did, the earth quaked, rocks split open, believers came forth from their graves, the veil in the temple split from top to bottom, jeering Jews smote their breasts, and Roman soldiers said: “Truly, this was the Son of God!”

Despite Jesus’ shameful death He was not buried in a potter’s field, but among the rich. Although His tomb was sealed and guarded against tampering, when the morning of the new week dawned, it was opened by an angel to reveal that He was no longer dead, but had risen again. Forty days later He returned to His place of glory in heaven. He is the living Savior of all men. On the basis of His perfect life, innocent suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection, God declared this whole world of sinners forgiven. Paul expressed the blessed results for sinners when he said: “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

Three times Paul told in detail of how this glorious, living Savior turned him from a Pharisaic model of self-righteousness and a persecutor of the Church into a preacher of the Gospel. Jesus called him to carry the Good News of salvation to the Gentile world, and through that Good News caused heathen temples to be deserted, shrine-makers to riot, governors to tremble, and a whole empire to be called Christian. Paul was, as most people who are acquainted with the New Testament say, the greatest

missionary the Christian Church has ever had. His ministry has become a pattern for all who would preach Christ Jesus as the Savior of sinners. For us who have received a seminary training, we might say that he, by inspiration, “wrote the book” on pastoral theology.

As we study his ministry, it is evident that he patterned it after our Savior’s own ministry. Jesus dealt with large numbers of people, but His work with them was chiefly as individuals. We can listen to Him speak to Nicodemus, Nathaniel, Zacchaeus, the woman caught in adultery, the woman at Jacob’s well, and many more. It was a ministry of one on one. He loved every sinner He met, even from eternity. He knew each one of them individually with a perfect understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, temptations, opinions, peculiarities, and sins. His dealing with each one of them was different. He didn’t talk to Mary as He did to Martha, nor did He treat John as He did Peter. He sought to have all come unto Him and be saved, including Judas, the son of perdition.

Paul followed Jesus’ example in his ministry. He too preached to large numbers of people in synagogues and market places, but his work with sinners was chiefly on a one-to-one basis. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 he lays before us his practice in dealing with those to whom he brought the Gospel: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω.

This passage has been variously translated, but not with any significant difference in meaning.

NKJV: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

NASB: “I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”

Reader’s Digest Bible: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

Beck: “I’ve been everything to everybody to be sure to save some of them.”

NIV: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. “

Lenski: “To all men I became all things, in order that by all means I might save some.”

J. Anderson: “I have worked among all kinds of people, and therefore I have lived in all kinds of ways, doing everything possible to save some of them.”

Phillips: “I have, in short, been all things to all sorts of men that by every possible means I might win some to God.”

Living Bible: “Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.”

Moffatt: “To all men I have become all things, to save some by all and every means.”

Goodspeed: “I have become everything to everybody, so as by all means to save some of them.”

Jerusalem: “I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost.”

Luther: “*Ich bin jedermann allerlei worden, auf dasz ich allenthalben ja etliche selig mache.*”

Paul’s ministry was like that of our Savior. He did not have the attribute of omniscience, but he did have a heart for sinners. He himself had once been on the road to perdition, but the Lord plucked him as a brand from the burning. His aim was to do individually with others, so often as he had the opportunity, what Jesus had done for him. Let us look at his words in more detail.

τοῖς πᾶσιν — *to all men*

Paul does not say that he occasionally here and there sought to find some common ground with others in order to tell them of Christ, but he did this to *all men*. That does not mean every single person who lived in his day, but to those with whom he came in contact. This includes young and old, men and women, learned and unlearned, masters and slaves, Jews and Gentiles. Each individual had his own peculiar characteristics, views, prejudices, emotions, feelings, cares, failures, sins, etc. He dealt with all classes of people who had varying kinds of personalities. To all of them he became all things.

(γέγονα) πάντα — *all things*

Paul does not say that he became some things or many things, but all things to all men. This does not mean that he made himself what they were, that is, evil or good. Had he done that, he would have been a miserable slave of men. To the Galatians he wrote: “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I

seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). He met them where they were and found a common ground with them in order to tell them of salvation in Jesus Christ. He did not compromise his doctrinal position to gain a hearing, nor did he support evil in his dealings with men. By trade he was a tentmaker. We might call him a blue-collar worker. When he came into communities new to him, it seems that he first sought out the areas where tentmakers worked and took up his trade among them. He didn’t walk into their midst and tell them that he was God’s chosen vessel to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, but came to them as one of them and spoke to them on their level. He joined them in their work and suffered along with them. As opportunity presented itself, he discussed salvation in Christ.

We don’t know how often he came into contact with publicans and sinners such as Jesus met, but he knew how to talk with every class of sinner. He met them on their level, but he did not condone their way of life or wrongdoing. When he met Pharisees, he could talk their language. His aim was always to win them for Christ—not at all costs, but at great cost. That is, he personally accommodated himself to their ways in order to speak to them of salvation in Christ.

We know that he came into contact with slaves, such as Onesimus was. He did not seek to be anything more to him than a fellow servant and fellow Christian. But when he dealt with a slave’s master, like Philemon, it was immediately clear that he was a man of equal birth and standing. When Paul spoke before royalty, such as King Agrippa, he knew how to present himself, his cause, and the cause of the Gospel without the least bit of intimidation. He spoke to them also as sharing a common ground with them and sought their salvation.

Paul did not show off his grasp of the languages or his scholastic degrees when he was in the presence of the unlearned. Rather, he spoke to them of the highest wisdom, namely, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was different, however, among those who were learned and cultured and important in the eyes of men. He let them see that he was well educated and could quote the poets, perhaps even better than they.

When he dealt with those who were led astray by false teachers, such as the Galatian Christians, he knew how to deal with them like a father deals patiently with his erring child. But it was a different story when it came to confronting those guilty of promoting the error by a different gospel from that which he preached. He told them: “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9).

If we look back to verse 19, we can hear Paul himself describe this feature of his ministry: “*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*”

Through faith in Christ Paul was free from all men, but love moved him to be the servant of all men so that he might gain the more. Luther based his *Treatise on the Liberty of a Christian Man* on these words of Paul. Luther stated it this way: 1) A Christian man is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. 2) A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. A sinner brought to faith by the Holy Spirit voluntarily becomes a servant to all men. He is no longer under the judgment of God or men, but truly free in Christ. Yet, as Paul says: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). When he sees his neighbor in need, he becomes his servant to meet that need. His neighbor’s greatest need is salvation. So Paul became a servant to his fellowmen in order to gain the more, that is, more than he could gain in any other way. Now he cites some examples.

Verse 20: “*Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.*”

Paul speaks first of the Jews as an ethnic group. On his first missionary journey he and Barnabas went into the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia and were asked to say a few words of comfort and encouragement to the people, if they had such to bring. Paul stood up and addressed the audience: “Men of Israel, and ye that fear God” (Acts 13:16). Then he rehearsed the history of the Jews from the time of their deliverance in the days of Moses down to David. He told them: “Of this man’s seed hath God

according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). When almost the whole city came on the next Sabbath to hear more of the Gospel, the local Jews resented it, contradicted Paul and Barnabas, and chased them out of the city. Paul and Barnabas then shook the dust of that city off their feet and went to Iconium. But first they had brought the Gospel of forgiveness to Pisidian Antioch.

Verse 20b: “*To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.*”

Now Paul tells how he acted toward the Jews in regard to their religion. The Jews were under the moral, ceremonial, and civil law given by Moses. They were especially zealous in seeking to live according to its regulations. Paul, through faith in Jesus, was free from the law. He was no longer conscience bound to observe its ordinances, such as abstaining from certain kinds of food, the rite of purification, vows, etc. He could have eaten pork, without any scruples of conscience, and blood and things strangled. But he did not use his freedom when he was dealing with Jews. Instead he became as one of them under the law. He conformed to their customs without in the least approving what was false in their thinking and practice. He remembered all too clearly his own Pharisaic past, his frustrating efforts to keep the law in order to be saved. He knew how they thought and felt and could understand their ways. He did not hesitate to have his head shorn at Cenchrea because of a vow (Acts 18:18), or to observe the rite of purification in Jerusalem (Acts 21:26), or to give up eating meat so as not to offend them (1 Cor. 8:13). He showed great patience and tact in dealing with the Jews, gladly conformed to their customs and way of life, for the one purpose—to bring them the Gospel so they could be saved. He did not compromise that Gospel, but merely sought the necessary common ground upon which he could get near them and preach salvation through Jesus Christ.

But when Judaizers insisted that Titus should be circumcised, he drew the line immediately. This would have been a subjection to the law and the loss of the liberty that belongs to those who believe in Jesus. It would have been a going back into bondage from which Christ had set him free.

Verse 21: “*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law.*”

Paul now speaks about his relationship to the Gentiles who had no legal code from God to regulate them. The Gentiles did have the law written in their hearts, as all men do (Rom. 2:14-15), but they did not have the law given by Moses. Among them Paul practiced the law of Christ, that is, the law of love of which he speaks to the Galatians: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2); and in chapter five, verse 13: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” When Paul was among the Gentiles, he adapted himself to their ways and avoided observing the requirements of the Mosaic law. For example, on Mars Hill he spoke to the sophisticated philosophers of Athens with politeness; he credited them with being *very religious*, and then went on to tell them on the basis of an inscription on one of their many altars who the true God is and of salvation in Him. They listened until he spoke of the resurrection and the judgment to come. Then they mocked him. But some believed. Paul was equipped intellectually to meet the philosophers of Greece and to speak their language. In their presence he became a non-Jew in order to gain some for Christ. R. C. H. Lenski in his commentary on 1 Corinthians goes into detail on this point and offers worthwhile information about Paul’s dealing with Jews and Gentiles in behalf of the Gospel (383-384).

Verse 22a: “*To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.*”

Most commentators consider *the weak* to be weak brethren, that is, Christians who have “not made much headway in Christian knowledge” (Kretzmann 132). Lenski says: “‘The weak’ are Christians indeed, but because they are weak they are easily offended by the strong who act without regard to their weakness, 8,7 . . .” (385). Werner Franzmann in an essay on this portion of 1 Corinthians to the 1955 WELS convention in Saginaw preferred to consider the weak as being among the unconverted. He speaks of the weak in health, for whom Paul would have a heart because of his thorn in the flesh; the

intellectually weak over against the highly intelligent; the morally weak, such as publicans and sinners; the emotionally weak, such as the high-strung and neurotic. Franzmann bases his argument on the use of κερδαίνω (gain), used four times as a set term for converting men to Christ. He feels that it is not likely that Paul would suddenly “shift to the meaning of Matthew 18:15, ‘gaining a sinning brother,’ or of 8:7 and 8:10 of I Corinthians, ‘gaining (winning) a Christian weak in knowledge and understanding,’ especially since it occurs in the refrain-like statement of purpose” (237). He says that at the end of chapter eight Paul has “really left the topic of the way in which such weak brethren are to be borne and won. It is not impossible for him, of course, to go back to it here . . . , yet it strikes one as a jarring note in his eloquent cadences extolling the self-denying love that would ‘save the more’” (237).

We come back now to the original statement before us: “*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*” Paul became *all things to all men*, that he might by *all means* save some. Three *alls* present Paul’s great desire to bring the Gospel to sinners for their salvation. Paul had no illusions about the success of his work. Jesus spoke with numerous publicans and sinners, yet we read of only two publicans who were converted: Levi and Zacchaeus. Had Jesus not made Himself all things to all men, they very likely would not have been counted among the converted.

γέγονα — *I have become*

Paul at one time was completely different from what he was when he wrote these words. This being all things to all men was not something he had learned by his own ability. This happened through Christ, who called him as he was going to Damascus in an effort to destroy the Christian church. (At that time he was still Saul.) He had tasted blood at the stoning of Stephen, and he wanted more of it. He pursued every Christian he could find to imprison, punish, or kill him. But then he met Jesus, One mightier than himself, who threw him to the ground, struck him blind physically, but gave him a new eyesight when He called: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). Then and there Saul saw both the fire of hell awaiting him for seeking salvation by his own merits and Jesus, the Savior, who came to save him. He never forgot how Jesus plucked him like a brand from the burning and made him a chosen vessel to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles. From then on he said: “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). As Jesus had become all things for him, so he now sought to become all things to all men for Christ’s sake, that some might be saved. No matter where he was or what the occasion was, he proclaimed salvation through faith in Christ. He had a heart for sinners, and his one great desire was that the Jews and all men be saved. Phillips catches the spirit of Paul when he translates: “I have, in short, been all things to all sorts of men that by every possible means I might win some to God.”

The world we live in is different from what it was in Paul’s day. We carry on our ministry in communities in which there are established Christian congregations. Paul found it useful to make contacts at synagogues, but the bulk of his work was carried on in totally heathen surroundings. We deal with few really unchurched people. Most of the prospects that we seek to instruct in sound Christian doctrine come from some Christian background. Nevertheless, the principle that Paul followed in his ministry, of being all things to all men, applies also to us in our work.

The theme of this essay now asks: How do these words apply to us in our ministry?

All of us can make applications of those words to our work, but it should be evident that we need to be in personal touch with those whom we seek to serve as ministers of the Gospel. We can’t spend all week in our study, but we have to get out among our members and our prospects. The Lord expects us to study so that we can rightly divide His Word of truth, but then He wants us to bring it to others. That means that we cannot sit in the protective surroundings of our books and mimeograph at people the things we should discuss with them personally.

We will go where our people are and talk to them on their level. The more we see them in their own surroundings, the better we will understand their doubts and fears, their problems and needs. It won’t take long to see that we cannot expect the same fruits of faith from all whom we serve. God in His

wisdom didn't make them all alike. He gave five talents to some, three to others, and only one to some. Where there is fruit of faith evident in their lives, we will be glad to see it, since this is the Lord's work in them. When we get a close-up look at their struggles in life and the problems they face every day, we will learn patience and not be unreasonable in our dealings. It is unreasonable to expect fruit before there have been any blossoms, or leaves and branches before the roots have taken hold. When we grow impatient with them, let us remember the words of the divine Dresser of the vineyard who pleaded with the heavenly Owner: "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it" (Luke 13:8). We are dealing with immortal souls who will be saved if they believe in Jesus as their Savior, but eternally damned if they do not.

Only under certain circumstances will we visit people while they are busy at their work. Rather, we will meet them in their homes where they are relaxed, feel comfortable, and can talk freely. As they talk, our job is to be good listeners. Some individuals never reveal much about themselves until we can do something with them that gains their confidence, such as joining them on a picnic, spending a few hours in a boat fishing, or sitting in a blind hunting ducks with them. Wherever their interests are strong, there we will find an opportunity to get to know them and to find that common ground on which we can speak of Christ.

Our role as pastors is somewhat like that of salesmen. A salesman serves his prospects best by coming to them neat, clean, properly dressed, with an enthusiastic attitude, and, usually, at the customer's convenience. He avoids being pushy if he hopes to be successful. He also knows how to present his wares and to leave at the right time. The salesman doesn't weary those to whom he seeks to sell. He is considerate, and sensitive to the situation, at all times. Certainly we should be no less in our pastoral calling.

Some of our work will involve us with the sick, the mentally ill, the imprisoned, and with people in all kinds of different situations. Some homes we enter will be dirty, others immaculately clean. None of the outward circumstances involved in our visits dare disturb or distress us. We may feel deeply saddened to see our fellow Christian in the situation that he is in, but as the Lord's representatives we have the duty to come with the Word of God and apply it properly to his needs.

The ministry is our calling. It's not a five-day-a-week job. It is ongoing. There is no room for self-pity, self-service, or self-glory. Idleness may belong to others, but it does not belong to those who work in Zion. Amos says: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1). How many pastors work as hard during the week as their members do, who spend eight to nine hours on the job, with only a half-hour for lunch? How many pastors have been TV addicts, babysitters, and a whole host of other things? The Lord's work requires haste. The night is coming when no man can work. Do we really owe it to ourselves to rise late, rest often, fritter away precious opportunities when the Gospel needs to be brought to others? If we really become all things to all men so that some may be saved, our days will be long and our vacations well-earned.

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How Can We Help a Recently Bereaved Member of Our Congregation?

Lester Schierenbeck

* The following essay, originally presented by Pastor Schierenbeck to the 1980 Wisconsin Pastoral Conference of the CLC, appeared in the December 1980 issue of the *Journal* (20:4, pp. 17-21). It reappears here in memoriam, with the author's use of the King James Version retained in this reprint.

The Christian faith makes a festal triumph out of the world's greatest tragedy—death. To the Lord's own belongs the victory cry: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54-57). This victory we celebrate at the death of a confessing believer, who with Paul is given the grace to confess to God and before men, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). In the fellowship of our faith we share the privilege of awaiting death with the expectation of the certain hope of triumph in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, our Savior.

But this shared victory over death in Jesus does not mean that there is no hurt or pain connected with the death of a child of God. Like Jesus, who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, every death is a reminder of man's sinfulness, which exacts its toll upon the bodies of all the sons of Adam. But this conviction of sin and judgment is quickly stilled by Jesus, whom we know and praise as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But there is another factor that cannot be overlooked. The Old Adam, our inherited sinful nature, is still attached to the newborn, converted child of God. This instrument of Satan robs the child of God of the perfect trust and confidence in God and in His Word, and thus from a perfect enjoyment of the triumph of the Christian death. In times of trial and testing, especially in the death of a loved one, every weakness of faith may be magnified. Finally, the strongest faith will not completely dispel the depression brought on by natural human feelings, evidenced by the emptiness of loss and the ache of loneliness.

The merciful God knows and cares about the bereaved believer and has provided for his help and comfort. For this reason also, among others, He has set the solitary in the family of believers. Among such He reveals Himself as "the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

As those who are called by God as servants to the Flock of God, we ought to count it among our most pleasant duties to comfort with the Word those who experience the pain and loss of bereavement. Keeping in mind the privilege and responsibility of our calling, let us apply ourselves to the assigned topic: How can we help a recently bereaved member of our congregation?

How can we help a recently bereaved member of our congregation who has lost a loved one who shared with us the faith and confession of Christ as the world's Redeemer? Here the ministry of comfort should be most pleasant indeed. The foundation for the comfort of the moment has already been laid in the preaching and teaching of the Word of grace and power. Yet that fact should not lead us to presume that our comfort to the bereaved is not needed. It is an advantage if a pastor can be present at the moment of death. In the presence of death itself it is most helpful to have at hand in your memory a number of verses of comfort from the Bible (e.g., Job 19:25, John 11:25, Rev. 14:13, etc.), to be ready with a brief prayer, and to speak friendly words of reassurance. But this important phase of comforting should be kept as brief as possible, and the pastor ought to assist the family in leaving the presence of the dead body as quickly as possible. Where it is not possible to be present at the moment of death, it is surely reasonable to expect that a pastor will come to the bereaved as soon as it is possible for him to do so, basically following the same method of comforting as is given when present at the moment of death.

How long one remains with the bereaved at the first contact after death has taken place will be determined by the needs and circumstances. A pastor can stay too long or not long enough. Experience ought to help us develop the art of avoiding both extremes. But there are circumstances that will direct us in making the proper decision. Some guiding factors will be the nature of the death (sudden or lingering), the measure of faith and understanding (mature or immature), the measure of support from family and friends (strong and present or weak or nonexistent), to list but a few. In the days between the death and the funeral some cases may require particular attention as the bereaved seek to cope with their pain and loss; others may require no more than contacts that develop as details of the funeral are being attended to.

The high point of our opportunity to serve comes in connection with the funeral service. The sermon ought to merit careful work and attention as we bring the Word of comfort to bear in relation to the individual circumstances and needs of the bereaved. Thank God, a change in funeral customs within the past 50 years has improved the climate for presenting the healing Word of grace and life instead of leaving an atmosphere that encouraged grief and made the dust of the body the primary focus of attention. Perhaps within the lifetime of the younger pastors the day may come when they will celebrate further improvements, such as beginning with the committal service and then coming to God's house to hear His Words of comfort and life to all who mourn.

But even within the structure of our present funeral customs there are things a pastor can do to make our funeral service more effective. Whenever possible, hymns should be used rather than a choir or soloist. The bereaved should be encouraged in advance of the service to join in the singing of the hymns. There is a definite therapeutic antidote for grief in congregational singing. But that benefit can be canceled out with a poor selection of hymns (*e.g.*, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," "Be Still, my Soul," and even a solid hymn such as "What God Ordains is Always Good," if played at a sole and mournful pace). The choice of hymns should always reflect the joy and triumph of the death of the righteous, to soothe and to heal instead of stirring up the emotion of grief.

But even if we have been faithful to our calling up to this point, our shepherding is not finished with the committal service and the funeral meal. Often the full realization of a loved one's loss does not impact itself with full force until several weeks after the death. Up to this time the bereaved has experienced the comforting attention of family and friends. Also, there have been duties and responsibilities that have demanded attention and occupied time. All this may come to an end abruptly. It is most important that as pastors we recognize that the funeral service does not constitute the end of our concerns for the bereaved. A call of comfort several weeks after the funeral ought to be a routine part of our work. That call will also give us an insight as to the extent that further help may be needed.

But the need for comfort in the loss of a loved one will include not only help when both the deceased and the bereaved are members of our confessional fellowship. These are surely the easiest situations in which we serve. Two other possibilities come to mind, similar, but not alike. The deceased may be a member of a heterodox Christian congregation, or not even a professing Christian. In both cases we ought to be alert to the need for help, even though in the time before the funeral our contacts will be limited by the fact that we are not conducting the funeral service.

When we comfort a bereaved member whose deceased loved one was a member of a heterodox Christian church, a mixture of Christian tact and firmness is required of us. This is especially true when death is unexpected or violent. At such a time grief clouds and impairs good judgment. The bereaved may seek from us that absolute assurance that the loved one is with Jesus in heaven. At such a time we are in danger of saying too much or too little. While we cannot speak with the same assurance as we speak in the death of one within our fellowship of faith, there is nothing wrong in expressing the wish that the departed did die in the true and saving faith. On the other hand, we must guard against leaving the impression, spoken or unspoken, that such a prospect is nonexistent. We ought to pray always that in all our pastoral services we be led by the Holy Spirit to develop that art of the Spirit of not saying more than can be truthfully said nor saying less than ought to be charitably said.

In the situation when the deceased dies in open rejection of Christ and His Word, we again face a different situation—the most difficult of all. There can be no comfort that can be expressed, not even a pious desire that the deceased was delivered from sin and death. In a case like this our only help will be to

remind the bereaved that their God is a kind, loving Father, who “like as a father pitieth his children, so . . . pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 103:13). As children of such a heavenly Father, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). We are also afforded an opportunity in which God reminds us to ask Him that He “so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12).

For us who are privileged to serve as the minister of God to our members in their grief and loss, it is necessary that we are filled with the knowledge of the love of God and with a deep concern and love for our fellow believer. Where these two ingredients are present, God will grant us the grace to help the bereaved members of our congregations to the glory of our God and to the loving service of those entrusted to our spiritual care.

The Church of the Lutheran Confession—Fifty Years

David Lau

* As was done with chapters 1-3 (see *Journal* 49:1, pp. 11-40), quotations are given according to MLA guidelines. See Works Cited on pp. 46-47 for author, title, and publishing information.

Chapter 4: Taking a Stand

In the years from 1939 to 1955 the Wisconsin Synod had been admonishing its larger sister synod, Missouri, with respect to various matters of doctrine and practice on which the two synods differed. Prof. Edmund Reim, as secretary of the Union Committee, had been in the forefront of these discussions. He had attempted to keep the members of the Wisconsin Synod informed of the importance of these matters through a series of articles he wrote for *The Northwestern Lutheran*, at the time a bi-weekly publication of the Wisconsin Synod. A number of these articles were published as a pamphlet in 1950. Prof. Reim demonstrated in these articles that the Wisconsin Synod position on unionism, Scouting, and the “Common Confession” was based soundly on the Word of God.

In the last chapter of the pamphlet, *Where Do We Stand?*, Reim admitted that the position of the Wisconsin Synod on these issues was not a popular one and that there were and would be many who disagreed with it. “Usually we of Wisconsin have been found in opposition to the prevailing trends. . . . One must consider the probability of finding oneself in a lonely and isolated position because of the unpopular nature of one’s stand” (62). Then he wrote words that proved to be prophetic: “Peace *can* be restored, —purchased at the price of surrender. Our Synod can, for instance, disavow the work of this present writer. That is a cost item which he has counted, a risk he has accepted” (64).

This disavowal began to take place already at the 1955 Wisconsin Synod convention in Saginaw, MI. The Standing Committee on Church Union, of which Edmund Reim was the secretary, declared in its preliminary report to the convention: “We have . . . arrived at the firm conviction that, because of the divisions and offenses that have been caused, and which have until now not been removed, further postponement of a decision would be a violation of the apostolic injunction of Romans 16:17” (*Reports and Memorials* 79). Then the convention proceeded to do what its committee had said would be a violation of Scripture: it postponed the proposed separation from the Missouri Synod.

The time had come for members of the Wisconsin Synod to take a stand—not only against the Missouri Synod, but against the majority in their own synod who had postponed action on separation until 1956. Pastor Winfred Schaller, Jr., of Cheyenne, WY, later to become editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*, had already submitted a protest to the 1955 convention against a Wisconsin Synod action taken in 1953 (*Reports and Memorials* 16). Several members of the floor committee at that convention that had proposed postponement had stated: “We . . . are of the conviction that the reasons stated for delay do not

warrant postponement of action” (*Reports and Memorials* 86-87). Among these committee members was Paul F. Nolting, later to become longtime secretary of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Among the other voting delegates and advisory delegates who registered their protest against postponement were Egbert Albrecht, Edwin Schmelzer, Ivan Zarling, J. B. Erhart, Gerhard Pieper, William Wiedenmeyer, Robert Dommer, Paul G. Albrecht, M. J. Witt, Egbert Schaller, Otto J. Eckert, Christian Albrecht, and Edmund Reim, all of whom later became involved in the formation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Arthur Voss of the Thiensville seminary also registered his protest, but died of a heart attack on October 19, 1955. His widow and sister later became members of the CLC congregation in Milwaukee.

The years from 1955 to 1963 witnessed many more public protests against the postponement of action on the part of the Wisconsin Synod. Some pastors and congregations began to withdraw from the synod in 1956, more in the years that followed, particularly after the Wisconsin Synod convention in 1959. Those who withdrew in the early years were particularly isolated, for there was no group to join, no conference or synod of confessing Lutherans who agreed with their position. Nevertheless, they believed that obedience to the Word of God left them no choice; for them it was a matter of conscience. For some pastors their withdrawal meant a loss of income, since their congregations did not follow them in their withdrawal from the church body. They had to find other employment. Some were even forcibly removed from their parsonages and churches. For other pastors their separation from the Wisconsin Synod led to divisions within the congregations they had served, division between those who favored the pastor’s stand and those who opposed it. In some instances these divisions led to bitter conflicts and even court cases.

It was not the pastors only who had suffered the consequences of taking a stand. Many of the lay members who felt conscience-bound to separate from the Wisconsin Synod and from the Norwegian Synod (ELS) had to endure the hostility or ignorance of their relatives, former friends, and associates. Some lost income because of the hostility of the community in which they worked. Sad to say, words were spoken and actions were taken on both sides of the struggle that were not in agreement with the will of God. Confessional Lutherans who want to follow the Word of God in their lives learn from experience that they also have a sinful flesh leading them at times to wrong attitudes, bitter feelings, sinful pride, selfish ambitions, and every other kind of sin.

In his essay for the tenth anniversary of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1970, Maynard J. Witt referred to the experiences of those who were the first to withdraw from their synods. He wrote: “Many of those who became members of the Interim Conference (also known as the Lutheran Spokesman Group) after the last part of the year 1959, did not experience the forlorn loneliness and anguish in the same way as those who withdrew in 1956, 1957, and 1958. There was no church group these men could join. There was no synod in existence with which they could affiliate. Those were the days of charged emotions. There was tearful loneliness and the search for a haven” (1). Later in the same essay Pastor Witt indicated the main reason for those early withdrawals:

It was the holy Word of God which was violated when the synods from which we originally came, continued in a fellowship which God forbade. God made it clear to us that every deviation from the Word is dangerous. He said: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” and again that every departure “will eat as doth a canker.”

That the doctrine which was violated is a non-fundamental one is not the issue in fellowship. That the teaching because of which we separated may be referred to as a peripheral teaching does not alter God’s exhortation and admonition to withdraw. The fact is that the deviation is the beginning of an attack upon the glory of the work and person of Jesus whose Word is ignored. It is the beginning of the devil’s modification and eventual destruction of the essential doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. Every departure from God’s Word disrupts and disturbs the purpose for which God gave Scripture to us, namely, to “make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” We did not want to be partakers of the evil deed of departing from God’s clear Word, and we did not want to be joined with such as serve not our Lord Jesus Christ by ignoring and disregarding His “avoid” and “withdraw.” (6-7)

Pastor Witt continued with these words that are surely worth remembering today:

Let others say what they wish as to the reasons why we withdrew. Let them say that it was because we couldn't get what we wanted. Let them say that it was a matter of personality clashes. Let them say that we were bitter. But let none of us ever conduct ourselves in such a way that the opponents can have a right to such claims. The six pastors who met in pastoral conference in Spokane in the fall of 1957 cautioned one another against bitterness, and it is worth repeating. "Bitterness and lovelessness are unbecoming to everyone who is a recipient of God's grace in Christ. Our conduct and behavior ought to be such at all times that others may know that the love of Christ and love for His Word dwell in us. Let the gift of grace shine; let Christ be glorified in our lives; let the evidence of our love be clear to all." (7)

One of the first congregations to withdraw from the Wisconsin Synod was Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato, MN. Already in 1950 Immanuel congregation felt compelled by local circumstances to break fellowship with a Missouri Synod congregation in its vicinity. In 1953 the congregation pleaded with the Wisconsin Synod to separate from the entire Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17, "lest we become guilty of other men's sins" (qtd. in Lau 134). In 1955 Gordon Radtke accepted a call as assistant pastor of Immanuel, serving together with Gervasius Fischer. Both pastors were convinced that the 1955 action of postponement by the Wisconsin Synod was contrary to the will of God. In October of 1955 the congregation by a vote of 42 to 14 declared themselves *in statu confessionis* over against the Wisconsin Synod and understood by this that they would "abstain from active fellowship" with the Wisconsin Synod (qtd. in Lau 138). When the Wisconsin Synod at its special 1956 convention continued to postpone any action of separating from the Missouri Synod, Immanuel congregation by a vote of 45 to 6 resolved to declare their withdrawal from membership in the Wisconsin Synod (Lau 139).

Immanuel congregation had over a thousand members at that time, even though in the preceding years many had left the congregation because of its stand. Mankato became a natural center for those who agreed with the position of Immanuel congregation in the years that followed. As announced in the *Northwestern Lutheran* of April 14, 1957, Pastor Hilbert Schaller had withdrawn from the Wisconsin Synod. He then moved to Mankato and began to serve Immanuel congregation. His ministry was cut short by an early death, but his widow, Adelgunde Schaller, served as a teacher at Immanuel's school and later as a teacher and librarian at Immanuel Lutheran College for many years.

In 1956 and 1957 the Immanuel congregation sent funds to support small congregations with whom it was believed there was doctrinal agreement. These congregations were located in Springfield, MN; St. Louis, MO; Lyons, NE; and Monroe, MI. Immanuel congregation also organized free conferences for those pastors and congregations who had already left synods of the Synodical Conference or were contemplating such a move. The first such free conference was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church on September 26, 1956, with Hilbert Schaller presenting a paper at this conference. Because of health problems during these years Pastor Fischer spent some of his winters in Winter Haven, FL. Through his labors a new congregation was organized there in 1957, Immanuel Lutheran Church of Winter Haven, supported as a mission by Immanuel of Mankato. In 1957 Immanuel also began to support Pastor Fred Tiefel and his mission in Japan.

The Wisconsin Synod convention of 1955 in Saginaw, MI, had decided to wait until 1956 to vote on the resolution to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod. One of the reasons given for the delay was to give opportunity for the Missouri Synod to respond to the charges against it. The Missouri Synod met in St. Paul, MN, in June of 1956, and seventeen members of the Wisconsin Synod Church Union Committee attended those meetings. Since some of the actions of the Missouri Synod seemed conciliatory, the Church Union Committee stated in its evaluation: "We are of the conviction that our Synod ought not to close the door to further discussions at this time. . . . It is also our conviction that . . . we hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance" (Standing Committee 234-235). At the same time, however, the Committee admitted that "many of the controversial issues . . . still remain wholly unresolved" and "the sister synod's position on issues such as Scouting, military chaplaincy, and prayer fellowship has not undergone any change" (Standing Committee 234).

The 1956 convention of the Wisconsin Synod, held in Watertown, WI, followed the advice of its Church Union Committee and resolved to “‘hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance’ until our next convention” (qtd. in Friedrich 294). Meanwhile, it was resolved “that our fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod be one of vigorously protesting fellowship to be practiced, where necessary, in the light of II Thess. 3:14, 15” (qtd. in Friedrich 295). This resolution “was adopted by a vote of 108 to 19, with 38 delegates either absent or abstaining and with several advisory delegates recording their dissent. ‘No’ votes, it would seem, represented a conviction that fellowship should be terminated at the present time” (Friedrich 294).

Later in his “An Open Letter to the Protest Committee,” dated October 29, 1958, Prof. Reim defended the Church Union Committee report and the action of the convention. He wrote:

In 1956 our Synod faced an anomalous situation, finding itself in a sort of no-man’s-land of its own creation, caught by the consequences of the failure at Saginaw to match its words with action. Now came Missouri’s St. Paul convention with its resolutions, some of which might mean what we were hoping for, some of which sounded a note of humility and regret that might possibly be an expression of genuine repentance. Faint though these possibilities were, they made it impossible to advocate a break without leaving a nagging doubt as to whether a genuine offer had not perhaps been rejected, whether a smoking flax had not perhaps been quenched. (6 emphasis Reim)

Most of the other protesters in the Wisconsin Synod, however, did not agree with Reim’s assessment of this matter and maintained that the Lord was requiring separation from the Missouri Synod at once. After all, the position of the Missouri Synod on the matters in controversy had not changed from 1955.

By the time the Wisconsin Synod held its 1957 convention in New Ulm, MN, Fred Tiefel had resigned from his position as Wisconsin Synod missionary in Japan. Nevertheless, the mission work in Japan continued under Tiefel’s direction. The Japanese Christians in his congregation fully agreed with him, and soon he received financial assistance from various pastors, congregations, and individuals who supported his position.

In the two years that followed the 1955 convention, tensions had escalated between those who favored immediate separation from the Missouri Synod and those who favored delay. Among the voting delegates at the 1957 convention were Harold Duehlmeier, Albert Sippert, Winfred Schaller, Jr., Robert Reim, George Tiefel, and Adalbert Geiger, all of whom later became members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Among the advisory delegates were Christian Albrecht, Herman Fennern, Egbert Schaller, Victor Tiefel, Paul F. Nolting, Paul G. Albrecht, M. J. Witt, and Edmund Reim. The Wisconsin Synod president, Oscar Naumann, reported to the convention:

Many individuals, several conferences, and one entire District are convinced that we as a synod are guilty of disobedience to God’s Holy Word, because we have not as yet applied the injunction of Romans 16:17, 18 to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. These individuals and groups have memorialized Synod to take this step and to declare the termination of fellowship. They assure us that continued fellowship relations and even continued discussions on the present terms are taking place in violation of their conscientious objections. (1957 *Proceedings* 15)

The district referred to was the Pacific Northwest District.

The standing Church Union Committee reported on their discussions with the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference and declared that “the controversial issues still remain wholly unresolved and continue to cause offense” (1957 *Proceedings* 135). Memorials calling for termination of fellowship with the Missouri Synod came from a Nebraska District Pastoral Conference; from Pastors John Lau, Paul Prueter, and Jonathan Schaller in the La Crosse, WI area; from a Dakota-Montana Delegate Conference; from St. Peter’s Lutheran Church of Stambaugh, MI; from ten men of the Dakota-Montana District (including Waldemar Schuetze, Herman Fennern, Paul G. Albrecht, Leland Grams, Vernon Greve, and Helmuth Rutz); and as indicated above, from the Pacific Northwest District, which stated in its memorial: “We are as firmly convinced as ever that Rom. 16:17, 18 should be applied to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. As pastors and congregations we have been and are applying it. We, therefore, again plead with our Synod, officially and publicly to sever relationship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its convention this year” (1957 *Proceedings* 139). The Protest Committee, which

began its work in 1956 to handle protests against synodical action, likewise recommended: “We therefore hope . . . that the Synod will take such action which will remove every reasonable accusation of not obeying the Word of God” (1957 *Proceedings* 148).

The floor committee dealing with this matter agreed with the above memorials and stated in their report to the convention:

We feel conscience-bound to declare publicly, that these principles, policies, and practices create a division between our synods which The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod alone can remove. Until these offenses have been removed, we cannot fellowship together with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as one body, lest our own Wisconsin Synod be affected by the same unionistic spirit which finally weakens and destroys all true doctrine and leads to indifference and liberalism concerning Scriptural truth.” (1957 *Proceedings* 143)

The committee, therefore, proposed the following resolution to the convention: “*Resolved*, that we now suspend church fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17, 18, until the principles, policies, and practices in controversy between us have [been] resolved in a thoroughly Scriptural and mutually acceptable manner” (1957 *Proceedings* 143). Sad to say, one of the speakers who spoke against this resolution was the venerable John Meyer, longtime professor at the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Thiensville.

It is probably safe to say that if the convention had accepted this resolution, there would be no Church of the Lutheran Confession today. The convention, however, defeated this resolution by a vote of 77 to 61, with eight delegates abstaining. The convention resolved instead “that we continue our vigorously protesting fellowship over against The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, because of the continuation of the offenses with which we have charged the sister synod, Romans 16:17, 18” (144).

At this point during the 1957 New Ulm convention some of the protesters believed it was time to take a stand. On the morning after the vote was taken, Edmund Reim said:

I find myself compelled to discontinue my fellowship with the Synod. I hope and pray that the Synod may yet return to its former ways and to full obedience to the Word of God, specifically Rom. 16:17, 18. I trust that you will realize that I take this step, not in anger, but in deepest sorrow, and because I am constrained by the Word of God. (1957 *Proceedings* 145)

M. J. Witt likewise declared to that convention:

Since the 1953 convention at Saginaw, the members of Trinity Lutheran, Spokane, Washington, and I as pastor have declared ourselves protesting members of the Wisconsin Synod. This Synod convention by refusing to adopt the Floor Committee No. 2 resolutions has chosen to continue in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This convention has thereby not only chosen an un-Scriptural course but has also become partaker of the very sin of unionism against which she has admonished The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod during the last two decades. . . . Out of love to the Wisconsin Synod and out of love and fear of the Word of God, I am compelled to announce my severance of fellowship from the official Wisconsin Synod. (1957 *Proceedings* 145)

Paul G. Albrecht stated at the close of the convention:

Professor Meyer knows that I have loved and honored him since the day that I first met him. But I must disagree with him now; for I cannot operate with Scripture as he did last night. To heed his advice would lead straight down the path of unionism. . . . I cannot follow the course which the Synod now has chosen; for the Synod was wrong when it rejected the Report of Committee No. 2. . . . I cannot fellowship with those who have advocated the position which the Synod made its own last night. (1957 *Proceedings* 145)

Winfred Schaller, Jr., of Cheyenne, WY, also suspended his fellowship with Wisconsin Synod in stating to the convention:

Since Romans 16:17, 18 is a clear passage of Scripture and a sedis doctrinae, the confession of the Wisconsin Synod is wrong, and I cannot confess before men that I in any way approve or tolerate the false views held by the Synod. (146)

In the months that followed the 1957 convention of the Wisconsin Synod, other pastors and

congregations withdrew from the church body. *The Northwestern Lutheran* of March 30, 1958, reported that Robert Dommer, Ivan Zarling, Leonard Bernthal, and Waldemar Karnitz, together with their congregations in the Spokane area, had withdrawn from the Wisconsin Synod and thus were in agreement with Trinity Lutheran Church and its pastor, M. J. Witt. They were later joined by Gilbert Sydow of Ellensburg, WA, in February of 1959 to form a group of six. The two congregations in Spokane served by Zarling and Karnitz were small. The pastors resigned from the ministry, and the members were absorbed by Trinity Lutheran and Gethsemane Lutheran, served by Witt and Dommer respectively. Leonard Bernthal served congregations in Clarkston, WA, and Orofino, ID. Robert Dommer found a job delivering milk while continuing to serve his congregation. When Gilbert Sydow could not find work for a time, Trinity congregation of Spokane and others who had withdrawn gave him assistance until he was able to find employment.

As reported by *The Northwestern Lutheran* of May 25, 1958, Pastor Norton Carlson of Denver, CO, resigned from the Wisconsin Synod. He continued to serve as pastor of a small congregation in the Denver area.

Later in 1958 in Red Wing, MN, Pastor George Barthels and Teachers Walmar Voigt and Alvin Sieg withdrew from the Wisconsin Synod together with a portion of the membership of St. John's congregation. The new congregation took on the name Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church. During its early years George Barthels found employment in a boat-building factory to support his family. Since two teachers were not needed for Our Redeemer's School, Walmar Voigt found other employment, and Alvin Sieg served as the school teacher, with the first classes held in a room of a large farmhouse that was purchased as a parsonage.

Prof. Winfred Schaller, Sr., of Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac, WI, terminated his membership in the Wisconsin Synod because of its continued fellowship with the Missouri Synod. A few months later Winfred Schaller, Sr., died (May 25, 1959). His widow, Anne Schaller, later became an important staff member at Immanuel Lutheran College.

As reported in *The Northwestern Lutheran* of October 12, 1958, Pastor Otto W. Eckert of Winner, SD, had resigned from the Wisconsin Synod. A number of the members of his former congregation continued to honor him as their pastor.

In the months leading up to the 1959 Wisconsin Synod convention in Saginaw, MI, more withdrawals were reported in *The Northwestern Lutheran*. The March 1 issue reported that Edmund Baer, a teacher at Valentine, NE, had severed fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. The March 29 issue said that Marvin Eibs had resigned from the Mission Board of the Dakota-Montana District "for reasons of conscience." The April 12 issue reported that Pastor Kenneth Hallauer and Teacher LeRoy Hulke and St. Paul's Lutheran Church of White River, SD, had severed fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. The April 26 issue declared that Clarence Hanson had resigned from the office of Visitor of the Eastern Conference of the Dakota-Montana District "for reasons of conscience." The May 10 issue reported that Pastor Vernon Greve and St. Luke's Lutheran of Lemmon, SD, had severed fellowship "because of the Synod's position" in matters of church union. The same issue indicated that Pastor Eibs had now severed fellowship also. The June 7 issue reported that Ralph Schaller of Coloma, MI, had discontinued fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod and had resigned as pastor of Salem Lutheran in Coloma. The members that followed Pastor Schaller formed Faith Lutheran congregation of Coloma. The August 2 issue disclosed that Daniel DeRose had severed fellowship. He served a small congregation in Denver, CO.

It is possible, even likely, that if the Wisconsin Synod in its 1959 convention had separated from the Missouri Synod, the pastors and congregations that had withdrawn might have seen fit to return. But Prof. Carl Lawrenz, who had replaced Edmund Reim as president of the Thiensville seminary, introduced a new understanding of Wisconsin Synod actions in the years from 1955 to 1959 and also a new criterion for suspending fellowship with erring church bodies in a letter he addressed to the Protest Committee of the Wisconsin Synod on June 16, 1958.

The 1955 convention of the Wisconsin Synod had unanimously passed a statement that declared

the Missouri Synod to be guilty of causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine of Scripture. But then the convention had postponed the action called for by Romans 16:17-18, the action of avoiding those guilty of causing divisions and offenses. Carl Lawrenz now gave the novel interpretation that by not taking the action of avoiding, the convention had also negated the conclusion that the Missouri Synod was guilty of causing divisions and offenses. He wrote: "The above interpretation given to the Saginaw resolutions is the only one that can make any sense" (2). His interpretation, however, did not agree with the official report of the convention, which we quoted earlier (cf. *Journal* 49:1, pp. 38-39). In fact, the Protest Committee had to admit "that it, as well as many others, 'did not understand it that way at the time' (page 3)" (qtd. in Reim "An Open Letter" 2).

Since Lawrenz's report was sent to every pastor in the Wisconsin Synod and contained misleading information, Edmund Reim, although no longer a member of the synod, took it upon himself to send a rebuttal of Lawrenz's interpretation to every pastor in the Wisconsin Synod. After laying out all the evidence against Lawrenz's interpretation, Reim gave his opinion: "May I venture to suggest that your Protest Committee was a bit hasty in adopting Prof. Lawrenz's interpretation? It is after all an interpretation which is not borne out by a careful examination of the record" ("An Open Letter" 4). Pastor Egbert Schaller agreed with Reim on this point: "It has been argued, rather naively, that Synod could not have intended to find Missouri guilty in the sense of Rom. 16:17 as of then because, had that been the meaning, Synod would have sinned in deferring suitable action. . . . The hidden premise that Synod could not have sinned is presumptuous. . . . The evidence that Synod said one thing and then did another is overwhelming" ("Status" 18-19).

Yet there was something even more dangerous in Lawrenz's letter. Up to that time the Wisconsin Synod had operated with the conviction that the criterion for separation from another church body was the continuation of divisions and offenses contrary to Scriptural doctrine, as commanded in Romans 16:17-18. Carl Lawrenz, however, introduced a new procedure that justified the postponement of action on the part of the Wisconsin Synod in 1955, 1956, and 1957. Lawrenz wrote:

Is there not an area of human judgment involved before a Christian comes to the conviction concerning a brother who has fallen into error that he can no longer treat him as a weak brother, to whom he owes further patient admonition, but that he must now be treated as a persistent errorist, from whom the Lord bids him to withdraw all further fellowship? . . .

The fact that an individual or a church body has fallen into an error of doctrine or practise, or even the fact that the individual or the church body still defends that error of doctrine or practise, is not yet in itself a reason for terminating church fellowship. . . . Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring brother or church body demands recognition for their error. (3-4)

The explanation of Lawrenz was accepted by the Protest Committee of the Wisconsin Synod, by its Church Union Committee, and eventually by the Wisconsin Synod itself at its 1959 convention. It also convinced many of the protesters, and one can say that to some extent it brought greater unity to the Wisconsin Synod. For this reason Carl Lawrenz was highly honored in Wisconsin Synod circles as the "savior" of the Synod. But a number of the protesters recognized the new criterion for separation proposed by Lawrenz as false teaching and vigorously opposed it.

At the thirty-fifth convention of the Wisconsin Synod in 1959, held again in Saginaw, MI, the Church Union Committee reported that unionistic offenses on the part of the Missouri Synod were continuing. For example, the statement was made: "To have a professor not in fellowship with us expound the Word of God at a Synodical Conference seminary we must consider as unionism, prohibited by Scriptural fellowship principles" (1959 *Proceedings* 167). Nevertheless, the floor committee did not call for separation from the Missouri Synod at this time, but called for more study of the issues and participation with a conclave of theologians from outside the Synodical Conference that had been asked to give their counsel on the matter. Only one committee member, Oscar Siegler, expressed dissent: "Our Synod would seem to have no choice but to mark The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as persisting in divisions and offences, and any further discussions with the view of admonishing The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ought not be continued on a fellowship basis" (1959 *Proceedings* 177).

Again there were many memorials calling for separation from the Missouri Synod. One such memorial came from the Nebraska District Pastoral Conference. Another memorial calling for separation and indicating disagreement with Lawrenz's letter was signed by thirty men, including Paul R. Koch, Ronald Roehl, Robert Reim, James Pelzl, Waldemar Schuetze, Gerhard Pieper, Gerhard Mueller, Egbert Albrecht, Norman Gurath, and five members of the church council of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Fond du Lac, WI. Trinity Lutheran Church of Clear Lake, SD, and Zion Lutheran Church of Hidewood Township, SD, pleaded for separation in their memorial to the convention. Otto J. Eckert of Saginaw joined two other men in calling for separation from the Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17-18 and stating their opposition to all the arguments that had been used for postponing action.

Nine pastors in the Dakota-Montana District had drawn up a memorial for presentation to the convention, but the Wisconsin Synod president reported that "the District Praesidium felt constrained to conclude that the nine pastors had withdrawn from fellowship" (1959 *Proceedings* 185). However, since St. John's Lutheran Church of Bowdle, SD, and Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Jamestown, ND, had also signed the memorial, which called for separation from the Missouri Synod, it was presented. Two pastors and congregations in the Austin, MN area presented memorials calling for separation; these were Trinity Lutheran Church of Dexter Township and Pastor Harland Reed, and St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Austin and Pastor L. W. Schierenbeck.

One other memorial calling for separation is of note. Given with the name "A Call for Decision," it was signed by thirty men, who included Harold Duehlmeier, Martin Galstad, Roland A. Gurgel, Paul F. Nolting, Rollin Reim, Egbert Schaller, William Wiedenmeyer, Bertram Naumann, John Lau, George Tiefel, Clarence Hanson, H. P. Bauer, Arthur Clement, Elton Hallauer, Karl Brandle, Elmer Boniek, and Carl Thurow. This memorial addressed the new interpretation of previous synodical action proposed by Carl Lawrenz and stated: "In its historical presentation, the *Report* distorts plain, documented facts relative to the action of the Saginaw Convention of 1955." The memorial goes on to say: "We consider this distortion of historical facts to be a lesser offense, however, than the abuse of Scripture upon which it is based." By "abuse of Scripture" they meant the new criterion for separation proposed by Lawrenz: "Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring brother or church body demands recognition for their error." Pertaining to this statement the memorial said: "We hold that it is false and unscriptural, and that the argument based upon it is rationalistic and untenable. We ask the Synod to disavow it" (1959 *Proceedings* 210-211).

In his post-convention report to his congregation in Nicollet, MN, Pastor Egbert Schaller answered the question "Why is it false and unscriptural?" with these words:

Because in teaching us when to avoid erring church bodies, Scripture says nothing about "reaching the conviction that admonition is of no further avail." Therefore also the Standing Committee in 1955, as above shown, did not mention that, but declared that when divisions and offenses continue after the erring has been admonished, it is time to avoid. It is not our business to reach a conviction about whether more admonition would be profitable or might accomplish the purpose. Nor is it our business to stop admonishing after we have terminated fellowship relations. But it is our duty to terminate fellowship when the erring has been corrected and does not stop giving offense with his error. (3)

The convention reacted to the "Call for Decision" memorial by resolving "that the Synod disavow the serious and repeated charges made in 'A Call for Decision'" and by resolving "that the Synod also disavow the charge 'distortion of historical facts'" (1959 *Proceedings* 211-212). With regard to relations with the Missouri Synod, the synod resolved "that we instruct our Church Union Committee to continue its efforts in the Joint Union Committees until agreement on doctrine and practice has been reached, or until an impasse is reached and no such agreement can be brought about." At the same time the convention stated: "Many of the offenses of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod . . . have not been removed and have been aggravated by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's reaffirmation of their position on Scouting" (*Proceedings* 195). Notice that the direction of Romans 16:17-18 was being ignored, for even though the offenses were continuing, there was no separation. Meanwhile, the procedure

proposed by Lawrenz was being followed: fellowship was to continue until an impasse was reached, or, in other words, it was determined that admonition was of no further avail.

It was not long thereafter that *The Northwestern Lutheran* reported more withdrawals. In the remaining months of 1959 the following were reported as having withdrawn from the Wisconsin Synod: Pastor Helmuth Rutz and Our Savior's of Jamestown, ND; Pastors Leland Grams, Albert Sippert, Christian Albrecht, and Paul G. Albrecht; First Lutheran Church of Faulkton, SD, and Zion Lutheran Church of Ipswich, SD; Pastors Rollin Reim, Roland A. Gurgel, Egbert Schaller, and William Wiedenmeyer; and Professor Martin Galstad.

The reports of withdrawals continued in 1960 and 1961, though in some cases the withdrawals had taken place much earlier than they were reported in *The Northwestern Lutheran*. It was reported that Pastor Otto J. Eckert had called the course of the Wisconsin Synod and St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Saginaw, MI, unscriptural and that therefore his ministry in the synod and in the congregation had been terminated. Others who withdrew were Robert Reim, James Pelzl, H. P. Bauer, Paul F. Nolting, Robert Mackensen, Paul Pruetter, Orrin Falk, John Lau, Jonathan Schaller, Elmer Boniek, J. B. Erhart, Paul R. Koch, George Tiefel, Bertram Naumann, Waldemar Schuetze, Egbert Albrecht, Gerhard Pieper, Ronald Roehl, Gerhard Mueller, St. Paul's Lutheran of Green Garden, MI, Calvary Lutheran of Marquette, MI, St. Peter's Lutheran of Stambaugh, MI, Harold Duehlmeier, L. W. Schierenbeck, Elton Hallauer, Harland Reed, Norbert Reim, John H. Johannes, Arthur Clement, Shirley Wendland, Adalbert Geiger, Victor Tiefel, and St. Luke's congregation of Denver. *The Northwestern Lutheran* of March 12, 1961 reported that Pastor Herbert Witt of Valentine, NE, resigned "because of the persistent unscriptural position of the WELS on the fellowship doctrine" and "because of willful disobedience to God's Word on the part of the Nebraska District."

Pastors and congregations in the Wisconsin Synod were not the only ones taking a stand against the disobedience to God's Word going on in their church body. The Norwegian Synod, soon to be known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, had already suspended fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod in its 1955 convention. But the Norwegian Synod had not suspended fellowship with the Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri Synod was by far the most dominant member. This inconsistent situation continued through the years that followed and became the focus of many protests and memorials from within the Norwegian Synod.

In fact, the record indicates that some leaders in the Norwegian Synod were beginning to doubt whether their synod had done the right thing in 1955. Norwegian Synod president, M. H. Otto, posed this question to the 1956 convention: "How can we best promote the true welfare of our King's business and His Kingdom—by resuming some measure of fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, or by maintaining the present status quo?" (39th Conv. Report 7). The Union Committee of the Norwegian Synod reported at the same convention: "Our Synod last year 'suspended relations' with the Missouri Synod 'until the offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned have been removed by them in a proper manner.' But we did not sever our connections with the Synodical Conference . . ." (42). In response the 1956 convention resolved "that the Norwegian Synod meet with the other synods of the Synodical Conference to determine whether or not the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference are now in doctrinal agreement." At the same time the convention determined "that for the present the exercise of our fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod remain in suspension" (46-47).

President M. H. Otto reported to the 1957 convention "that we feel we at this time cannot conclusively declare that we and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are in doctrinal agreement. . . . While it may not be in order to lift our suspension of fellowship at this time, neither is it at this point in order to say that all our testimony is fruitless" (40th Conv. Report 13-14). The Union Committee, of which Norman Madson, Sr., was a member, concluded its report by declaring that "we can do no better than to maintain, and try to live up to, all the resolutions of our 1955 and 1956 Conventions on our relations with other synods; that is—in brief—continue the 'suspension of fraternal relations' with the Missouri Synod, and at the same time continue discussions within the framework of the Synodical

Conference, which we have begun” (53).

Some pastors and members of the synod, however, were deeply troubled by the inconsistency in the synod’s resolutions. How can one be not in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, on the one hand, and at the same time practice fellowship with representatives of the Missouri Synod at meetings of the Synodical Conference? Pastor Arthur Schulz of Tracy, MN, had distributed a paper to the pastors in the synod in 1957, entitled “Should the Norwegian Synod Now Lift its Suspension of Fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?” After reviewing the history of intersynodical conflict between 1938 and 1957, Schulz concluded by saying that his question must “be answered with a ‘No’ when we consider the facts and the official resolutions of the Synods concerned” (26). He then presented a memorial to the 1957 convention calling for the Norwegian Synod “to withdraw its membership from the Synodical Conference,” because the Synodical Conference was no longer fulfilling the purposes for which it was founded. The Norwegian Synod, however, rejected this suggestion, instead resolving “that our Synod take no steps at this convention to sever connection with the Synodical Conference . . .” (40th Conv. Report 55-56).

It should also be mentioned that at this 1957 convention Pastor George Schweikert of Okabena, MN, presented a condensed translation of a paper by the eminent Missouri Synod theologian of a previous generation, Francis Pieper. In his essay entitled “The Difference between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches,” Pieper answered the question that was troubling the synod. He said: “It is blindness if you suppose that you are still a witness-bearer for the truth when you continue in fellowship with openly known errorists. As Luther says: You ‘cannot remain in the same stall with others who spread false doctrine or are attached to it or always speak good words to the devil and his crowd’ (St. L. Ed., XVII: 1180)” (40th Conv. Report 39).

Among those attending the Norwegian Synod conventions of 1956 and 1957 were pastors and laymen who later became members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. They were Norman Madson, Sr., Arthur Schulz, Arvid Gullerud, C. M. Gullerud, Ruben Ude, Keith Olmanson, G. Radichel, Loren Borgwardt, Gerhart Becker, Ernest Williams, Walter Pomerence, and Walter Aden. Vernon Gerlach and David Pfeiffer (father of John Pfeiffer), who were associated with the beginnings of the CLC, were also present. So were the brothers J. A. O. Preus and Robert Preus, who at one time were strong proponents of separation from the Missouri Synod, but in 1958 they both accepted calls to teach at seminaries of the Missouri Synod and later became leaders in the struggle to bring the Missouri Synod back to some semblance of orthodoxy.

At the 1958 convention of the Norwegian Synod, now named the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), President M. E. Tveit expressed doubt as to what the synod should do, saying: “In these troubled, confused and unionistic times it is often difficult to know what is the right thing to do—when to separate and avoid, and when to join with others not now in our fellowship” (41st Conv. Report 16). The Union Committee recommended that the synod “continue to take part in these joint Doctrinal Meetings for another year” and “that our suspension of fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod continue for another year” (43). When the convention then resolved to continue the doctrinal discussions, there were certain pastors who asked that their negative votes be recorded, among them C. M. Gullerud, Arvid Gullerud, David Pfeiffer, Arthur Schulz, and George Schweikert.

Loren Borgwardt, a member of Ascension Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, WI, presented substitute resolutions on doctrinal matters to the 1958 convention. Resolution No. 1: “That the Evangelical Lutheran Synod withdraw its membership from the Synodical Conference” (3). Resolution No. 2: “That we continue the present discussions by our Union Committee with the Union Committee of the other Synods of the Synodical Conference” (29). Resolution No. 3: “That we again declare our desire to maintain and establish fraternal relations with those synods, congregations, and individuals who are of one mind and spirit with us in matters of Christian doctrine and practice” (34). These substitute resolutions were given to the Union Committee for action by the convention in 1959.

In the early months of 1959 Loren Borgwardt sent to all pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod a lengthy document explaining his reasons for presenting these substitute resolutions. The basic

problem, as Mr. Borgwardt saw it, was that the 1955 resolution to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod “was only partial and incomplete” and that it “resulted only in untold confusion and a possible weakening of our Synod’s position” (3). The problem was that “our Synod did not withdraw from the Synodical Conference, well knowing that the Synodical Conference was controlled by the Missouri Synod. This ambiguous action by our Synod was justified in our midst at the time by a genuine desire not to suspend fellowship relations with the Wisconsin and Slovak Synods” (19). “We refused to withdraw from the Synodical Conference in 1955, 1956, 1957, and in 1958. Our Synod’s obedience to God’s command in the apostolic injunction of Romans 16:17 was incomplete!” (20 emphasis original). “Romans 16:17 does not say ‘avoid them at this level and fellowship with them at that level.’ It just clearly and simply states ‘avoid them’! There are no exceptions—there are no qualifications!” (20). “We ourselves are now guilty of unionistic practices at the Synodical Conference level” (20). “By continuing our membership in the Synodical Conference our Synod is presenting to the whole wide world a lie because such membership automatically implies that we are walking hand in hand with the Missouri Synod in true unity of spirit and purpose, preaching the unconditioned Gospel. This lie is causing untold confusion within our Synod, within the other Synods, and throughout the Lutheran Church as a whole” (21).

With respect to the proposed Resolution No. 2, Mr. Borgwardt stated in his paper that he was no longer in favor of continued discussions. In conclusion he said that “the Evangelical Lutheran Synod faces a momentous decision at its 1959 convention. Our Synod will have to declare itself one way or another as concerns our future relations with the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference” (36).

Therefore just as the Wisconsin Synod was faced at its 1959 convention with “A Call for Decision” over against the Missouri Synod, so the ELS was faced with a decision in 1959 with reference to its continued membership in the Synodical Conference. Overtures or memorials to withdraw from the Synodical Conference were submitted by C. M. Gullerud and Orville Fruechte and also by Pinehurst Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, WI, where Arvid Gullerud was pastor. The Union Committee, however, recommended that the ELS continue to take part in discussions with the other Synodical Conference members on the same basis as before, while at the same time continuing the suspension of fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod. The convention discussed a minority report calling for the termination of membership in the Synodical Conference, but ended up tabling that report and approving a report that followed the recommendations of the Union Committee. There were those who wanted their negative votes recorded: Arvid Gullerud, C. M. Gullerud, George Schweikert, Loren Borgwardt, G. Radichel, Ernest Williams, and Orville Fruechte.

Between the 1959 and 1960 ELS conventions Norman Madson, Sr., dean of the seminary, resigned from the seminary faculty at Bethany. M. E. Tweit, synod resident, reported to the 1960 convention that Pastors Arvid Gullerud and C. M. Gullerud had withdrawn from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. One of the two congregations served by C. M. Gullerud, Salem Lutheran of Eagle Lake, MN, withdrew from the synod also. Arvid Gullerud’s congregation, Pinehurst Lutheran of Eau Claire, WI, also withdrew from the synod, but at a later time returned to it. Pastor Gullerud and those who agreed with him were then moved to form a new congregation, what we now know as Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire. Members who had withdrawn from Ascension Lutheran of Eau Claire with their pastor, Keith Olmanson, joined the former Pinehurst members in forming this new congregation.

In his letter of withdrawal, dated June 30, 1959, C. M. Gullerud stated:

The Synod has continued in the fellowship of the Synodical Conference and has thereby been involved in joint prayer and worship (in committee meetings and at Synodical Conference Conventions) and in joint support of mission work together with a church body which has caused divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. God’s Word teaches that we are to avoid such church bodies which means that we are to carry on no worship or church work with them. To do so is to act in disobedience to the clear Bible passage—Romans 16, 17.

Since the convention acted to continue in the fellowship of the Synodical Conference . . . , [this action] leaves me no other alternative but to declare my withdrawal as a permanent member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. . . . I take this step not in bitterness but with sorrow over the defection of a synod which I have tried to serve and which I have loved” (43rd *Regular Convention* 54).

The 1960 report of the Doctrinal Committee seemed weaker than in earlier years, recommending “that the Synod make a thorough study of its reasons for suspension of fraternal relations with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1955 with the view of ascertaining whether the continuation of the suspension is justified or not” (43rd Regular Convention 45). Several congregations, however, called for withdrawal from the Synodical Conference. Among them were St. John’s Lutheran of Okabena, MN, together with its pastor, Ruben Ude; Ascension Lutheran of Eau Claire, WI, together with its pastor, Keith Olmanson; Lime Creek Lutheran in Lake Mills, IA, together with its pastor, Gerhart Becker; and Zion Lutheran of Tracy, MN, together with its pastor, Arthur Schulz. Among the signers of these letters were such as Arthur Ahrens, Raymond Gunther, Clarence Morrison, Wilburt Soleta, and Louis DeWall, all of Okabena; and Leonard Eckel, Loren Borgwardt, and Oswald Christianson, all of Eau Claire.

The 1960 convention responded to the critical situation by resolving “that the Synod recess this convention until November to determine whether or not we can continue in the Synodical Conference” (43rd Regular Convention 50). This same convention report announced that Gerhart Becker and David Pfeiffer had withdrawn from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The recessed convention of the ELS in November of 1960 resolved “that we defer our final decision regarding our membership in the Synodical Conference until our 1961 Convention” (Recessed Conv. Report 32). Between this convention and the 1961 convention of the ELS, four more pastors withdrew from membership: Keith Olmanson of Eau Claire, WI (October 1960); Ruben Ude of Okabena, MN (November 1960); Arthur Schulz of Tracy, MN (December 1960); and Norman Madson, Sr., of Mankato, MN (January 1961).

It was not easy for these pastors and congregations and individual members to take a stand against the prevailing opinions of the majority. In many cases it meant separating from family members and close friends. Nor should we think that all of the protesters actually withdrew from either the Wisconsin Synod or from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In our recounting of the events we have for the most part listed only the names of those who did withdraw. There were others who made strong statements, but did not follow through with action that matched their words. No doubt, some of these were persuaded by the arguments of synod leaders that it was God’s will that they remain in their synods. Yet it is to be feared that some stayed in their synods even though their consciences based on the Word of God were telling them that they should leave.

We should not forget the strenuous efforts of pastors attempting to instruct their congregations on these issues so that they could take a united stand on the Word of God and leave the synod without any divisions in the congregation. Two of the pastors who prepared extensive Bible study presentations for their congregations were L. W. Schierenbeck and Egbert Albrecht. The congregations in their care withdrew from the Wisconsin Synod with almost no losses, although at a later time these groups also endured major divisions. Some pastors, such as Robert Reim and Roland A. Gurgel, found almost no support for their stand in the congregations which they served. But what usually happened was that a minority of the congregation followed the pastors who withdrew from the synod, and in this way new congregations were formed, generally much smaller than the congregations from which they withdrew.

In such circumstances tensions and hard feelings were inevitable. But this is nothing new for confessional Lutherans who understand how important it is to separate from false teaching and false teachers. We think of such as Martin Chemnitz or Paul Gerhardt, who refused to compromise on doctrinal issues when it was very tempting to do so. We think of many of our own forefathers who came to the United States to escape from unionism in their former European churches. *The Book of Concord* states the case like this: “To dissent from the consensus of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a grave matter. However, divine authority commands all people not to be accomplices and defenders of ungodliness and unjust cruelty. Thus, our consciences are sufficiently absolved” (Kolb-Wengert 337-338).

Another thing to remember about these withdrawals from the synods of the Synodical Conference is that the leaders in this effort were mature men, many of whom had served in influential positions in their respective former synods. They included district presidents, seminary professors, synodical officials, writers for official publications, and veteran pastors of large congregations. How difficult it was for

persons in their fifties and sixties and older to make major changes in their lives! Yet leaders like Norman Madson, Sr., Winfred Schaller, Sr., Edmund Reim, Paul G. Albrecht, Gerhard Pieper, George Tiefel, C. M. Gullerud, M. J. Witt, Egbert Schaller, and Otto J. Eckert were convinced that they had to take the steps they did out of obedience to the Word of God. The present members of the CLC should never forget the difficulties these men and others with like convictions faced and the sacrifices they made for the sake of obedience to God's Word.

Nor should we forget the efforts of the men and women in the congregations they served, efforts to support the cause of God's truth regardless of cost. We cannot name them all here, but let us mention some of these families as representative of all the others who took a stand, by God's grace, on the issues with which they were confronted. We want to remember these families together with their sons and daughters. In some cases the third and fourth generations of these families are still carrying on the work in the spirit of their grandparents and great grandparents. In no particular order we mention the Affolters of Mankato, the Fitschens and Sandeens of Red Wing, the Bernthals and Gerbitzes of Milwaukee, the Guraths and Reins of Fond du Lac, the Poraths from Millston and other places, the Nissens from Hancock, the Petersons of Seattle, the Skinners and Eichstadts of Austin, the Ohlmanns of Valentine, the Rombergs of Sleepy Eye, the Boones of Hidewood, the Fuerstenaus and Klatts of Watertown, the Larsons of Lemmon, the Sprengelers of Cheyenne, the Beekmans of Eau Claire, the Paulls of Marquette, the Heisels of Stambaugh, the Drews family from California, the Jones family from Mission, the Biebers and Walzes and Blumhardts from Bowdle, the Ochsners of Faulkton, the Packards of Cambridge, the Reinhardts of Coloma, the Streges of Nicollet, the Hansens of Hecla, the Garretts of Sister Lake, the Weises of Winter Haven, and Clarence Jourdan of Rhinelander, WI, who made the long trip every Sunday to worship in Stambaugh, even though his wife was not willing to accompany him.

The role of the pastor's wife in these trying times was crucial. We append here a few words of one such wife, Mrs. Egbert Albrecht (Lois), who had this to say about her pastor husband and the "storm and stress" of those controversial years:

It was a difficult, soul-searching time for all involved. . . . He would come home from area meetings with fellow pastors, where the alarming trends toward liberalism were discussed, truly disturbed over the events. When some of those pastors who had recognized the dangerous trends suddenly did an "about face" and reversed their thinking, he felt betrayed and abandoned. Then he looked forward to coming home, to a haven where he could talk things over, and be reassured. And, the best thing about those times is that we both turned to the Lord for help and guidance. It seemed that the more storms we weathered together, the stronger our faith became. (9)

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Book Reviews

Michael T. Feuerstahler: *A Lutheran Looks at the Assemblies of God*; Northwestern Publishing House, 2008, paperback, 122 pages.

I am often asked by members of my congregation, "What does that other church over there teach?" Sometimes they ask because they have friends in those churches; other times they have heard a particular denomination discussed in the news, or they are simply curious. I must confess, however, that studying Scripture itself and confessional Lutheranism is a big enough job for me that I don't spend much time looking around at what everyone else is teaching. When I am asked questions about other churches, I rely on resources such as this one from Pastor Michael Feuerstahler. His is another volume in the series of titles, *A Lutheran Looks At. . . .* A previous work in the series, *A Lutheran Looks at Episcopalians*, was reviewed by David Lau in the September 2008 issue of the *Journal of Theology*.

The Assemblies of God is one of the largest and fastest growing church organizations in the world today, with over 2.6 million members in the United States and over 48 million overseas. So the subject matter in this little book is timely and worthy of our attention. Although Feuerstahler's focus is on the Assemblies of God, many of the things he discusses apply also to other Pentecostal and charismatic groups.

After a brief introduction to the history of the Assemblies of God via the holiness movement, Charles Parham, and William Seymour (of the famed Azusa Street Mission), he addresses the document known as "A Statement of Fundamental Truths." Formulated in 1916, it is used by the Assemblies of God today in confession of its 16 Fundamental Truths. Although the Assemblies of God does not subscribe to creeds as such, these 16 points lay out the main teachings found in its congregations.

Feuerstahler spends extra time on the distinctive teaching of the Assemblies of God, the so-called "baptism of the Spirit." He rightly says, "It is not an overstatement to assert that in Pentecostalism, the desire for the baptism in the Holy Spirit sweeps every other doctrine into its vortex" (p. 21). As he presents the various positions of the Assemblies of God, he also brings in proper Scripture to answer and refute its false teachings.

In addition to the baptism of the Spirit, the author looks at other Assemblies of God teachings, including its attitude toward the Bible as the Word of God (with which it struggles because it has a high regard for Scripture and yet is influenced by contemporary ideas that are contrary to God's truth), conversion and the sacraments (in which it errs greatly), the Christian life (in which it does not understand the Spirit's work of sanctification), and divine healing. In an interesting chapter on the

worship practices of the Assemblies of God, the author comments on services he attended for the sake of observation. Although Jesus' name was mentioned in Assemblies of God worship, he noted that there was little or no preaching of the actual gospel (Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sin) and not even much preaching of God's law as the means to reveals the sinner's guilt.

The author strives to present the Assemblies of God accurately, and therefore he acknowledges where it does teach and practice according to God's Word. Yet he correctly identifies its principal spiritual problem: that although members believe that Jesus is their Savior from sin, death, and the devil, Christ as Savior is not really at the center of its universe in practice. Feuerstahler writes about "a word that saturates Assemblies of God literature—*experience*. The Assemblies of God shines the spotlight upon the individual—*your* decision to believe in Christ; *your* manner of living—who is empowered by a personal, subjective experience of Spirit-baptism. . . . While the Assemblies of God voices high regard for the objective truth of God's Word, in practice, human experience trumps divine revelation. Adherents 'hunger' for subjective experiences that will validate their faith and empower them to live their faith" (pp. 112-113). Reading this book will give you a renewed appreciation for the Christ-centered preaching that, by the grace of God, still remains in our churches.

Feuerstahler's book is a useful tool for answering and addressing the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal movement in general. It would be a worthwhile addition to the library of pastor and layman alike.

Robin A. Leaver: *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007, paperback, 485 pages.

As author Robin Leaver indicates in the introduction to this book, his interest in the theology and music of Luther was aroused due to a decided disinterest in his native England. Having been told that Luther's theology was "suspect and therefore not to be investigated in much depth," he set out to see for himself—and found the opposite to be true. His Luther research eventually brought him into contact and friendship with Martin Franzmann at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Franzmann encouraged him to continue his study and writing.

There have been many volumes written on Martin Luther, and a good number on Luther and music, but with this work Leaver hopes to answer some of the modern scholarship in this field which has to some extent begun to suggest that Luther was not much of a musician and really not so much interested in music at all.

The book in a sense is not entirely new. It is a compilation of articles that the author wrote over a period of time for the *Lutheran Quarterly*. Leaver notes, however, that each article has received a thorough review and, in many cases, a rewrite. In addition, the first three chapters are newly written for this publication.

Effort has been made to annotate thoroughly the material presented in the body of the book. There are four appendices and over 100 pages of endnotes. Many of the familiar (and less familiar) quotations of Luther on music make an appearance with extended discussion.

The body of the book's content is structurally arranged under five divisions as outlined below.

I. Background and Principles. There is a good chapter here on "Luther as Musician," which follows in some detail the influence of music on Luther at various stages in his life (as a monk, as a professor, etc.). The author contends that music for Luther was not just a side interest, but a major part of his life. Luther was personally acquainted with several of the great composers of church music in those days, Johann Walter and Ludwig Senfl to name two. When Luther heard that Senfl's motet on Psalm 132/133 was sung at the beginning of the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, he wrote the composer a personal letter of thanks.

As Leaver describes Luther's "theological understanding of music," he also demonstrates a good grasp of law and gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith, which was so important to Luther. It is necessary for any writer on Luther to understand clearly (and even better, to believe and agree with) the great teachings that were brought to light again during the Reformation.

Interesting too are the comments on some of the widely held ideas concerning Luther and music. For example, Leaver addresses a commonly voiced thought that Luther did not see much difference between secular music and church music and that he freely took secular music and recast it using religious words. As the author shows, this was not actually the case. Luther had a deep concern and a high regard for church music.

II. Musical Catechesis. This section is an especially useful resource for modern day Lutherans who are, it seems, in some part losing sight of the historic music of the Lutheran Church and the historic purpose of music in the Lutheran Church. One by one, each of Luther's "Catechism Hymns" are discussed in detail as the author sets out to show how they were written in order to *teach the congregation* the truths of God's holy Word rather than simply to provide a break or an entertainment at different points during the service. The catechism hymns are *Dies sind die heiligen Zehn Gebot* (Ten Commandments), *Wir Glauben all an einen Gott* (The Creed), *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (Lord's Prayer), *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam* (Baptism), *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (Keys and Confession), and *Jesus Christus unser Heiland* (Lord's Supper). This reviewer was encouraged in reading to take another look at all these hymns and enjoy the way in which they so simply and yet with great depth expound the principle truths of the Bible. We would do well to make them more familiar to our people again!

III. Liturgico-Musical Hermeneutics & Pedagogy. Leaver discusses here Luther's approach to liturgical reform, rightly showing how his reforms were based on his theology, particularly the doctrine of justification by faith. He writes to answer those who accuse Luther of being haphazard and sloppy in his liturgical efforts, showing that every reform Luther made was perfectly in keeping with his understanding of Scripture. Very interesting to this reviewer was the way in which Luther assigned particular *tones* (musical scales) to each portion of the liturgy. These tones were not randomly assigned, but given with the careful thought that the musical idea conveyed should match the Scripture being presented. For example, Luther suggested that the Gospel lesson be sung to Tone V. Tone V (the Lydian mode) was recognized by the listener as being happy or joyful, very much befitting the gospel of Christ.

IV. Liturgico-Musical Forms. If one wishes to learn more about chant in the Lutheran Church, this is a brief discussion of that topic. It is rather interesting and makes one want to try his hand at singing a Biblical canticle!

V. Implications and Consequences. When speaking of Luther and his liturgical music, the *Deutsche Messe* (German Mass) always takes center stage. In this, Luther's suggested order of service, all his liturgico-musical principles are combined. Leaver traces the German Mass from Luther's day to the time of Johann Sebastian Bach, who took Lutheran liturgical music to its greatest heights.

Robin Leaver writes well, although the sheer amount of historical material presented makes this less of a casual and more of a scholarly read. Be prepared for smatterings of German and Latin, some of which are left to the reader to translate on his own. Nevertheless, the book does not require a degree in music or proficiency in languages to benefit from its chapters. The Lutheran who reads it will, no doubt, gain an appreciation for and a better understanding of the music of his church.

David Schaller

Stephen Tomkins: *William Wilberforce—A Biography*; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007, paperback, 238 pages.

Two hundred years before this biography was published, the British House of Commons abolished the slave trade. William Wilberforce is generally regarded as the man chiefly responsible for this action, although many others were involved. Stephen Tomkins describes the event in these words: "As MPs rose to their feet, applauding and filling the chamber with their cheers—a display unprecedented in living memory—he sat there in a daze, tears streaming down his cheeks. . . . The vote was carried by 283 votes to 16. . . . The twenty-year struggle for Wilberforce had been shorter for some of them, but in the case of Sharp lasted almost forty years. It had consumed a fortune in time and money; it had, in some

cases, threatened health, welfare, and reputation; it had taken eleven bills from Wilberforce plus more from the others; and it was finished” (pp. 170-171).

Was there a need for the abolition of the slave trade? Was there a need for the abolition of slavery itself? We know that there were Christians in those years who defended slavery as a legitimate institution. Indeed, it is altogether possible for a Christian to own slaves and treat them in a Christian manner, as the Apostle Paul presents it in his New Testament letters. But it is also clear that at the time of Wilberforce there must have been very few involved in the slavery business who could say they loved their slaves as they loved themselves. Each chapter in this biography contains a few paragraphs giving testimony concerning how horribly the slaves were treated, particularly those being transported in ships at sea. We can understand how accounts such as these led Wilberforce and his allies to do all they could to bring an end to the slave trade.

Since reliable reports indicate that slavery is still flourishing in the world today, especially in connection with the sex industry, it is good for us to have this biography of Wilberforce. For it clearly shows how brutal and cruel human beings can be and how difficult it is to bring an end to such inhumanity when it involves greed and lust. The evidence presented in this biography also shows that it was his conversion to evangelical Christianity in his twenties that influenced Wilberforce to take on such a mammoth project as the abolition of the slave trade. Undoubtedly, our society could use such Christian statesmen to bring an end to current vices such as legalized gambling, legalized fornication, and legalized abortion.

David Lau