

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 39      MARCH 1999      NUMBER 1

CONTENTS

Studies In Luther: Luther's Relationship With And Writings About The Jews	Paul D. Nolting
Guidelines For The Book Of Revelation	John K. Pfeiffer
Determining The Will Of God In Our Lives	Rick Grams
Editorial Note	John Lau
PANORAMA:	
Review Of The Lord's Supper Statement Of The Evangelical Lutheran Synod	John Klatt
PAIDEIA:	
Communication: A Key To Harmony In The Ministry	Ted Quade

BOOK REVIEWS:

The Sermon: Its Homiletical Construction

by R.C.H. Lenski

(Reviewer: Michael Roehl)

Justification and Rome

by Robert D. Preus

(Reviewer: David Lau)

Happiness is a Choice: The Symptoms, Causes, and Cures of Depression

by Frank Minirth, M.D. and Paul Meier, M.D

(Reviewer: James J. Naumann)

The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Rd, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701-7199, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions: \$9.50 per year, \$17.00 for two years, \$25.50 for three years (Foreign: \$13.50, \$25.00 and \$36.50), payable in advance. Issues are dated: March, June, September, and December.

Editor

John Lau

2035 E. Lexington Blvd.

Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701-6735

Assistant Editor

Elton Hallauer

Book Editor

David Lau

Circulation Manager

Benno Sydow

2750 Oxford Street North

Roseville, Minnesota 55113

Staff Contributors

M. Eichstadt, N. Greve, S. Kurtzahn, P.F. Nolting, J.

Pfeiffer, M. Roehl, P. Schaller, A. Schulz

Correspondence regarding subscriptions, renewals, changes of address, etc., should be directed to the circulation manager. Correspondence regarding material published in the JOURNAL should be directed to the editor.

---

## STUDIES IN LUTHER: LUTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH AND WRITINGS ABOUT THE JEWS

[Presented to the Minnesota Pastoral Conference, Inver Grove Heights MN, October 27-28, 1998]

Paul D. Nolting

### INTRODUCTION

In 1522 Martin Luther was accused in absentia at the Diet of Nuremberg of teaching that "Jesus was conceived of the seed of Joseph, and that Mary was not a virgin, but had many sons after Christ."<sup>1</sup> In response to these charges, Luther wrote a treatise entitled, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*. In his introduction to that treatise, Luther commented on the terrible treatment that Jews had received at the hands of Christians and recommended a different approach in an effort to lead some of them out of their misbelief and into evangelical Christianity. He wrote:

Therefore, I will cite from Scripture the reasons that move me to believe that Christ was a Jew born of a virgin, that I might perhaps also win some Jews to the Christian faith. Our fools, the popes, bishops, sophists, and monks--the crude asses' heads--have hitherto so treated the Jews that anyone who wished to be a good Christian would almost have had to become a Jew. If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian.

They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and monkery. When the Jews then see that Judaism has such strong support in Scripture, and that Christianity has become a mere babble without reliance on Scripture, how can they possibly compose themselves and become right good Christians? I have myself heard from pious baptized Jews that if they had not in our day heard the gospel they would have remained Jews under the cloak of Christianity for the rest of their days, for they acknowledge that they have never yet heard anything about Christ from those who baptized and taught them.

I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of their fathers, the prophets and patriarchs. They will only be frightened further away from it if their Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain, and they are treated only with arrogance and scorn. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles. Since they dealt with us Gentiles in such brotherly fashion, we in our turn ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly manner in order that we might convert some of them. For even we ourselves are not yet all very far along, not to speak of having arrived.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of that same treatise Luther wrote:

If the Jews should take offense because we confess our Jesus to be a man, and yet true God, we will deal forcefully with that from Scripture in due time. But this is too harsh for a beginning. Let them first be suckled with milk, and begin by recognizing this man Jesus as the true Messiah; after that they may drink wine, and learn also that he is true God. For they have been led astray so long and so far that one must deal gently with them, as people who have been all too strongly indoctrinated to believe that God cannot be man.

Therefore, I would request and advise that one deal gently with them and instruct them from Scripture; then some of them may come along. Instead of this we are trying only to drive them by force, slandering them, accusing them of having Christian blood if they don't stink, and I know not what other foolishness. So long as we thus treat them like dogs, how can we expect to work any good among them? Again, when we forbid them to labor and do business

and have any human fellowship with us, thereby forcing them into usury, how is that supposed to do them any good?

If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealing with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty years later in December 1542, Luther wrote another treatise entitled, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. In this treatise, Luther's thoughts regarding how the Jewish people should be treated are dramatically different. Here he advised:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians...Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies... Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them...Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb...Fifth, I advise that safe conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the country-side, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like...Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. The reason for such a measure is that, as said above, they have no other means of earning a livelihood than usury, and by it they have stolen and robbed from us all they possess. Such money should now be used in no other way than the following: Whenever a Jew is sincerely converted, he should be handed one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred florins, as personal circumstances may suggest. With this he could set himself up in some occupation for the support of his poor wife and children, and the maintenance of the old or feeble...Seventh, I recommend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam...But if we are afraid that they might harm us or our wives, children, servants, cattle, etc....then eject them forever from the country. For as we have heard, God's anger with them is so intense that gentle mercy will only tend to make them worse and worse, while sharp mercy will reform them but little. Therefore, in any case, away with them!<sup>4</sup>

These words of Luther have embarrassed many twentieth century Lutherans. In our century we have had to deal with racism and its ill effects upon society. Luther's words, in the minds of twentieth century man, are tied to the policies and travesties of the National Socialists of Hitler's Germany. Consequently, some Lutherans of our century have made apologies for several of the last treatises Martin Luther wrote. Other Lutherans have claimed that such apologies are "oblique and disingenuous."<sup>5</sup> We will consider these thoughts more fully later in this essay. Before that let us consider the factors which led Luther to such a dramatic change in his opinions, and then let us trace the development of Luther's relationship with the Jewish people during the last twenty-five years of his life. It is our hope that we will gain a better understanding of Luther and his times and grow thereby.

## PART I: FACTORS LEADING TO LUTHER'S CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE JEWS

Some individuals have suggested that the change in Luther's attitude towards the Jews and other of his opponents was due to the onset of senility.<sup>6</sup> This assertion is certainly not supported by the evidence. Luther continued his teaching and administrative duties at the University of Wittenberg until his death. Between the years 1530-1535 he published 156 works, not counting sermons, letters, and the completed Bible translation of 1534. During the last ten years of his life he averaged 20 publications each year.<sup>7</sup> Neelak S. Tjernagel, in his insightful monograph entitled *Martin Luther and the Jewish People*, comments:

We will look in vain at Luther's letters, his table talks, his sermons, his commentaries on selected Psalms, his devotional pieces, his liturgical revisions, his hymns and songs, his disputations and above all, his massive commentary on Genesis written in his last ten years, for evidences of senility. One may find fault with the vehemence of some of the diatribes of the last decade of Luther's life, but not on the grounds of the senility of the author.<sup>8</sup>

Others claim that we should dismiss Luther's later writings on the Jews as simply the product of a bitter and angry old man.<sup>9</sup> But Luther's writings, even his treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies*, cannot be so easily dismissed. Mark U. Edwards, a present day Luther scholar, writes: "Every polemic Luther wrote these later years contained sections devoted to clear and persuasive exposition of doctrine and exegesis of Scripture."<sup>10</sup> By way of example, fully ninety percent of Luther's treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies* is devoted to just such scriptural exposition.

Unfortunately, the editors of the American edition of Luther's Works have added fuel to a rather unsavory analysis of Luther by prefacing their translation of *On the Jews and Their Lies* with the following remark, "A psychological analysis is difficult at this historical distance, though it is clear that Luther harbored an immense capacity for hatred, which could be directed variously at Jews, papists, Schwärmer, or other adversaries."<sup>11</sup> Accusing Luther of "hatred" towards others while failing to mention its nature and the reasons for it surely is misleading. L.D. Redlin, in an issue of the *Immanuel Home Messenger* dealing with Luther's comments on the Jews, makes these thoughtful observations:

If we truly love we will also need to hate. The Psalmist writes very simply, "You who love the LORD hate evil." (Ps. 97:10) Solomon is inspired to write by inspiration, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil." (Prov. 8:13) Our children learn this passage and we talk about that word "hate" as it is used here. It may sound rather harsh but it is true nevertheless: One simply cannot honor, respect, love God unless one has learned to hate evil--that which opposes God.

Luther's love for Christ was everywhere in his writing and in his life. When anti-Christian forces arose he recognized it as a threat to his life. He prized his life in Christ more than anything else in this world because he knew what it was to be without life--without Christ--without peace with God--without the hope of heaven.<sup>12</sup>

Numerous scholars suggest, no doubt with some merit, that as Luther aged and as illness afflicted his body with greater regularity, he became impatient and began to lose the evangelical optimism of his earlier years. There were simply too many people, among them the vast majority of the Jews, who had turned a deaf ear to the gospel proclamation. Luther's opponents, most notably the Jews and the papists, were hardened into what he considered an erroneous and deceitful theology from which there was little or no hope of recovery.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, he was prepared to meet their abstinence with a stiff proclamation of God's law and condemnation.

While most scholars have tended to look for explanations within Luther himself, others have suggested that there were great external forces also at work. By the mid-1530s the Lutheran reformation was no longer expanding, but rather was coming under increasing pressure from Catholic forces. Luther was confronted by bitter battles with political foes such as Duke George, Cardinal Albrecht, and Duke Henry of Brunswick. Opposition to these opponents required great energy and placed tremendous strain on the reformer. He enjoyed the full support of his own leader, Duke John Frederick, but Luther was called upon regularly by John Frederick to take up

his pen in support of Saxony's political and religious goals. All of these situations placed new pressures on Luther and severely limited his alternatives, as he sought to oppose the enemies of the gospel and uphold its defenders.<sup>14</sup> Tjernagel comments:

In the bitterness and coarseness of the political jungle in which Luther became involved it is evident that he became a partaker in the abusive use of epithets and common coarseness...his involvement in the day-to-day pressures of the political realities of the time had made for some narrowing and constriction of the evangelical character of the Martin Luther of the 1520s.<sup>15</sup>

Weightier than any of these arguments, in this writer's opinion, however, are Luther's theological and spiritual concerns. These dominated Luther's thinking throughout his life, but especially towards the end of his life. Luther had a passionate love for the gospel and concern for the truth. He abhorred anything that opposed the gospel or distorted its truth. He remained throughout his life ready and willing to defend the gospel and the truths of the Scripture against any foe. He used strong language to spell out clearly for the common man the truths he had learned through the Spirit's guidance. He wrote at times in ways we may find personally offensive. Luther regularly used scatological references in his polemical works, but they were "a deliberate rhetorical tactic employed to convince people of the sincerity of his theological opposition to those whom he called 'enemies' of the gospel."<sup>16</sup> The use of such terms was not uncommon in that day and Luther's contemporaries certainly took less offense than do his modern critics.

Luther's love for the truth led him into direct confrontation with the exegesis of the Jewish rabbis as presented both in the Talmud and through contemporary Jewish writings. Luther believed his Christological interpretations of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies were true and of vital importance to a correct understanding of the Old Testament. The Jewish rabbis consistently rejected Luther's exegesis, and were in Luther's opinion crass liars. What bothered and enraged Luther even more was that an increasing number of Protestant theologians and translators were adopting the exegetical opinions of Jewish exegesis.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, we find Luther in *On the Jews and Their Lies* voicing concerns about someone whom he otherwise admired, a theologian named Lyra. Lyra expressed his indebtedness to Jewish exegesis, which insisted on the literal sense of the text. Luther, however, claimed that the literal sense of the Old Testament was at the same time the Christological sense, something the Jewish rabbis disallowed. For Luther, the evidence of Christological meaning was so obvious that Jewish nonacceptance could only be the result of willful blindness which had to be opposed and condemned.<sup>18</sup>

When one combines Protestant acceptance of Jewish exegesis with reports (many of which appear to have been exaggerated) of Jewish proselytizing in Moravia during the 1530s, one can see why Luther would react so strongly. Certain Christians in Moravia were reportedly worshipping on Saturdays and submitting themselves to circumcision as a direct result of Jewish influence. Luther feared that these Sabbatarians were relapsing into Jewish legalism, much as the Galatian congregations had done fifteen centuries before.<sup>19</sup> He greatly feared the damage that the spread of such influence might cause other Christians. As with the apostle Paul, Luther was convinced that strong words and actions were necessary to prevent such things from advancing and threatening the cause of the gospel.

Unfortunately, in the midst of these grave spiritual struggles, Luther accepted on face value many false assertions and stereotypes of the Jewish people, which he had previously either dismissed or ignored. He repeatedly in his later writings made references to Jewish laws stating that Jews could "kill a Gentile on whatever occasion or in whatever manner that can be done" as an "act of piety" which would be "pleasing to God."<sup>20</sup> While there are references in rabbinic works suggesting the same "during times of war," Luther's statements do not provide that context or restriction.<sup>21</sup> He repeats and thereby affirms his belief in the validity of century old rumors concerning the Jews when in *On the Jews and Their Lies* he writes:

They have been blood-thirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom for more than fourteen hundred years in their intentions, and would undoubtedly prefer to be such with their deeds. Thus they have been accused of poisoning water and wells, of kidnapping children, of piercing them through with an awl, of hacking them in pieces, and in that way secretly cooling their wrath with the blood of Christians, for all of which they have often been condemned to death by fire.<sup>22</sup>

Luther was not alone in his beliefs, nor was there any lack of confusion in these matters. Johann Eck, Luther's Roman Catholic opponent, reported a supposed "eye-witness" account of an incident that occurred in 1503 near Freiburg in Breisgau in a book he wrote in opposition to the Jews just one year before Luther's treatise was written. In this incident supposedly two Jews had bled a Christian boy to death in a ritualistic murder. The reality of the situation was that the boy's father himself confessed that he had bled his son hoping to sell the blood to the Jews, who he believed would use it in their rituals. He could not stop the bleeding, however, and the boy had died. When confronted with a death sentence, the man blamed it on the Jews, who repeatedly denied the charge even though tortured. Eck, in spite of the father's confession and the Jews' refusal to confess, still blamed the Jews.<sup>23</sup>

Some of Luther's strongest remarks and stereotypes were reserved for his condemnation of Jewish usury. He accused the Jews of being "steeped in greed" and of being guilty of "usury." He accused them of stealing and murder and of ever "teaching their children to do likewise."<sup>24</sup> He accused the Jews of letting the Germans "work in the sweat of our brow to earn money and property while they sit behind the stove, idle away the time, fart, and roast pears." He states that they "stuff themselves, guzzle, and live in luxury and ease from our hard-earned goods."<sup>25</sup> Luther had strong words for the princes of Germany as well for allowing Jewish usury to continue:

They (the Jews) live among us, enjoy our shield and protection, they use our country and our highways, our markets and streets. Meanwhile our princes and rulers sit there and snore with mouths hanging open and permit the Jews to take, steal, and rob from their open moneybags and treasures whatever they want. That is, they let the Jews by means of their usury, skin and fleece them and their subjects, and make them beggars with their own money. For the Jews, who are exiles, should really have nothing, and whatever they have must surely be our property. They do not work, and they do not earn anything from us, nor do we give to present it to them, and yet they are in possession of our money and goods and are our masters in our own country and in their exile. A thief is condemned to hang for the theft of ten florins, and if he robs anyone on the highway, he forfeits his head. But when a Jew steals and robs ten tons of gold through his usury, he is more highly esteemed than God himself.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the above, one last factor bears serious consideration as we look for reasons why Luther's views over against the Jews changed so dramatically from the 1520's to the 1540's. Luther was fully convinced as he advanced in years that the end of the world was coming with haste. Luther did not fear the end, but rather welcomed it. It is reported that at one point during a dinner conversation a student of Luther's commented with some optimism that "If the world lasts but fifty years longer, there'll be some changes made." Luther reportedly cried out, "Oh God forbid! It would only get worse than it has been, for all kinds of sects would arise that have as yet lain hidden in the heart of man and we have never suspected were in there. So come, dear Lord, come, and let thy day of judgment break, for no longer can any improvement be expected."<sup>27</sup> Martin Brecht provides an insightful summary of this final issue when he writes:

In his final years Luther lived increasingly with the expectation that the world was soon coming to an end. This was connected with his impression that conditions were generally growing worse and that the church was beset by ever more dangerous threats. In 1540 he expected that either he himself or the next generation would experience the last day. The signs of the final time appeared to be fulfilled. The pope had been revealed as

the Antichrist, and the world raged and did not improve. Luther did not let this disturb his own equanimity. He longed for the Lord's return and, unlike during his Catholic beginnings, he no longer feared that event.

In the sermons on Matthew 24 in 1539 and 1540, Luther dealt extensively with the signs of the last days that were presently appearing. It seemed significant to him that the pope was not particularly concerned about Turks, Jews, Sacramentarians, Ana-baptists, and their errors. For him, the Turks and the pope were the power that would introduce the final affliction. Moreover, along with the Jews, they no longer let Jesus Christ be the Savior but erroneously depicted him as a severe judge. The pope himself behaved like the lord of Christendom. There could be no agreement or compromises with these false leaders. This was a living reality personified in the pope. Christ is there only where his Word is present. The pope's teachings, in contrast, did everything to lead people away from this center.

Among the signs of the last days for Luther and against which he preached was the unwillingness to repent--especially for the sins of usury and greed--which he confronted in those around him. In 1542 he had to admit resignedly that he had been unable to change the contempt for God's Word in Germany and would have to let the destruction run its course. In the following year he stated that all the classes lacked a consciousness of injustice and sin, and that the only complaints people raised were about injustices that they themselves experienced, which Luther considered a perverse situation. The only comfort offered by the fact that the world had forgotten Christ was that this presaged the imminent coming of the Lord. To Luther, the peace treaty concluded by the 'most Christian emperor' and 'most holy pope' with the Turks in 1544 was a criminal and insane action that signified a collapse of the world's order, and this could only be the beginning of the end. Set within this context of the end of the world, it was the conflict with the Jews, the Turks, and the pope that showed Luther who the people of God really were. It was a foregone conclusion that he would attack this tooth and nail.<sup>28</sup>

## PART II: THE DEVELOPMENT OF LUTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE DURING THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

To judge Martin Luther's relationship with the Jews on the basis of twentieth century culture and sentiment would do him an injustice. In order to understand Luther's relationship with the Jews, we must first understand the place that the Jewish people occupied in sixteenth century Western Europe. It is only then that we can place Luther's words and actions into context and fully understand his writings.

First of all, it is important to realize that the pluralistic society we enjoy together with its ideals of religious freedom and separation of church and state were unknown in the sixteenth century. Luther was a citizen of Electoral Saxony, which was part of the Holy Roman Empire and thus under the authority of Roman law. That law recognized only one legal religion, that of Christianity. Religious liberty simply did not exist and, in fact, would have been viewed as absurd by sixteenth century Europeans. Consequently, civil laws calling for the death penalty for serious political crimes also applied to serious religious offenses. Luther, for instance, did not rule out the death penalty for rebellious Anabaptists in 1531, and his later recommendations regarding the Jews were in keeping with existing laws dealing with heretics.<sup>29</sup> While we may wish that Luther had been more far-sighted, Luther's advice to the princes of Germany was fully in accord with the law of the land. Tjernagel observes, however, that, 'Lutherans personally loyal to Martin Luther may take some comfort in the fact that ultimately it was the fundamental principles of the great Reformer, applied by Roger Williams in the context of the political situation in the American colonies, that led to the practice of the separation of church and state.'<sup>30</sup>

Second, it is also important to realize the social make-up of medieval western Europe. European society at this point was a series of corporations--voluntary and involuntary communities bound together by mutual responsibility. The greatest of these was the Christian

church. The only foreign body in Europe, which failed to acknowledge its beliefs, was the Jews. The Jews were tolerated by the church, for their dire situation gave witness to the truth of the church's contention that God was punishing them for killing Christ and for their continuing unbelief. Jewish dietary laws prevented most socialization. Religious convictions and laws prevented both sides from intermarriage. With the rise of guilds, many of which were closely tied to the local Christian churches, Jews were forced out of agriculture, commerce and industry. They were left with petty moneylending and pawnbroking. Consequently, in view of their limited opportunities most Jews were viewed with suspicion and seen by most Christians as greedy, grasping, and immoral.<sup>31</sup>

Third, from the time of the First Crusade in 1096 onward the Jews had been subjected to a never-ending series of persecutions, pogroms, and expulsions. Crusaders who fought the infidel in the Holy Land found it quite natural to fight the infidel at home. In 1290 Jews had been expelled from England. In 1394 they were expelled from France. In 1492 they were expelled from Spain. The German principalities followed suit in the first half of the sixteenth century. Martin Bucer wrote a tract against the Jews in 1529. John Eck, as mentioned before, published his tract in 1541. In addition, Jewish converts printed more than one book on their former co-religionists, some of which were viewed as inaccurate and slanderous by the Jewish population and their supporters, but all of which were readily believed by the Christian populace. One Jewish convert, Anthony Margaritha, who converted to Christianity in 1522 and later embraced Lutheranism, wrote a book entitled, *The Whole Jewish Faith*, in 1530. Later he was imprisoned and eventually expelled from Augsburg because the Jewish community complained to the emperor concerning its contents.<sup>32</sup> Margaritha's work had a tremendous impact on Luther, for he viewed it as good table reading. In summary, Edwards comments:

There were Jews left in the empire, clinging to survival in small territories often controlled by a bishop or abbot. The large territories and most of the imperial cities had expelled their Jews some years earlier. Only on rare occasions did Luther encounter Jews; he never lived in close proximity to them, but he inherited a tradition, both theological and popular, of hostility toward them. He lived within a larger community, Western Christendom, which saw the Jews as a rejected people, guilty of the murder of Christ, and capable of murdering Christian children for their own evil purposes. And he lived within a local community that had expelled its Jews some ninety years earlier.<sup>33</sup>

During his early years Luther did not deal with the subject of the Jews at any great length. Apart from several references in his *Lectures on Romans* of 1515-1516, Luther's first dealings with the Jews came in a controversy between John Pfefferkorn and John Reuchlin. Both were converted Jews, but beyond that the controversy really dealt with academic freedom rather than with Luther's views on the Jews. John Reuchlin, Philip Melancthon's uncle, was the most noted Hebrew scholar in Europe. He had written an influential Hebrew grammar and lexicon. When Pfefferkorn called for the burning and banning of all Hebrew books, Reuchlin objected and defended their use by Christian scholars. Reuchlin was then attacked by Pfefferkorn, who was joined by George Ortwin of Cologne who wrote a scurrilous pamphlet against Reuchlin. Luther, who admired Reuchlin's scholarly work, intervened, condemning Ortwin's works as distorting and twisting Reuchlin's words.<sup>34</sup> Luther warned that if Reuchlin's opinions were condemned, opinions which to Luther had nothing to do with doctrine, it would send a chilling effect through the ranks of scholarship. He argued that the Inquisition should be concerned about real heresies, rather than spending its time arbitrarily accusing people of heresy for their opinions.<sup>35</sup>

The first treatise Luther wrote in which he dealt specifically with the Jews was, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, *That Jesus was Born a Jew*. He wrote this paper, as previously mentioned, in view of false accusations leveled against him by his Roman Catholic opponents. This treatise showed a sincere desire on Luther's part to evangelize the Jewish people together with his recommendations regarding how this might be done. He condemned their former treatment and advocated removing social and business discrimination against them.

Luther urged his fellow Christians to treat the Jewish people according to the law of Christ's love rather than with papal law. Luther was certainly aware that not all of the Jews could be won in this way, but he recognized that it was no different with so-called Christians either. Luther dedicated this work to Bernard, a baptized Jew living in Schweinitz. Luther had participated in the baptism of Bernard's son and hoped that this treatise would both strengthen Bernard's faith, but also help him reach out to his fellow Jews.<sup>36</sup> In 1531 when Bernard had to leave his family because of his debts, Luther and Melancthon each cared for one of his children.<sup>37</sup> Luther assisted him financially as he was able, and used Bernard occasionally as a messenger.<sup>38</sup> As late as 1533 Luther still maintained his hope that by right preaching and moderate treatment many Jews would be won to the gospel.<sup>39</sup>

By the mid-1530s, however, Luther's attitude with regard to the Jewish people had begun to change. In 1530 Luther already had advised a pastor seeking advice on the baptism of a Jewish girl to be sure that the girl's intentions were honorable, for he had heard of other Jews who were baptized simply to mock the Christian faith. In 1532 Luther reported just such an incident regarding the baptism of a Jew in Wittenberg. Luther stated that in the future he "would take such candidates to the Elbe bridge and dunk them in the water."<sup>40</sup> It would appear that Luther's pessimism over against the possibility of Jewish conversion was encouraged sometime during this period by an unfortunate encounter with three Jewish scholars. He reported the incident in the following way in his treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies*:

I once experienced this myself. Three learned Jews came to me, hoping to discover a new Jew in me because we were beginning to read Hebrew here in Wittenberg, and remarking that matters would soon improve since we Christians were starting to read their books. When I debated with them, they gave me their glosses, as they usually do. But when I forced them back to the text, they soon fled from it, saying that they were obliged to believe their rabbis as we do the pope and the doctors, etc. I took pity on them and gave them a letter of recommendation to the authorities, asking that for Christ's sake they let them freely go their way. But later, I found out that they called Christ a tola, that is, a hanged highwayman. Therefore I do not wish to have anything more to do with any Jew.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of these discouraging incidents, Luther did not close the door to Jewish conversion or baptism. In 1540 a Jewish man named Michael came from Posen to Wittenberg to be baptized by Luther. Luther questioned the man regarding the purity of his intentions, but then did baptize him. Luther stated that he admired--indeed, loved--the Jewish people. Their great men were superior in his mind to the church fathers of the Christians. Nevertheless, Christians should take heed and not become complacent in view of the fact that the angel Lucifer and the seed of Abraham had both been cast down in view of their rebellious unbelief.<sup>42</sup>

In 1536, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Duke John Frederick placed rather severe restrictions on the Jews living in Saxony or passing through Saxony. Luther, while not behind the enactment of the laws, certainly appeared to have approved of them. In 1537 Josel of Rosheim (Alsace), a spokesman for the German Jews, wrote Luther attempting to secure a recommendation from Luther which would gain him an audience with John Frederick. Luther declined to support Josel in this matter and responded in part in the following way:

My dear Josel:

I would have gladly interceded for you, both orally and in writing, before my gracious lord [the elector], just as my writings have greatly served the whole of Jewry. But because your people so shamefully misuse this service of mine and undertake things that we Christians simply shall not bear from you, they themselves have robbed me of all the influence I might otherwise have been able to exercise before the princes and lords on your behalf.

For my opinion was, and still is, that one should treat the Jews in a kindly manner, that God may perhaps look graciously upon them and bring them to their Messiah-

-but not so that through my good will and influence they might be strengthened in their error and become still more bothersome.

I propose to write a pamphlet about this if God gives me space and time, to see if I cannot win some from your venerable tribe of the patriarchs and prophets and bring them to your promised Messiah...<sup>43</sup>

For the sake of the crucified Jew, whom no one will take from me, I gladly wanted to do my best for you Jews, except that you abused my favor and hardened your hearts.<sup>44</sup>

What did Luther have in mind when he made reference to “your people so shamefully misusing this service of mine and undertake things that we Christians simply shall not bear from you”? While he does not elaborate in the letter, it would appear that Luther had in mind the rumors coming out of Moravia regarding Christians following the lead of the Jews and worshipping on Saturdays while submitting to circumcision. In his tabletalks we hear the following comment by Luther regarding Josel’s request:

Why should these rascals, who injure people in body and property and who withdraw many Christians to their superstitions, be given permission? In Moravia they have circumcised many Christians and call them by the new name of Sabbatarians. This is what happens in those regions from which preachers of the gospel are expelled; there people are compelled to tolerate the Jews. It is said that Duke George declared with an oath that before he would tolerate the Lutherans he would lay waste all churches, baptism, and sacraments. As if we didn’t preach the same service of Christ and the same sacraments! In short, the world wants to be de-ceived. However, I’ll write this Jew not to return.<sup>45</sup>

It was with regard to the Sabbatarians that Luther next wrote concerning the Jews. His treatise *Against the Sabbatarians* appeared in March 1538. Luther wrote this treatise in response to letters he received from Count Wolfgang Schlick zu Falkenau, who reported to him that Jews were making inroads through their proselytization of Christians.<sup>46</sup> The Jews were supposedly convincing unwary Christians of the necessity of worshipping on Saturdays and of getting circumcised. As one scholar put it, “In view of Luther’s emphasis on Christian freedom, based on a clear distinction between law and gospel, it was predictable that he would vigorously oppose the Sabbatarian position.”<sup>47</sup>

*Against the Sabbatarians* is a theological and apologetic argument against Judaism, but aside from general criticism and obvious annoyance with the rabbinic interpretation of the Bible it does not contain the strong positions enunciated in *On the Jews and Their Lies*. It emphasized Christianity’s heritage from Judaism, and reaffirms that the task of Christians was to lead the Jews out of their errors and into the truth.<sup>48</sup>

Luther began the treatise by stating the Jewish people had become stubborn and hard to win to Christianity because they remained tied to the false interpretations of the rabbis.<sup>49</sup> He continued by pointing out that in spite of fifteen hundred years of suffering, the Jews had still not learned that God’s judgment upon them was the direct result of their rejection of Christ.<sup>50</sup> He reminded his Christian readers that God had promised that David’s earthly throne would continue and the priestly sacrifices would not fail until the promised Savior had come. Christ had come and with His coming came the end of both David’s earthly throne and temple worship in Jerusalem. Luther summarized his arguments in the following way:

But now in their last, Roman exile, there is none of this. There is no prophet, and they have no word from Scripture telling them how long this exile will endure. They must be so pitifully afflicted for an indefinite time, wandering aimlessly about without prophets or God’s word. God never did this before and he would not do it now if his Messiah had not come and his promise had not been fulfilled. For he promised that David’s throne would not fail or the priestly sacrifices be discontinued; and yet both David’s throne and Moses’

altar, together with Jerusalem itself, have been destroyed and have lain desolate for fifteen hundred years. Meanwhile God keeps silent, as he never did in Egypt or in the other exile. Nor will he or can he do so, lest he be untrue to his promise.<sup>51</sup>

Luther took up the Jewish assertion that their problems were simply a temporary punishment of God for their sins. He stated that such assertions in effect label God a liar for not keeping His promises to David and the other Old Testament believers. "No," Luther concluded, "the Jews are slandering God and deceiving themselves when they accuse God of breaking faith and trust with David because he did not send the Messiah in the manner they would have liked and as they prescribe and imagine him to me."<sup>52</sup>

Luther continued by rejecting the proposition of the Jews that the laws of Moses, in particular Saturday worship and circumcision, were necessary for salvation. Luther pointed out that numerous kings and heathen from Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and elsewhere were saved without circumcision or adherence to the laws of Moses. He likewise quipped that it would be highly unlikely that God would require the Gentiles to follow a law which the Jews themselves could not fulfill given the fact that they had lost their country, city, government and all that Moses instituted. Truly, Luther concluded, the Jews had been "smitten with blindness."<sup>53</sup>

(To be continued)

### NOTES

- 1 Luther's Works, 45:197.
- 2 Luther's Works, 45:200f.
- 3 Ibid., 229.
- 4 Luther's Works, 47:268-272.
- 5 Neelak S. Tjernagel, *Martin Luther and the Jewish People*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1985), 15.
- 6 Ibid., 15.
- 7 Ibid., 19.
- 8 Ibid., 24.
- 9 Ibid., 69f.
- 10 Mark C. Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics 1531-1546*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 18.
- 11 Luther's Works, 47:131-132.
- 12 L.D. Redlin, "What We Should and Shouldn't Learn from Martin Luther," (*Immanuel Home Messenger*: Vol. 15, No. 4, October 1993), 1-2.
- 13 Tjernagel, 34.
- 14 Edwards, 5.
- 15 Tjernagel, 45.
- 16 Ibid., 96.
- 17 Edwards, 141-142.
- 18 Luther's Works, 134.
- 19 Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1532-1546*, Vol. III (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 337-338.
- 20 Luther's Works, 6:212.
- 21 Luther's Works, 47:226f, cf. Footnote 116.
- 22 Ibid., 264.
- 23 Edwards, 119-120.
- 24 Luther's Works, 47:227.
- 25 Ibid. 266.
- 26 Ibid., 217f.
- 27 H.G. Haile, 293.

- 28 Brecht, III:333f.
  - 29 Ibid., 37.
  - 30 Tjernagel, 49f., 72f.
  - 31 Edwards, 121.
  - 32 Luther's Works, 47:128-131. It might be noted that the editors did not question the motives of the authorities in Augsburg. Was Margaritha imprisoned for his writings on the Jews or for his evangelical beliefs?
  - 33 Edwards, 121.
  - 34 Tjernagel, 8.
  - 35 Martin Brecht, Martin Luther: His road to Reformation 1483-15-21, Vol. I (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 162.
  - 36 Martin Brecht, Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532, Vol. II (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 112-113.
  - 37 Brecht, III:335.
  - 38 Luther's Works, 50:144-145.
  - 39 Brecht, III:336.
  - 40 Ibid., 335.
  - 41 Luther's Works, 47:191-192.
  - 42 Brecht, III:339f.
  - 43 Luther's Works, 47:62.
  - 44 Brecht, III:337.
  - 45 Luther's Works, 54:24.
  - 46 Luther's Works, 47:65.
  - 47 Ibid., 60.
  - 48 Brecht, III:339.
  - 49 Luther's Works, 47:66.
  - 50 Ibid., 72.
  - 51 Ibid., 75.
  - 52 Ibid., 78.
  - 53 Ibid., 87.
- 

## **Guidelines for the Book of Revelation**

John K. Pfeiffer

Through the ages since it was written, the Book of Revelation has been the object of much abuse. Self-made authorities have misused this treasure to develop strange doctrines, for which they can find no support in any other part of Scripture. In order to avoid this, it is necessary that the reader follow certain basic guidelines as he approaches this book.

### **Source**

Before he even begins his study, the reader must believe that God is the source of this book. As the introduction declares, the contents of this book were delivered by Jesus to John the Apostle (1:1). Knowing the source, the reader will appeal to God in prayer, asking for guidance and perception. Only with the help of the Author can one discover the meaning of this wondrous book.

## Interpretive Approach

There are at least two acceptable approaches to the book. One is that the book is symbolic and reveals timeless truths. Accordingly, the reader should not try to apply a given vision to any specific period or event in history. Rather he should be able to see the fulfillment of the visions in every age.

This approach sees history repeating itself time and again. As the Preacher says, "That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9). Just as God was able to direct the ebb and flow of events in the past, so He will in the future.

While this approach is acceptable, I believe that it misses the full impact of the book. I believe that the book was intended to reveal far more, namely that God knew beforehand specifically what would happen and determined what the final outcome would be. According to this approach the book is symbolic and reveals specific historical events and personages.

Which approach is that of the Spirit? Since there is no other book in the New Testament that compares in style with the book of Revelation, we cannot discover an interpretive approach in this part of Scripture.

However, in the Old Testament, there are two books which have many similarities. The books of Ezekiel and Daniel contain prophetic symbolism of the same nature as is found in Revelation. In Daniel's prophecies, visions and symbols refer to specific historical happenings (cf. Dan. 2,7,8). Likewise, Ezekiel's prophecies are often historically specific.

Since these two prophetic books are our only basis for establishing an interpretive approach and since the Author of these books authored Revelation also, there is a solid basis for taking the second approach to the book of Revelation.

However, both of these approaches lead the reader to the conclusion that the overall objective of this book is to encourage and strengthen us by showing that the future is under God's control and that, by the grace of God, Christ and His Church have the ultimate victory over all the forces of evil. This truth should be on the mind of the reader as he considers each vision. Thus he can avoid the danger of becoming so involved in the details of the vision that he forgets the objective of the Lord.

## Timeframe

In the very first verse. John writes: Αποκαλυψη Ιησου Χριστου ην εδωκεν αυτω ο θεος δειξαι τοις δουλοις αυτου α δει γενεσθαι εν ταχει και εσημανεν αποστειλα δια του αγγελου αυτου τω δουλω αυτου Ιωαννη. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and showed by signs through His messenger to His bond-servant John" (1:1).

These words are significant, since they govern the whole book. They reveal to us that, generally speaking, the visions found in the book are speaking of things which would come to pass after the time of revealing, that is after the time when the visions were given to John.

Careful consideration should be given to verb tenses. If the vision uses a tense that refers to something having been completed in the past, then the vision relates something that happened before the time when Christ gave the vision.

For instance, in 5:6, we read. και ειδον και ιδου εν μεσω του θρονου και των τεσσαρων ζων και εν μεσω των πρεσβυτερων αρνιον εστηκοσ ωσ εσφαγμενον, εχον κερατα επτα και οφθαλμουσ επτα, οι εισιν τα επτα του θεου πνευματα τα απεσταλμενα εισ πασαν την γην. The perfect tense in εσφαγμενον and απεσταλμενα indicates that the Lamb had been slain prior to the vision and that the "seven Spirits of God" had been sent out into the world prior to the vision.

One vision, upon which this has a particular impact, is that of the woman giving birth to the child (ch.12). Many understand this to refer to the birth of Christ. However, this cannot be the interpretation, since His birth took place prior to the giving of the revelation and since the tenses

speak of something occurring at the time of the vision, either as a one-time action (aorist) or an iterative action (aorist) or an on-going action (present).

Furthermore there are portions of the vision which simply cannot apply to the birth of Christ. For instance, if this is understood as the literal birth of Christ, how are we to understand Mary's flight into the wilderness? Was Satan waiting in the stable to literally devour Christ? Also, since the number "12" is the number of the Church, we would have to say that the Church is Mary's crown.

The interpretation that seems most acceptable is that the woman is the Church, the Bride of Christ, giving birth to the individual Christian. As for Satan, he is always 'seeking someone to devour' (1 Pet. 5:8).

Regarding the word 'shortly' (1:1): since the New Testament frequently speaks of the time from the Apostles until the End as a brief time, we understand that the visions of this book refer to events occurring during this time period.

It is noteworthy that the expression of John 'to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place' (1:1), is essentially repeated by Jesus in 4:1, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.' This demonstrates that the revelation of future things does not begin until chapter 4. Thus, in chapters 2 and 3 the letters to the seven churches speak of things in John's past and present.

## **Symbols**

The things which John saw are symbolic; they represent the reality, but are not the reality themselves. The Spirit uses the word εσημενον (v.1), from σημενω, which means 'to show by signs' (σημειον = 'sign' - cf. 12:1,3). The KJV and NKJV translate well with the word 'signified.' Unfortunately, some other translations have deprived readers of the significance of this most important word: NASB - 'communicated'; NIV - 'made it known.'

Example: 5:6 - Jesus is pictured as a lamb. He is not a lamb in reality. This is a sign, symbolizing something about Him. As lambs were sacrificed in the Temple, so Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb.

Those who fail to take note of the symbolic nature of the visions invariably develop false doctrines (e.g., the millennialists). The strange, or not so strange, thing is that they pick and choose which visions they will interpret symbolically and which they will take literally.

For our interpretation of these signs the rest of the Bible is our only resource. The most valuable resource that the reader can have beside his Bible, is a concordance. There is surely a lot of labor involved, but it is a labor of love.

Our interpretation of the signs dare never contradict the clear and literal passages of the Bible. Neither can these signs be used to establish some new doctrine, which is otherwise unknown in Scripture.

## **Scope**

In giving these visions of the future, God does not intend to give us a complete revelation of all the events of the New Testament era. These are the highlights, events which have the greatest impact on the Church of Christ. It is during such periods especially, when it seems as though the Church is losing the battle, that Christians need the reassurance of this book.

## **Numbers**

Just as the visions are symbolic, so are the numbers within the visions. Again, the interpretation of these numbers must be drawn from the manner in which the numbers are used throughout Scripture and not on the reader's flights of fancy.

Here are some possible interpretations, along with the Scriptural reasoning:

3= God Trinity, Benediction. Isa. 6:3)

4= Earth (Rev. 7:1; Matt. 25:31; 4 seasons; 4 compass points)

7= Completeness with special reference to God's dealings with the earth (3+4; 7 days of week, creation; frequently used)

10= Completeness (seems to be used more for judgment) (Commandments; 10 plagues; Num.14:22; 1 Kings. 11:31; Dan. 7:7)

12= The Church (12 tribes of Israel; 12 Apostles)

40= Completeness (seems to be used of time) (40 days: Elijah. Christ; 40 years in wilderness; Judg. 3:11; a generation)

1000= a long, but complete and determined (time)

3 ½ = time & times & the dividing of times (Dan. 7:25)

= 1260 days = 42 months = 3.5 years (Rev. 13:5) = the reign of the Antichrist

6= the number of man (Rev. 13:18; created on the 6th day)

666 = man's number times 3 (God) = man+God, i.e., man making himself God

= Other possibilities: 6=3x2 - man trying to make himself more than God; 6 does not measure up to 7 - man trying to make himself equal to the Church but he is not even a part of it.

144,000 = 12x12x1000 - The whole Church; all the elect

### Conclusion

As the End draws near, the battle of the Church with the world is becoming fierce. From pseudo-church and state (Gog and Magog?) the enemy comes to surround the City of God with the hope of reducing it to rubble. We need the encouragement and strength which the Book of Revelation offers. Here we shall discover that the City of God shall stand firm unto the End. Not even the gates of hell shall prevail against us.

Hopefully, these guidelines can serve to encourage the reader to study this book, remembering that it will take patience and hard work.

---

## Determining the Will of God in Our Lives

[Presented to the Minnesota Pastoral Conference, Inver Grove Heights, MN, October 27-28, 1998]

Rick Grams

A number of concepts crowd the mind when we attempt to describe the will of God. We might think of God's good and gracious will or God's just and holy will. We might recall God's creative will, God's providence, God's foreknowledge, or God's divine concurrence as further expressions of His will. It is not in the scope of this study to include matters relating to creation, eternal election or predestination. The subject before us deals with the practical application of God's will in our individual lives. Any reflection on the will of God in our lives brings us face to face with God's divine providence. Difficulties arise when faulty reason supposes itself capable of grasping the infinite majesty of almighty God. On one hand we might hear the remark that it is God's will after some catastrophe. Or we might hear about God's will for something good that has occurred. The original question for this study was: "Can, or when, do we determine the hidden will of God?" It is an important question because of how frequently one hears "It is God's will." We need to understand when the expression God's will is used properly or improperly. Specifically we want to learn how God's will and our will relate to one another. The question was widened to consider the subject of determining the will of God in our lives.

The Bible uses a number of words to describe the volitive "will." They are βουλη, γινομαι, προτιθημι, θελημα, and their derivatives, plus a few other words rarely used. βουλομαι stresses deliberation based on an intelligent choice. Compare the word used of Joseph regarding Mary in Matt. 1:19 where he "was minded to put her away." γινομαι is used by Jesus in the words

to the Third Petition (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). *θελημα* stresses what one wishes or has determined shall be done. It means “a willing, will.” In other words, *θελημα* is less sharply defined than *βουλη* (Thayer, BAG). John used this word in his gospel account of those “who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). *θελημα* occurs five times as often in the Bible as *βουλη*. A significant verse regarding the mysteries of God uses each of these terms: “having made known to us the mystery of His will (*θεληματο*), according to His good pleasure (*ευδοκιαν*), which He purposed (*προεθετο*) in Himself” (Eph. 1: 9). The original words are used quite frequently in the Bible with a wide usage of meanings. In addition, our English translations often use the word “will” for all of the terms.

Scripture does reveal what the dogmaticians describe as God’s first and second will. The first is God’s good and gracious will by which God desires the salvation of all sinners (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9); the second is God’s holy and just will by which God judges and condemns all those who reject His grace in Jesus Christ (John 3:18).

Dr. J.T. Mueller offered the following comments on God’s revealed will and the hidden will:

The revealed will of God embraces the entire revelation of Scripture, 1 Cor. 2:12-16; the hidden will of God includes all things which He has left unrevealed in His Word, Rom. 11:33-35. While we should diligently study the revealed will of God in Holy Scripture, the attempt to explore His hidden will must be condemned as both foolish and arrogant.<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptures speak of the hidden will of God in two ways. Either God’s will is hidden in such a way as can, and should, be learned by revelation or God’s will is hidden from man in such a way as beyond any discovery by man. We humbly confess that no one is capable of knowing God’s will if God has chosen not to reveal it. An example of the first kind of hidden will is how Jesus used it in Matthew 13:35 regarding parables: “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (secret = *κρυπτω*). Jesus had explained this kind of hidden will. “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt. 13:11). An example of the second kind of God’s will is found in Romans 11:33-35. This will of God remains hidden from man until the dawn of eternal life in Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul expressed such awe at the glory of the Lord revealed to such fallen creatures as ourselves!

Our spiritual knowledge of God’s Word and will are not perfect in this life. “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:9,10). Eternity is coming and then we shall know perfectly the mysteries of God’s creation, providence, the incarnation of God’s Son, the Trinity, etc. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). But the will of God has made certain that we have all that we need to know to follow the narrow path to the kingdom of glory through faith in Christ Jesus alone! “We are confident, yes, well pleased (*ειδοκουμεν*) rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

God certainly can and does act by His will to frustrate the schemes of the devil, the world, and our own weak flesh. “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:11,12). God allows the human will to express itself in ways that God will use for His purposes. Think of how Joseph was sold into slavery in order to save his family from famine in the end! The Lord promises to make “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (*προθεσιν*)” (Rom. 8:28). So, determining the will of God in our lives is not to discover “yes or no,” “right or wrong,” answers to life’s many questions, but to receive divine encouragement for our inadequate

abilities and divine strength for our many weaknesses. "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:4,5).

Because of God's foreknowledge we also address the divine will of God in regard in good and evil actions. Care must be maintained in speaking of God's will in regard to evil. God certainly knows all that has happened, is happening, or will happen. But this does not mean that God causes events which result in evil. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God', for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (James 1:13). The Word of God reveals that even wicked acts can be done only by God's concurrence, or as we have learned to say, God's permission, because it has to serve His holy purpose (Gen. 50:20, Rom. 8:28).

"God indeed permits, but does not will that which He permits."<sup>2</sup> "To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Ps. 92:15). "Nevertheless the question remains: 'How does God cooperate in evil actions that actually do occur?' On the one hand, we cannot say that these acts are done without God, for this would deny His divine concurrence (atheism); on the other hand, however, we must not ascribe to God these acts in so far as they are evil (pantheism). In other words, the divine concurrence makes God neither the author of, nor an accomplice in, evil acts."<sup>3</sup> "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!" (Rom. 9:14).

In respect to God's concurrent will in good acts, we will find two different concepts. We call many actions "good" in respect to civil good deeds, which are done by both the world and the saints. The other side is, of course, the spiritual works which unbelievers can never do but which the believers do even in the simple, everyday matters of life. Compare the wonderful truth of 1 Cor. 10:31: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The spiritual good works of the believer are worked by the Spirit of God, who bestows both the ability to do good, and also the willingness to do good (2 Cor. 3:5). "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Yes, even to suffer, "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

The issue of determining God's will in our lives cannot be reduced to immediate answers to satisfy corrupt human reason or emotions. God has not revealed all things to us in the Scriptures. The answers are not specific but general for the very reason that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Calling events or decisions the will of God when they may not be is a matter of casuistry--there are too many ponderables to consider when anyone says, "It is God's will." The important thing to remember is that God can and will bless our faulty works and weak decisions to glorify His infinite mercy in Jesus Christ. When confronted by tragedy or suffering we need to remember this: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19). The Christian accepts such events as permitted by God's will for his spiritual welfare. Luther explains the Third Petition in his Small Catechism:

God's good and gracious will is certainly done without our prayer all by itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when He breaks and stops every evil will and plan of those who do not want us to hallow His name or let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the sinful world, and of our own flesh. His will is also done when He gives us strength and keeps us firm in His word and in faith for as long as we live. This is God's good and gracious will.

On this side of eternity we will not understand everything perfectly as God does. Thank the Lord, He does! Even the world of man grudgingly admits, "Hindsight is wiser than foresight." But the Christian has the confident certainty of God's Word, "Now may the God of peace, who

brought up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20-21). (Cf. Rom. 8:28.)

God’s plans may not always coincide with ours, thankfully, because God’s plans are so much better and wiser than our own. Our flesh wants black and white answers now. But we will have to wait until eternity to see how God’s will touched every area of our lives. The assurance of God’s love in Christ assures us. The love of God was demonstrated by Christ’s perfect example in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39ff.). “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Only when our plans and decisions are in harmony with the Lord’s revealed will can we know that all things have been done to the glory of the Lord! The Christian can always pray, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!” (Matt. 6:10, Luke 11:2). In conclusion, then, may we ever join the apostle Paul in wonder and awe at the glory of God’s will in our lives:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33)

### **NOTES**

1 Dr. John T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: CPH, 1955) 172.

2 Quendstedt, cited by Mueller 192.

3 Mueller 191.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Unlike some topics of doctrinal concern, there exists a relatively smaller amount of written material regarding the will of God in all of its ramifications. Several articles treat the subject in more thorough detail.

Hinrichs, E. W. “God’s Direction in Our Lives and the Element of Chance.” (A conference essay. Also cited by other Lutheran writers.) *Concordia Theological Monthly* (June 1946) 425+.

Schaller, John. “The Hidden God.” Trans. Prof. John Jeske. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 71:3 (1974). (The original German article is in the Oct. 1916, issue of the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 213-233.)

Schaller, John. “God’s Will and Command.” *Journal of Theology* 19:3 (1979). (A translation of an essay entitled: “Gottes Wille und Befehl,” found in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 12:1 (1915). The translation was begun by Pastor Waldemar Schuetze and given its final editing by Pastor H.C. Duehlmeier.)

Bartels, Dr. Ernest. “A Lutheran Understanding of the Will and Providence of God.” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, 22:4 6-64, 23:2 19-58, and 23:3 8-51.

---

**EDITORIAL NOTE:**

In an article in the December 1998 (Vol. 38, No. 4) issue, entitled “A Review of Carl Manthey-Zorn’s Hermeneutical Principles,” on page 38, the author made the assumption that a list of exegetical principles had been written by John F. Sullivan, the translator of Manthey-Zorn’s book, *Manna*. The assumption was incorrect, as has been learned; the source of the list remains unclear. – JL

## **P A N O R A M A**

### **REVIEW OF THE LORD’S SUPPER STATEMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD**

[Presented to the CLC Southeastern Pastoral Conference, Dallas, TX, September 22-24, 1998.]

John Klatt

Church history is the history of doctrinal controversies. How could it be otherwise? The church in this world is the church militant, striving against devil, world, and flesh. The devil is always at work to disrupt the peace of Christians gathered together to do the Lord’s work. He is always at work with his lies to corrupt the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of his relentless efforts against the church it will be until the end of time the church’s lot “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

We in the CLC are no strangers to doctrinal controversy. We have been through several of them in our relatively short history, some of them continuing for years before being settled. We have suffered the loss of pastors and congregations. But the Lord has also helped us, giving us growth in understanding through the study of Scripture that controversies require if they are to be settled in a God-pleasing way. Because of our own experience with controversy and our concern for the truth, we are interested in doctrinal controversies going on in other places. To follow controversies in which we are not involved need not be to indulge curiosity or to intrude into things that are none of our business. We can learn from others’ controversies, both where error is taught and where truth is defended and upheld.

One controversy that has been of interest to us in recent years is the one in the ELS having to do with the Lord’s Supper, hence the request for this review. The controversy arose over the teaching that the body and blood of the Lord are present on the altar at the consecration, before the distribution. This idea appeared in a book on the Lord’s Supper by Dr. Tom Hardt, a pastor in Sweden. This book, *Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia*, was published in 1971. Some of Hardt’s ideas were espoused by B.W. Teigen of the ELS and set forth in a book, *The Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz*. In 1981 the ELS Convention adopted a statement on the Lord’s Supper consisting of nine theses. The ninth of these reads: “We hold that we cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental usus when the real presence of Christ’s body and blood begins, but we know from Scripture and acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ.” This did not satisfy everyone, for in 1989 a six-point explanation to thesis nine was added. It reads:

We understand Thesis Nine in the light of the following statements:

- a) The words of consecration effect the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in a valid administration of the Lord’s supper (consecration, distribution, and reception).
- b) Because of the consecration Christ’s body and blood are present in the elements of bread and wine before the reception of the elements by the communicants.

- c) We reject any attempt to fix the mathematical point or exact moment when the real presence begins.
- d) We reject the teaching that the presence of Christ's body and blood is in any way effected by the eating and drinking of the elements by the communicants.
- e) We reject the doctrine of transubstantiation, i.e., that the earthly elements cease to exist when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins.
- f) We reject any celebration of the Lord's Supper without communicants.

A number of ELS pastors expressed concern about the expression "before the reception" in point "b." The WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations expressed a similar concern to their sister synod. In response the Doctrine Committee of the ELS proposed a revision of point "b." The 1997 ELS Convention adopted the revision which reads as follows:

b) Because of this consecration by virtue of our Lord's original institution "the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received" (AC X, p. 34; see AC XXII 6, p. 50; AP. X 1, p. 179; AP. XXIV 80, p. 264; FC SD VII 10,11, p. 571). The Scripture and the Confessions, therefore, teach that in the Supper the body and blood of Christ are received by the communicant and also that the "minister who consecrates shows forth [tenders] the body and blood of the Lord to the people" (AP XXIV 80, p. 264; see also SC VI 12, p.351; SA Part VI 1, p. 311; AC XXII 6, p. 50; AP X 4, pp. 179-80), that they are "truly offered with visible elements" (FC SD VII 10,11, p. 571; see also AP X 1, p. 179), and that they are really present in the Supper . . . under the form of bread and wine" (AC X, p. 34). [Note: All references to the Book of Concord are from the Tappert Edition.]

In a report published in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (Spring, '97) Tom Nass gives the WELS CICR reaction to the above revision. He notes that the revision is "mostly a collection of statements from the Lutheran Confessions which are incontrovertible in our midst." But he calls attention to a couple of things. The order of words in the revision is different from the order in the Book of Concord, where it is always that the body and blood are "present, distributed, and received." Nass comments, "One hopes that a shift in emphasis will not be inserted by this different order." He also calls attention to the use of the words "shows forth" to describe what the minister does who consecrates the elements and distributes the sacrament to the people. He calls this a poor translation of the Latin word exhibit in the Apology (XXIV, 80), which the Triglotta consistently translates with the word tender. The parallel German word is reichen, to give or present. The words "shows forth" could be understood in the sense of holding up something to be viewed, a thought to be avoided because of the Roman Catholic practice of the adoration of the host, which has no basis in Scripture. Nass also says that the CICR wonders if the revision "adequately addresses the issue at hand" and "speak(s) specifically to the controversy so that it will resolve the problem," though he adds that they have been encouraged by recent conversations with the ELS Doctrine Committee.

Nass also offers the following encouraging quotes on the time of the real presence from an essay delivered at the ELS General Pastoral conference in January, 1996, "The Lord's Supper in the ELS Today." It is the work of Gaylin Schmeling, president of Bethany Seminary.

We have the certain promise of His presence only in the distribution and reception. To assert dogmatically more than this goes beyond what God intended us to know or be our concern.

Therefore if one believes, as it seems much of the Ancient church believed, that after the consecration Christ's body and blood are on the altar, he should not be accused of error. In the same way, the brother should not be condemned who does not

want to assert precisely when the presence begins, but who is certain that he receives the true body and blood of Christ offered to him in the Sacrament (p. 6).

Because the sacramental union exists only in the sacramental action, the remaining species at the completion of the Lord's Supper celebration are simply bread and wine. There is no basis for the reservation, ocular communion, and the veneration of the sacrament outside of the use. There is no dogmatic demand that all the consecrated elements be consumed in the sacramental service (p. 8).

Because of the explanations they have received from ELS representatives the CICR believes that unity on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper is maintained between WELS and ELS. But they say that study and discussion will undoubtedly continue. Nass mentions reports of "a congregation or two (that) insists on the consumption of the reliquia in a way that may cause confusion in the church" and "sermons (that) speak of the real presence on the altar in a way which presumes that this is unquestionable Bible doctrine." He also mentions concern in the ELS over reports that there are WELS pastors who celebrate the Lord's Supper without using the Words of Institution.

The ELS Statement brings to our attention several questions about the Lord's Supper, some of them old and familiar, some perhaps new to us. We will examine them and consider how the ELS Statement answers them.

When does the real presence begin in the Sacrament? The Words of Institution recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul report that Jesus gave His disciples bread and wine and said, "This is my body . . . This is my blood." He gave them His body and blood together with the bread and the wine. Paul's commentary on the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 10,11 assures us that the Lord continues to give His body and blood to all who eat and drink in the sacrament, even to those who do so without faith. It is on this basis that Luther and the reformers taught the doctrine of the real presence. And it is the real presence that is the main point of the Reformation writings about the Lord's Supper, in opposition to the transubstantiation of the Romanists and the representationism of the Reformed. Neither Scripture nor the Confessions address the question of the point at which the real presence begins, being content to assure us that the body and blood of the Lord are truly present and that we do receive them when we eat the bread and drink the wine in the Sacrament. Thesis nine in the Statement says it well: "We hold that we cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental usus when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins."

What we can say from Scripture is that we have the promise of the real presence only in connection with the eating and drinking. Jesus said, "Take, eat; This is My body." "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant." To try to find out more than this is to attempt to delve into the mystery of the Sacrament beyond what the Lord has chosen to reveal.

Why then did the ELS find it necessary to add a six-point explanation to thesis nine, a simple and obviously correct statement? The answer is to be found at least partly in the first two points of the explanation. Point "a" says, "The words of consecration effect the real presence . . ." So the concern seems to be not so much when the body and blood of the Lord are present but how they are present, what brings them into being in the celebration of the sacrament. They wanted to emphasize the truth that only the word of Christ can perform the miracle of the presence of His body and blood. Therefore, they reasoned, one must say that as soon as the words of Christ are spoken in the celebration of the Lord's Supper the body and blood must be present. They saw the questioning of this point as a questioning of the word as the power in the Sacrament. They tried to enlist Luther as their ally, citing his use of Augustine's famous statement about the sacraments: *Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*.

There is no question that it is the word that effects the real presence, for without the word there would be no sacrament. Without the word of Christ bread and wine would remain simply bread and wine just as surely as "without the word of God water is simple water and no baptism."

But what the consecrationists forget is that the time element between the consecration and distribution in our use of the Lord's Supper is something that we have added. When Jesus instituted the Supper He spoke the words as He gave the elements to His disciples. He "gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body . . .'" Schmeling makes this supporting observation:

Part of the problem in the issue of the moment of the presence is that we, in our administration of the Lord's Supper, establish a time interval between the pronouncement of the Verba and the distribution of the elements which was not there in the first Lord's Supper. Then we speculate about the real presence in that time interval which we have created. For theological purposes the three-fold sacramental action of consecration, distribution, and reception should therefore be viewed and considered holistically as a factual and conceptual unity rather than sequentially as a series of three distinct occurrences. The consecration, distribution, and reception should be viewed as simultaneous actions rather than as consecutive actions ("The Lord's Supper in the ELS Today," pages 3,4).

The question of when the presence begins was part of the controversies on the Lord's Supper that were settled by the Formula of Concord. The beginning and ending of the presence was debated in the Saliger controversy, named for Johann Saliger, a Lutheran pastor who taught that through the consecration and before use bread and wine in the Lord's Supper were the body and blood of Christ. He was refuted by Chytraeus, who showed that the word of Christ, which embraces the whole act of the sacrament, causes the presence (Lutheran Cyclopedia, ed. Jacobs and Haas, 1899). Therefore when the writers of the Formula chose not to make a statement about the moment or duration of the real presence it was not because this question was unknown to them but because they believed nothing could be said about it on the basis of Scripture.

The ELS Statement raises a question about the consecration when it says, "The words of consecration effect the real presence of Christ's body and blood in a valid administration of the Lord's Supper" (9a). There is no question that the words of Christ are what make the Lord's Supper a sacrament, and without them bread would remain only bread. But do they mean that the Words of Institution must be recited exactly in the manner in which we customarily recite them in our Communion services? When we celebrate the Lord's Supper it is necessary that we do what Christ did at the first Supper, in response to His command, "This do." But as has been pointed out, Jesus said the words, "This is my body" as He was giving them the bread, etc. Is this not what we do as we distribute the elements to the communicants? We say, "This is the true body of our Savior Jesus Christ." This question becomes a practical one if the Words of Institution are not read before the distribution, as they are customarily read in our services. Certainly this custom should not be changed. It is good that the communicants should hear the Words of Institution in their entirety at the Communion service. But what if they are omitted by the pastor unintentionally? Such things happen, even if only very rarely. Would the distribution then not be a valid administration of the Sacrament?

The Formula of Concord does speak of the Words of Institution as necessary.

In the use of the Holy Supper the Words of the Institution of Christ should in no way be omitted, but should be publicly recited, as it is written 1 Cor. 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, etc." This blessing occurs through the recitation of the words of Christ (FC Epitome, VII 9, Triglotta, p. 811).

But even if the reading of the Words were unintentionally omitted would not the words spoken at the distribution still qualify as a "recitation of the words of Christ"? If the supply of elements is exhausted during the distribution and a new supply has to be brought out, is it necessary to repeat the Words of Institution? Not if we understand the whole sacramental act as

one unit in which the elements are distributed as the Words of Christ are spoken. In this way all the elements that are distributed are consecrated as they are distributed.

Questions about when the presence begins surely lead to questions about when it ends. The final point (“h”) in the explanation of Thesis 9 deals with the *reliquiae*.

We reject the dogmatic assertion that the remaining elements in a valid celebration of the Lord’s Supper must be consumed; rather, we continue to uphold the practice of the church down through the years that the remaining elements may be consumed, or be disposed of in a reverent manner, or be saved for future sacramental use.

This is in accord with the Christ’s institution where the promise of the presence of the body and blood are only in the distribution and reception. Christ gives us His body and blood in the sacrament to eat and to drink. There is no promise of an enduring presence in the bread and wine outside of the sacramental action. This was also the position of the writers of the Formula of Concord, as demonstrated by these words of Chemnitz:

By the external ministry of the Word and Sacraments God is truly present in the church, working with us and effectually acting in us through these means. He is present even in the external signs in the use of the sacraments, dispensing and communicating through these visible signs His invisible grace, according to His Word. But the signs themselves, by themselves, add nothing toward this grace. God is not present with them inseparably, but because of the covenant and according to the Word they are not Sacraments apart from their use. When these Sacraments have been completed, they either pass away, as Augustine says, or are separated from the Sacramental union (*The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. Preus, p. 109).

There are also some general lessons about controversies that can be gained from the Lord’s Supper controversy in the ELS. One is that there is a powerful temptation in controversy to try to line up respected theologians of the past on one’s side. There is nothing wrong with looking at how the fathers understood Scripture on this or that point. But there is a danger in quoting these men out of the historical context in which they wrote. B.W. Teigen’s use of Chemnitz is an example.

Another general lesson here is the harm done by controversies. While it is true that controversies are to be expected and that the Lord blesses us through them in the Scripture study that they require, we should never forget that controversies are caused by the devil’s work. They upset the peace in the church, cause confusion, alienate people from the church. Schmeling refers to these things in the closing paragraph of his paper:

While this discussion of the Lord’s supper in our midst has been salutary in that we have received a deeper understanding of the power and efficacy of the Word, it has also resulted in potential danger to faith and life. Is there any one of us who can come to Holy Communion without thinking about the endless wrangling about the moment of the presence? How many lay people have not been confused in their faith when they are told they have been improperly handling the remaining elements, or that they must believe that the Lord’s body and blood are present at an exact time? (“The Lord’s Supper in the ELS Today,” p. 13).

Which of us can read this paragraph without thinking about the self-love controversy in the CLC and the harm it did to our fellowship with the confusion it caused? Our experiences of these things should make us careful. We should not be afraid to do what is necessary to defend

and preserve the truth, but we should tremble at the thought of unnecessarily stirring up controversy.

Finally, in these times of widespread doctrinal indifference, it is good to see a church body striving to bring a controversy to a proper end on the basis of Scripture.

### SOURCES

Chemnitz, Martin. *The Lord's Supper*. Trans. J.A.O. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia, 1979.

Luther, Martin. "Augustine's Words: Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, (Spring 1997) 98-100.

Nass, Tom. "The ELS Lord's Supper Statement," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, (Spring 1997) 124-128.

Schmeling, Gaylin R. "The Lord's Supper in the ELS Today," paper delivered to the ELS General Pastoral Conference, 1996.

---, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper, A Presentation of the ELS Doctrine Committee*, no date.

Teigen, Bjarne Wollan. *The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz*. Brewster, MA: Trinity Lutheran Press, 1986.

---

## **P A E D E I A**

### **Communication: a Key to Harmony in the Ministry**

[Presented to the CLC Teachers' Conference, October 1998.]

Ted Quade

It is a safe, educated conclusion that after the fall into sin Adam and Eve had some disagreements. When you consider "where" they had been and "what" lay ahead of them along with the number of years they were together, their harmony may have been at stress levels that we have never considered. Yet, the Lord was with them, walking every step of the way while guiding them through His plan of salvation. Stop to count the number of recorded times the Children of Israel lost harmony with the Lord and with their leaders and we are amazed at the continued love that the Lord showered on them. It is also a fact that there were many times more disagreements than there would be room to record in the Bible.

Consider the "disharmony" in the world in which we live today. We do not have to look outside of our family unit to know that over the course of time harmony has been strained in one way or another. Marriage, children, relatives, the work place, and even in our congregations-harmony, at times, is more discordant than pleasant, sweet music.

This is all brought about by our nature, the sinful nature of man. It is easily labeled, quickly pointed out, and should be recognized for what it is. It is sin. Disharmony in a sinful world is what is expected in civilization fallen away from the Heavenly Father. Discord among those who serve the Lord causes the work of the Lord to suffer, work that He Himself has called us to do. Disharmony in ministry is a catastrophe that only Satan relishes. For this reason the

following is presented to remind and refresh each of us that our harmony begins with how we communicate with one another as we represent the Lord of the universe here on earth. God help us to His end!

### **Servants of the Lord**

When I first became a basketball official there was a pamphlet that each of us was to read entitled "So You Want to be an Official?" I have always wondered if such a pamphlet should be designed for those considering entering the ministry. Over my short two decades in the ministry, I have often wondered why I did things the way they were done, said the things I said, and responded the way I did. After one year of being in the ministry I was fortunate to attend an installation service of a fellow teacher. The pastor, at whose feet I had my basic training in the Lord, looked at the prospective teacher and said, "...from this day forward, you and your family have been placed in a glass box. Everything you do in the classroom, around the church building, on the church property-everything your family does in public, the grocery store, gas station, community parades-wherever you travel, how you smile, what you wear, and above all, how you and your family conduct yourselves, is open and public to all-because you are now a public minister, serving the Lord in the public ministry, proclaiming the gospel to all that Christ died for all ..... and Satan isn't going to like it a bit!" That address and the words of encouragement which followed have never left me. For years they have echoed in my mind as I serve in the ministry, as I am a father to my family, and as I live in communities across the country. Satan truly doesn't like God's Word of grace being taught and preached anywhere and he searches day and night, works on each of us, looking for a way in which he can cause us to fall away from the joy of sharing the wonderful news to despising it and those we serve and with whom we serve. A tough reminder to me is that the teacher referred to above left the ministry over discord, and the pastor is no longer in our fellowship. Maybe if there had been a pamphlet!

We need to remember that every member of the Christian church has the gift of grace. Each member belongs to God. To each, our God is just that-a Father, a Friend, and a Comforter. He guides all to grow in grace and does so in an orderly manner. For this reason God has established offices in the church. One such office is that of teacher. It is that common thread that has brought each of us to this conference and I pray that it is this common thread which will draw each of us closer to our Heavenly Father and strengthen us to fight off the temptations of the "old evil foe."

What a privilege it is to be called into service of the Lord! God has given each of us a task to be His representative. Each of us needs to remember that the people we serve are His people; the congregations and classrooms are His. The people to whom we have been called do not need dictatorship but leadership, guidance, and shepherding. The work is bigger than pastors and teachers can do alone. Therefore we have to work together as a team with common goals and objectives, guided by God to His end and to His glory alone. For this reason we must learn to get along and live with one another. We must live in harmony.

To live in harmony we must recognize the calls the Lord has given us. Pastors are the shepherds of the congregation as a whole. They have been called to the whole congregation and are responsible for the teachers as well. Areas of the Christian school that pastors will want to be active in should include setting forth the Christian philosophy of the school, promoting the school and urging members to use and support it as an effective Christian educational arm of the congregation. Pastors will want to visit the classrooms, attend the faculty meetings, maintain Christian discipline, teach religion, serve as spiritual counselor to the staff and teachers, and show continued interest in the general overall operation of the school.

Teachers are also called to the whole congregation but have more limited, defined responsibilities. Teachers assist the parents in educating their children. Teachers should not hide in their calls. They should be willing and ready to help in all the congregational needs when it comes to the children. Pastors must also make sure that they do not act as lord or master over

teachers or consider the teachers as their aides or servants. One or the other is not the boss while the other is the servant. This would not be a Christian relationship. Both pastor and teacher serve the whole congregation and in many ways the teacher serves to assist the pastor in his call with special attention to the children. Both must be motivated by the love of Christ to love each other and to serve the church. In situations when duties are not clearly spelled out in a call, love must rule.

### **Communication: Relating with Those Around Us**

Whether we are dealing with our fellow teacher, the principal, the pastor, parents or members of our congregations, our communication skills are crucial. Many times our communication or lack of communication leads to disharmony, discord, and problems in our ministry.

One author points out that there are five basic qualifications that should be considered to improve our communications, our harmony with one another. We need to be tough, be honest, have faith, serve in humility, and love one another.

#### **Be Tough**

Our encouragement to be tough comes in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14: "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love." Here are seven "c's" to consider.

Courage is important. The task of teaching and preaching is not an easy one. By being in the ministry we have painted a target on ourselves at which Satan shoots his arrows of disbelief and discord. The early Christians prayed for the apostles that the Lord would give them courage and boldness to stand up for the Lord. So it is today. No one needs to tell you that preaching and teaching the true Word of God is an easy profession.

The ability to take criticism. I am of the opinion that if a person cannot accept constructive criticism, he or she should not be in the ministry. Of course if this were the rule, I would have to be the first to leave. Ministers of God's Word must be open, frank, and honest with their communication. Church staff meetings must include the opportunity to discuss everything. Communication is a must. We must not give Satan any opportunity to enter in and eat away at us because we remained silent.

The common courtesies that we expect of others we must be willing to give to others. Our ministries are like families. When all the members of a family treat each other with kindness and fairness, the family grows in love. So must our relationships with our faculty "family" grow. Our thoughts and deeds toward each other—parents, members of boards/councils, and the congregation as a whole—must show our love for our Savior "shining" through daily. Strive to be courteous.

Cooperation leads to harmony. We need to support each other. The task of serving in congregations with schools today is too large for one person to handle. We need to uphold one another and open communication on all areas. Cooperation is key to success.

We will work more harmoniously and more effectively if we are content. The grass has always been and always will be greener on the other side. Salaries, housing, and much more sometimes cloud our thoughts of serving the Lord. Envy and jealousy are the causes of many discordant notes in all walks of life, especially in the ministry. Paul writes in Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

It is hard not to waver in our opinions. We need to follow through on our goals and objectives. Being consistent also has a place in harmony. If we are too easily persuaded away from our goals, we often send the wrong signal to those who may be watching our every move.

We must remember that in everything we have Christ's image to guide us. Strive to reflect that image. While here on earth, Christ was perfect in all His dealings. He never "showboated." He taught His students about the truth of God and the Father's promises, not

boasting of Himself-but spreading the message. Our work relationship will not suffer if we strive to serve in the image of Christ.

### **Honest Workmanship**

In 2 Timothy 2:15 we learn about the harmony of honest workmanship. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Studying and working continually at our calls is one of the best ways to keep from causing problems. The more we study the less we will be inclined to steal from others and procrastinate in our work. Our study should be in the Lord's Word. It is here that we will find a guide for every action. The Lord's own words must be the motivation for all of our labor. Satan is always working to trip us up, looking for our weak spot. We need to study the Lord's words, grow in faith, and continue to learn all we can about the tasks that are placed before us. We need to work together to share our knowledge with those with whom we teach. We need to share this knowledge and insight with our congregation and with our synod. Boasting of individualism will cause our harmony to weaken quickly. By using honest workmanship we will help our fellow workers, our congregations, and our synod grow. Share what we have learned, guard the greatest treasure that we have, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Faith**

The task of communicating is not easy. Harmony of silence is easier. As sinners, our flesh looks for the easy way out. The most important qualification that we need is faith. Hebrews 11:6 states: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." The psalmist declares "I believed, therefore I spoke." As ministers of the gospel we will want to make a strong confession of just why we are doing what we do. Paul wrote to Timothy "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." and to the Philippians he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). We ought to have faith and confidence in each other. If there is a lack of trust, a lack of mutual confidence, there will be problems. Faith makes us courageous workers for the Lord. If there is conviction and confidence, courtesy and dedication, there will be good Christian relationships.

### **Humility**

Humility might be the toughest qualification for harmony among us. In Ephesians Paul writes "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2). If we show true humility and are not filled with pride or trying to usurp the role of another, we are blessed. Our love and concern must first of all be for our Lord and then for our neighbor. Even the disciples John and James were concerned about their position and Jesus admonished them and encouraged humility. How do we achieve humility? Pray, Pray, and Pray. We need to be reminded of the privilege which we enjoy as servants of God. Humility will move us to show little concern for physical profit and personal gain. Paul wrote from Rome to you and me, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10). Humility will move us to follow established procedures. We will work together, grow together, and share together. The best example of humility is that of our Savior, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

### **Love**

Finally, love springs from faith and governs all. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Love of the Lord will bring a closeness to the Lord and to everyone around you. There will be loyalty between the teacher and the pastor and teacher and teacher. From board member and parent to synod president there should be a greater desire to hold the tongue, contemplate, and even remain silent. Love moves us to be kind and considerate of one another. There is complete unselfishness in true love. Harmony will be great. When problems arise and responsibilities overlap, love will bring peace to the situation. As we are consumed by love our congregations will see the examples that we place before them, our students will learn a great lesson, and we will all share in the glories that the Lord has promised to each of us. If we have and share the consuming love for the work of the Lord, we will not have time to be at each other's throats. If we become concerned that we are overworked or that our congregation expects too much of us, let Christ's love be the rule in our lives.

Forgiveness springs from love. Should we find ourselves not in harmony with those around us, in those situations where we discover that we might not be right, the love of forgiveness is simple, open, and there for us whether we are in the wrong or have been wronged. Jesus continually forgave those to whom He walked and talked. Our Heavenly Father gave His only Son for all. The Savior willingly died and conquered death so that in the sight of the Lord we are forgiven. Love for one another drives to say, "I am sorry, please forgive me." Those are simple yet powerful words as are the words "I forgive you!" are. May our love for one another encourage us to admit faults and force us to face each other in forgiveness.

### **In Conclusion**

If each of us had completed all the above mentioned qualifications there would never be a need for this review. The reports of discord among teacher and pastor, principal and staff, parents and staff would never be heard. Each of us would start each day of our lives with a smile and end it with one. But this is not happening. Even in the early church there was discord. Paul and Barnabas had disagreements. There have been and will remain shortcomings common to all. Some have talents in one area while others just have not been so-blessed. There are many different gifts abounding among us gathered here at this conference. Talents vary, and rarely do we find one who has all the gifts and all the talents. The teacher looking for the perfect pastor, principal, or congregation will not find it. The pastor looking for the perfect teacher will not find it. The perfect Teacher lived here almost 2000 years ago. He set the examples for us to follow and has gone on ahead to prepare our eternal resting place. Jesus has told us that if we need Him or anything, ask. Prayer is our best defense for discord and poor communications.

I conclude with twelve practical suggestions for the encouragement of harmony offered by Robert Voss from his article on Pastor-Teacher Harmony.

1. Remember that we are a team. Teams never get anyplace when there is strife and controversy. Teams have to pull together. Members of a team will not trample one another.
2. Matthew 5:44: We are to love even our enemies. Could it be true that we could not love one another?
3. If an offense has been committed by one or the other, Matthew 18 dare not be forgotten, and here we get back to communication. If a problem arises, we ought to be able to solve that problem by applying Matthew 18. This means that we communicate with each other and not with everyone else. Professional ethics also demands that we keep our problems among ourselves and refrain from spewing them out before ears which have no business hearing them.
4. Hold staff conferences and talk it over.
5. Go back to the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule. When I cut down my teacher, do I want him to cut down me? When I have something bad to say about someone else, do I want that someone else to speak bad about me also?

6. A very practical solution is to promote a little levity. By this I am not implying that the work of the Lord is worthy of levity, but human relationships are. A little levity between pastors and teachers generally is a wholesome thing.

7. Still another practical suggestion is this that we each mind our own business. As pastors, we don't need our fingers in every pie. Besides, we don't have enough fingers.

8. Live the Fifth Petition: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

9. Guard your tongue.

10. A suggestion for teachers is to realize that the school is not an entity unto itself, but is a servant of the congregation. The teacher is called to serve the congregation.

11. Mutual respect should be furthered.

12. The final and most practical suggestion of all is to use the privilege of prayer. Let us pray for one another, that we may meet the qualifications which God requires of us, that we may serve the purpose which He has set down for us-the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ.

As I have gone through my ministry, lived in my 'glass house,' almost daily the words of Isaiah echo in my head because the Spirit has planted them on my heart: 'Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand' (Isa. 41:10). May our Heavenly Father, through His Comforter, guide each of us to live in harmony with one another-concentrating on the work He has given us each to do, to the best of our God-given abilities. God help us.

Therefore Thou alone, my Savior, Shalt be All in all to me;  
Search my heart and my behavior, Root out all hypocrisy.  
Restrain me from wond'ring on pathways unholy  
And through all life's pilgrimage keep my heart lowly.  
This one thing is needful, all others are vain;  
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain. TLH #366, v. 7)

### **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Kuehne, Clifford. Practical Theology Notes. Immanuel Lutheran College, 1977.

Mielke, Wayne. "Teachers are Special Gifts," delivered to the 1981 CLC Teachers' Conference, Valentine, NB.

Mueller, Arnold C. The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher. St. Louis:CPH, 1963.

Schuetze, Armin W. and Irwin J. Habeck. The Shepherd Under Christ. 2nd ed. Milwaukee:NPH, 1981.

Voss, Robert. "Pastor-Teacher Harmony," Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly Vol. 65 (January 1968).

"Examples," Devotion at the 1988 CLC Teachers' Conference, Markesan, WI. October 1988.

The Holy Bible, New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.

The Principal's Handbook, Board of Parish Education. Milwaukee, 1981.

---

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

**The Sermon: Its Homiletical Construction, by R. C. H. Lenski**

As seems true with all of R.C.H. Lenski's writings, the careful reader will gain much that is good, and some that is not so good, in *The Sermon*. As is almost always the case, Lenski is uncertain about nothing in this book. He seems to have lived in a world colored only black and white. There is, nevertheless, so much that is good in this book that the Christian pastor would do well to read or review it at least once every five years or so. The book was a staple in pastoral libraries around the time it was first printed. (My copy was purchased by the sainted M. J. Witt in 1935.) Though it has since gone out of print, ample copies are available for any interested reader.

Though we in the CLC tend to shy away from the term, it must be admitted that the pastor is, in part, a professional public speaker. The term "professional" does not describe the individual himself, nor his individual talents, but rather the training, care, and attitude that goes into each sermon preparation... or ought to. It is a tragedy (and probably a sin) when pastors fail to understand fully their divine mandate to "preach the Word," together with all that is involved in faithful sermonizing. Again, though we may not agree with every dogmatic statement in *The Sermon*, Lenski's book gives us direction in our efforts toward the most effective homiletical construction we can produce.

The book is divided into four logical parts, with sub-chapters dividing each part. The parts include: The Text; The Division; The Theme; and The Elaboration. The remainder of this book report will be dedicated to brief sound bites from these four sections. These are offered in the way of encouragement. Most of these theories on sermonizing we have heard many times before. Many we have long since forgotten.

### I. "The Text"

The first encouragement seems obvious to us; perhaps not to others: "Use a text when preaching." The reasons, to us, are self-evident. When using a text, avoid allegorizing that text. "Allegorizing" is when the preacher ignores the obvious meaning and intent of a text and applies it in some cute way to another situation. Lenski gives the example of a high school commencement preacher who used Jesus' words in John 11:44 as his text: "Loose him and let him go," words spoken to the men who were to unwrap Lazarus after he had been raised from the dead. Miracles are often allegorized. (The leprosy of sin, the benevolence of the young boy at the feeding of the 5000 led others to bring out their hidden food and share, Jesus Christ rose not bodily but spiritually in our hearts, etc.) "Allegorizing turns the text into a sham. It passes by the real meaning of the text, and imposes on the sacred words some fancy of the preacher" (p. 13). "Allegorizing also leaves the impression that a preacher can preach almost anything on any text" (p. 14).

Although I have heard it used effectively, Lenski warns against using two texts in a sermon. He also strongly advises the preacher to avoid free texts, warning the preacher to use them only for special occasions, and then to pick one for doctrinal content that is neither too long nor too short. In Lenski's mind the consistent use of a pericope is a must. I hope we would all agree with him. A good pericope is designed to allow the preacher not only to avoid pet topics, but also to cover all the basic doctrines of Christianity at least once each year. It is also a good idea to choose whether you will preach from the Gospel, Epistle, or Old Testament text in a pericope and then stick to it throughout the year. The alternative is almost always that we avoid the more difficult and meaty texts and fail to work through them as we should. There is little growth in preaching only on "easy" texts.

The Third Chapter under The Text deals with the relation between the text and the sermon. In general the sermon ought to stick to the text, but neither too rigidly, nor too loosely. "In the sermon the preacher should look through the text at his congregation" (p. 36). To forget either the text or the congregation in sermon preparation is wrong. Stick to the text, but work at applying that text to your flock.

Chapter Four is entitled "Mastering the Text," and it provides some of the best material in the book. The chapter begins, "Nothing less will do. The preacher must not merely study his text

more or less, he must master it. We are quite safe in saying that a good deal of the weakness and ineffectiveness of the sermon is due to insufficient and improper text study. Somehow the opinion prevails that a good sermon may be preached even if the text is not mastered. Some rely on their gift of eloquence... Why waste eloquence on poverty of thought... Some rely on their general knowledge of the Bible and of the doctrine of the Gospel... yet general knowledge raises the preacher but little above common-places... Moreover, the task is long... The fund with which the preacher starts must constantly be replenished, or he will grow stale" (p. 44). Lenski goes on to warn against the many sermon resource and anecdote books available (more now than then). In Lenski's opinion a pastor should draw on his own observations and experiences, and then use them only to illustrate, never to take center stage away from the text.

The following steps are presented as the proper format to follow in preparing the best sermon possible: 1. Begin with prayer. (Luther said, 'Diligent prayer is more than half the study.') 2. Read the text early in the week and give it time to work on your heart and mind. At this point read only cursorily the Greek or Hebrew in order to ascertain the true text. 3. Study the text by thorough exegesis. 4. Catechize the text: Who, what, where, subject, emotions involved, time, scope, etc. 5. Uncover the truths of the text (How does the text a. instruct, b. refute error, c. admonish, d. rebuke faults or vices, e. urge or warn against something, f. comfort the Christian.) 6. Study the arguments in the text; that is, how does the text drive its point home. 7. Look at other men's work (commentaries, etc.) 8. Consult other aids (Dogmatics texts, parallel passages, etc.) 9. Preach the text to yourself to give it personal spiritual experience. All of this is to be done before the text is written.

## II. "The Division"

Art in the Sermon is described by Lenski as struggling to always choose "the better." Two thoughts or means of expression might be fitting in a sermon. Which is "better"? Word by word, line by line, these are decisions the preacher has to make. In Lenski's words, "All truth is art." The sermon should match the beauty of the liturgy and hymns.

On choosing the theme for the sermon, Lenski rightly points out that the parts, when added together, must equal the theme. Text and theme together must provide 1. Unity, 2. Organization, 3. Progress (as in climbing a mountain). "The sermon is not a review of the troops, but a battle carried to a victory" (p. 81).

The analysis of a sermon text should be varied from time to time. Not every text lends itself to three parts, nor should every text be handled analytically rather than synthetically or with a homily. An analytical sermon uses the unity of the text as the unity of the sermon, and the parts of the text appear in the same form and the same order as in the text. The analytical outline, for example, is always strictly textual in the sense that the parts flow right from the text and in the same order. A synthetic sermon, on the other hand, can take four different forms: Simple, Intermediate, Advanced, and Highest. Simple synthesis is simply shifting the order of the point in the text. If A, B, and C are the points as presented in a text, simple synthesis would be to preach them in a different order - B, C, A, or A, C, B, etc. Intermediate synthesis is used when, in studying the parts of the text, one part stands out above the others and is elevated to the theme. Advanced synthesis is when the preacher takes all the thoughts of the text-major and minor-and lays them out side by side in no particular order. Step two is to meditate intensely on those thoughts until the thoughts combine in a new way or form a new pattern. Lenski himself admits, "Advanced synthesis is rather more difficult to explain theoretically than to work out practically" (p. 106). He then goes on to give some very helpful illustrations using actual texts. The Highest form of synthesis operates much the same as advanced synthesis in that all the thoughts are listed as completely as possible and then subjected to intense meditation. The difference here is that all of these truths are viewed with some special need of the congregation in mind, or according to "some special need filling the preacher's heart" (p. 109).

A homily is identified by Lenski as the most difficult sermon form to prepare and deliver rightly. It is certainly the most difficult to use and still hold the congregation's interest. A homily takes the text just as it comes. "In analytical and synthetic sermons the theme is really the logical unity of the parts. In a homily the theme is only a descriptive unity of the parts" (p. 112). In a homily there is no theme with strict control over the parts. A homily expounds the text in the order it is presented in the text, much like a description of landscape would change as the landscape itself changed. A homily will then necessarily have many more parts than other sermon types. A word of warning from Lenski, "A homily easily degenerates into a Sunday School lesson, in which one verse or thought after another is commented on by the teacher" (p. 114).

The material in Parts III ("The Theme") and IV ("Elaboration") tends to run together. As to outlining, in general, don't break promises made in the theme and parts. We offer only some highlights from the remainder of the book. In outlining and preaching, bring approbation first (what God has done for us) and then application. Justification, then sanctification. Christ for us, then Christ in us. There are no set rules on elaboration of the material in a text (once the skeleton of the theme and parts are set down). The serious student can find valuable information here regarding elaborative analysis, wide and narrow elaborative synthesis, illustrations, elaboration according to psychological norms, etc. Finally Lenski deals at length with the introduction and the conclusion. One note in particular here. Learn how to end your sermon! Many a fine sermon has been ruined-or the congregation left with a sour taste in their mouths-simply because the preacher didn't know when to say amen, or how. Concentrate on saying it well the first time, and then do not repeat yourself in the conclusion.

- M. Roehl

---

**Justification and Rome, by Robert D. Preus. Concordia Academic Press, a division of Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1997. Paperback, 141 pages.**

At the time of the Reformation there was a clear-cut difference between the Lutheran confessions and the Roman Catholic confessions on the doctrine of justification. Today, however, there are many voices, both among Lutherans and Catholics, who claim that this difference is not so great after all. In fact recent documents suggest that there is now a basic consensus on this doctrine, even though the terminology used to express it may be different.

In this last book written by him before his sudden death on November 4, 1995, Lutheran theologian Dr. Robert Preus examines some of these recent documents to determine whether true agreement has really been achieved on this doctrine after so many years of conflict.

The documents examined include *On Justification* (1963), the product of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Helsinki, Finland; *Justification by Faith* (1985), the result of an American Lutheran-Catholic dialogue; *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era, Do They Still Divide?* (1989), the work of a European discussion group made up of both Roman Catholics and Protestants; and finally the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, concerning which a footnote states: "Final approval of the document is expected by December 31, 1998, at the latest" (p. 25).

Dr. Preus's conclusion is that the priority in these dialogues and documents has been "external unity and external peace among the churches" (p. 106), not doctrinal truth. Participants from both sides already agreed beforehand that they wanted to establish such external peace and unity. The document thus becomes a tool to try to explain real doctrinal differences as mere non-divisive differences in emphasis or terminology. Both sides favor the historical-critical method of Bible study, which maintains that the Bible itself is not unified in doctrine. "If there is no unity of doctrine in the Scriptures, there can be no unity of doctrine in the church, which bases her

doctrine on the Scriptures; and all the striving and struggles for unity of doctrine in the past have been unachievable and hopeless quests” (pp. 109-110).

In Dr. Preus’s opinion the so-called “settlement (the Joint Declaration) is an amalgam of the old Lutheran and Roman Catholic definitions, or rather, a pasting together of the two disparate sets of definitions -- sort of like a treaty. Neither side gives up its set of definitions and meanings” (p. 111). As an example of this, Dr. Preus refers to the so-called agreement by both sides that justification is “by grace.” This sounds good, until we realize that “a convergence or consensus statement has been worked out which ignores the fact that both sides completely disagree on what the grace of God is” (p. 52). “When two parties say they depend upon the saving grace of God for salvation, and by grace one party (the Lutherans) means the saving, loving disposition of God and the other party (the Roman Catholics) means an infused quality, can they both be said to share a common confession?” (p. 54). “It does not make sense ... to assert that two parties have consensus and common understanding while at the same presenting the two parties as having different and divergent understandings on the same topic” (p. 109). In order to make it seem as though there is consensus, the discussions and documents avoid the time-honored “practice of using antitheses and condemnations” (p. 107).

Careful study of past Lutheran and Catholic confessions reveals differences in the definitions, not only of the term grace, but also of such terms as justification and faith and sin and repentance. Dr. Preus says that in these dialogues they should have studied how the Bible itself uses these terms. Preus maintains on p. 111: “A perusal of Gerhard Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament clearly establishes the fact that the Lutheran Reformation understanding of all these terms was the correct one.” Another complaint by Preus is “that the theology of the Apology and the Formula of Concord is virtually ignored” (p. 113).

Should we then believe the reports we hear in the newspapers and on television about doctrinal agreement between Lutherans and Catholics? Should we believe that the decisions of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563) against Lutheran doctrine are no longer valid? Those who read this book and accept its contents and well-reasoned argumentation will agree with Dr. Preus’s prediction: “Both the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent will remain fully intact and represent Rome’s doctrinal position on the doctrine of justification” (p. 113). At the same time “the Lutheran Church may lose its distinctive confession. ... This is already the case in large segments of Lutheranism” (p. 112).

- David Lau

---

**Happiness is a Choice: The Symptoms, Causes, and Cures of Depression, by Frank Minirth, M.D. and Paul Meier, M.D. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.**

“Happiness is a Choice,” says the jacket, “is a clinically proven, non -technical guidebook for families, as well as a resource for pastors, counselors, and family physicians.” I can’t speak for whether or not the book has been clinically proven, but the rest is true. This book is an easy read because the type is big and the doctors explain difficult terms to people like me who know very little of psychology.

Each chapter is a question, so answering all the chapter-questions should be a good way to show what the book is about. Please note that the answers to the questions are the authors’ answers, not mine.

Part 1 - What Is Depression?

1. Who Gets Depressed? Nearly everyone, at some point. This chapter says that depression without or with biological causes can be cured. “Happiness can become a way of life if we choose the right paths to obtain it” (p. 23).
2. What Are the Symptoms of Depression? This chapter has an interesting list of symptoms from sadness to a psychotic break, and ends with a self-rating depression scale.

3. Is Suicide a sin? Yes. Suicide is never God's will. This chapter includes a list of ten warning signs of individuals most likely to attempt suicide.

4. Are Grief Reactions the Same as Depression? No. Minirth/Meier outline here the five stages of grief, and make a rather bold statement to the effect that if you read their book and put it into practice, you will never be clinically depressed (unless you have a genetic bipolar disorder, 1% of the population).

#### Part 2-What Causes Depression?

5. Is Genetics a Good Excuse? No. This chapter begins with a refreshing rant against physicians who blame alcoholism, homosexuality and other grievous sins on "bad genes." "Most human depression is the result of our own irresponsible behavior" (p. 45).

6. How Deep Do the Roots of Depression Run? Deep. Eighty-five percent of our adult behavior patterns are firmly entrenched by the time we are six years old. Many of us learned faulty ways of handling our emotions in the first six years of life. But we are not slaves to these patterns; God has given us a will to change them.

7. What Are the Primary Sources of Emotional Pain? 1. Lack of Self Worth. 2. Lack of intimacy with others (loneliness). 3. Lack of intimacy with God (more or less unbelief).

8. Do "Nice Guys" Finish Last? Yes, pretty much they do. Includes a list of 13 ways to produce an obsessive child, and 130 attributes of the obsessive-compulsive personality.

9. Can Depression Be Acted Out? You bet. This chapter is about the opposite of the obsessive-compulsive, the hysterical (histrionic) personality type. Includes a handy list of 12 rules to follow if you want your daughter to end up being histrionic. Includes a list of 118 traits of the histrionic person.

10. What Precipitating Stresses Bring on Depression? Includes a descriptive list of ten precipitating stresses which may cause depression, such as a loss, anger turned inward, false guilt, true guilt, attacks by Satan, etc.

11. What are the Personality Dynamics That lead to Depression? This chapter is about other causes of depression, including some biological ones like hypothyroidism and hypoglycemia. The authors warn that these are real things, but often they are over-stressed in our society.

#### Part 3-How Can One Overcome Depression?

12. Are There Some Basic Guidelines For a Happy Life? This chapter begins by saying that the great commandment contains three directives, "Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself (genuine self worth is the opposite of false pride, which is a terrible sin committed primarily by individuals who are trying to compensate for their lack of self-worth)" (p. 133f.) I think the seven guidelines listed in this book sound pretty good. The first two are 1. Commit your life daily to the purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ and 2. Spend some time each day meditating on God's Word and applying it to your life.

13. How Do You Handle Anger? 1. Decide if your anger is appropriate. If yes, then 2. Verbalize your anger and forgive the object of anger by bedtime. 3. Leave all vengeance up to God.

14. When are Medication and Hospitalization Advantageous? The average clinically depressed patient can be healed with weekly therapy without drugs in six to twelve months. If weekly therapy and drugs are administered, three to six months would be the average recovery. But if that person checks himself into a hospital and has daily therapy and medication, he will feel better in a week and be totally over his depression in three to six weeks. Which is the best choice if the depressed has a family at home that needs him?

15. How Do You Handle Anxiety? This chapter lists 10 behavior patterns from Scripture that will decrease anxiety. Also included are a few more from common sense.

16. How Do You Find Lifelong Happiness? This chapter is full of rules to follow for a happy life. Many of them are based on things we know to be true from Scripture.

In summary, this book proceeds on the assumption that there is some good science and medicine in psychology. It states that there is almost always a direct relationship between psychological health and the spiritual life. By reading this book I learned many terms and conditions which I had heard before but not understood. The book has many good Scripture quotations and a few questionable ones.

We believe that "Jesus died for me," should be the central theme of every Christian's life. The freedom from worry which the gospel brings to us is mentioned in connection with many of the problems and solutions listed above, but they perhaps could have put more emphasis on what God has done for us, and a little less on what we can do for ourselves.

*- James J. Naumann*