

ISSUES...

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer 1976

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RECONCILIATION

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EDITOR'S NOTES

These are trying times in the world and in the church. Strife and discord greet us when we listen, read and work. The worker is at odds with management. Husbands, wives and children disagree and often part ways. Nations and factions within nations are ready to fight at the slightest provocation. Conditions seem to be going from bad to worse among brethren who call upon the same God.

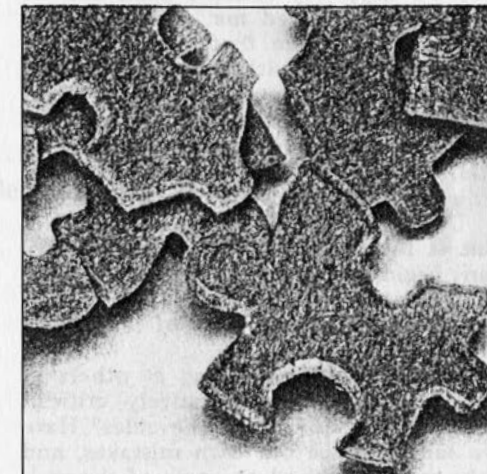
Reconciliation is certainly hoped for by all responsible people. What can be done to achieve it? Is it possible or not? This *Issues* is devoted to the presentation of both possibilities and problems in the quest for peace wherever there is strife. We hope our readers find leads to fruitful plans for action in these pages. The views expressed are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the position of the Concordia faculty.

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editorials

CAN SINNERS RECONCILE ?

Two small boys were playing with a wagon one day. They were each trying to ride at the same time, but there was little evidence of enjoyment. Finally one of the youngsters turned to the other and said, "You know, one of us could have a lot more fun if you would get off." Who among us has never felt this way? What is the truth about us? Are we really discordant in our harmony, divisive in our methods? What can we answer when face to face on the trail Ahab asks Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Let us not answer too hastily.

The church on earth lives in complexity and paradox. Those within her find themselves both for and against, both at peace and in conflict, both united and separated. To the world the church manifests the sinner-saint condition of her members. On earth the church is not an ideal society but a society striving for the ideal in an unideal world. By her Lord the church has been given the message of reconciliation yet faithful discipleship places the believer into the midst of tension and turmoil. What surprises most of us is that the tension and turmoil comes not only from those "out there" but as Acts 20 predicted, right from those within the fellowship.

Hostility and barriers exist among Christians because we are not yet freed from the presence of sin. Removal of barriers (reconciliation) begins with recognizing the presence of sin. Whose sins? "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Anyone who has not actively tried to prevent animosity among Christians, anyone who furthers hatred among Christians in any way at all must plead guilty — how much it is not our place to judge. We can

do nothing to free ourselves; we can only seek to be freed. There is not one of us who is not dependent upon forgiveness.

Forgiveness is needed for those times when we forgot that our unity is always the gift of God. No human cunning nor organizational genius created it. The beginning and means to overcoming our disunity is always the centrality of Jesus Christ. When we are disobedient to His preeminent position as the Head of the body, the Church, that body dysfunctions. Only as we completely live in His divine forgiveness are all other acts of forgiveness among us made possible.

While it is not in our power to create unity in the church, God does place upon us the obligation to express and maintain His gift to us. How? By our common submission to that apostolic deposit of doctrine which is the content of our witness to the world and the voice of the Spirit to call us all to Christ.

The life of the Church as set forth in the early chapters of Acts has been often set forth as a model for the churches of later generations. In Acts 5 we see how the Spirit's judgment fell mightily upon the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. Whenever or wherever conviction is replaced by the desire to simply create a good image the Spirit's judgment still stands. Reconciliation in the church requires that differences of opinion and allegiances be clearly expressed.

Reconciliation of different "parties" in the church has never been long-lasting when one or the other felt they had to compromise their understanding of the Spirit's revelation to the Church. While reconciliation does require SELF-sacrifice (remember our reconciliation to God required the Cross) those in the Church dare not sacrifice that Word which did not originate in them. And differences in the understanding of what the Spirit's Word is saying to the Church will not be reconciled by pretending that they are

not there or that they do not matter. Unless such differences are genuinely overcome they will remain a constant source of infection, the more dangerous for being hidden.

We are willing to concede that there may be differences of opinion within certain limits in the Church (e.g. on matters where Scripture has not clearly revealed the answer to our questions) without violating the unity of faith. We also admit that there may be independent organizations for considerations of convenience without violating the body of Christ. However, when organizational separations of Christians come as a result of dogmatic differences they are to be regretted. But they are less evil than either hypocrisy or contention. So long as unity of faith, love and obedience are preserved the unity of the Church is as to its essential principle intact.

As much as in us lies God calls us to live at peace with all men. Our ministry is basically the ministry of reconciliation. As we struggle to promote unity, charity and purity we sorrow over the realization of how much sin persists in causing divisions and dissensions among us. But we know that the Lord is still the head of His one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We know that He searches our heart. He alone passes true judgment on our loyalties and efforts. Whatever we do we always stand under His judgment and His grace. And it is He alone who can make us clearly "one in hope, one in doctrine, one in charity." Let us pray therefore, to the Lord of the Church for each other. He reigns. He never fails.

The overcoming of such differences comes only from dependence upon the Lord of the Church. It begins and ends with the prayer that His Spirit may make our faith stronger, our judgment clearer and our ability to draw distinctions more critical.

Richard J. Shuta

**WHY DON'T WE SAY
"I LOVE YOU" ?**

"O, brother Montague, give me thy hand." So speaks Capulet in the closing scene of Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET. With this handshake, peace comes to two warring families. All is happiness, right? Not quite. Reconciliation takes place before a tomb in which lie the freshly dead bodies of Romeo, son of Montague, and Juliet, daughter of Capulet, who, thwarted in their love by their families' "ancient grudge," have taken their own lives. The Prince of Verona, witness to the scene, says to the grieving fathers,

See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,

That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love!

And I, for winking at your discords, too,

Have lost a brace of kinsmen: all are punished.

A city torn with discord, households disordered, lives lost — how much of this might have been avoided if reconciliation had come sooner!

In our community, our Synod, two "families" oppose each other. There are clashes, threats, recriminations. Will we (for all of us are caught up in the struggle) move toward reconciliation? And, if it comes, will it be only after "all are punished" by needless, grievous hurt? Will "give me thy hand" be spoken only in the aftermath of many damaged lives, "poor sacrifices of our enmity?" Already kingdom work has been disrupted, people have been estranged from one another and from the Church, and works of ministry have been hindered. Will worse happen before peace comes, if, indeed it comes? If we are to avoid the rush toward tragedy, where do we begin?

In Frank Gilroy's modern play, THE SUBJECT WAS ROSES,* there is a suggestion for us to ponder. In this play we see a family living together, under one roof, claiming one name, yet each member is separated from the others. Timmy the son, home from the army after World War II and seeking to reconstruct his life, is at odds with his father, John, whom he has resented from childhood. But Timmy matures, and has the grace to see some truth about himself. He sees that frequently he has sided blindly with his mother. He comes to understand the thinking of his father: "That's what we must seem like to him — an alliance. Always two against one. Always us against him . . ."

But Timmy's greatest realization is expressed in the final scene of the play. Timmy says to his father, "Listen to me. (Pauses, then goes on quietly, intensely) There was a dream I used to have about you and I . . . It was always the same . . . I'd be told that you were dead and I'd run crying into the street . . . Someone

would stop me and ask why I was crying and I'd say, 'My father's dead and he never said he loved me.'" But Timmy goes on: "It's true that you never said you loved me. But it's also true that I've never said these words to you." This confession by Timmy leads to his positive affirmation: "I love you, Pop. I love you." Both are moved to tears, and they embrace each other.

Does this solve all their problems? No. But it reconciles to a point where love can begin to deal constructively with accumulated misunderstandings, arguments, and different ways of looking at life.

Have we, when looking at others in our "family," been negatively critical, fault-finding, quick to take sides? Have we failed to see our own mistakes, and have we been blind to some of the real, troubling issues? God, who has reconciled us to Himself by the blood of the Cross, has entrusted to us "the word of reconciliation." God the Holy Spirit empowers us to plead with men and women, "Be ye reconciled to God." Mindful of our common grace, are we not also moved to plead, "Let us be reconciled with one another?" And cannot we begin by saying, "I have not said it nearly well enough nor often enough, but I say it now: I love you, brother, sister in the faith."

This beginning will not banish all our problems either. But these cannot be resolved until the "us against them" is transformed by a loving embrace into "we." Then, in that mutual caring which rises above self-conceit and self-preservation, we may, in grace, move beyond the conviction of what is "our" right to a willingness to seek out what is right before God, and therefore right for both of us.

Robert Howard Clausen

* Random House, New York

**ERRORS OF SOME
DOCTRINAL PREFIXES**

The prefix "un" has received an unusual amount of attention during the past years. Many of us have used it to characterize fellow Christians and even fellow members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. We have observed that certain individuals or groups within the synod are uncommitted, uninformed, unclear, unBiblical, unconcerned, unconfessional, and unChristian. The complex assortment of historical events, political decisions, inflammatory rhetoric, and well-intended applications of Law and Gospel that have brought us to this day are the heritage of all the members of Synod, synodical administrators, conven-

tion delegates, lay-members of Synod, boards of control, pastors, teachers, and professors. We have become "experts" in the art of ossifying our brothers and sisters and "masters" of the glittering generality.

To our list of "uns" we must add the most significant "un" of all. We have been unable to see ourselves as we really are. When looking into the mirror of the Law, the image we have observed is so distasteful that many of us have become convinced it must belong to someone else. Our natural inclination is to invoke the name of the Lord as we attempt to destroy what we see. Instead of saying, "my sin, my sin, my great, great sin," we commit fratricide and ask the Lord's blessing upon the distasteful but necessary task. Being deeply concerned that the Gospel is taught in its truth and purity, we have forgotten our own limitations and appropriated the work of the Spirit into our own hands. We must remind ourselves that the Church is not saved or preserved by her pure doctrine, but in spite of her misuse of Scripture.

Again and again Jesus forgives the mistakes of the Missouri Synod both doctrinal and those related to the process of moral decision making. Again and again He sends His Spirit to purify teaching and to inform the decision making process. The Synod, like the individual, always remains saint and sinner. As a child of God, she is by faith an heir of God, and therefore a saint. But as a human institution, she is born in sin and is perpetually erring. The Bible teaches pure doctrine. The Bible contains pure doctrine. In every generation Christians struggle to teach and practice that pure doctrine. Again and again they fail. But Jesus loves them anyway.

The biggest mistake any Christian or group of Christians can make is to feel secure, saved, or righteous because of their pure doctrine. When any individual or group become so certain that they and they alone have captured God's pure doctrine and then proceed to purify the Church on that basis, they are bound to strain for gnats and swallow camels. In such a situation the wine bags always become hard and the precious wine is lost.

When things are this way the Church has ears to hear but does not hear. But when the people of God listen to each other, in spite of rank and position, because they recognize that the Spirit of God has not bound Himself to man-made structures, but to the Word and sacraments — then each and every man will be open to his brother's pain and his brother's yearning to hear the Spirit and to follow the Master. And what's most important, the Spirit will lead him to trust his brother and use each man to open God's Word to the other.

Ronald W. Vahl



by August Bernthal

**RECONCILIATION:
WHAT IS IT ?**

Ask the average man on the street what reconciliation means and chances are that he will not immediately offer the definition found in any good Greek lexicon. He will not be interested in Katallasso which means "to change, exchange coins for others of equal value, hence to reconcile (those who are at variance and return into favor with)." (Thayer) He will think rather of one single word, peace. He may not know even what he means by peace except that he knows that he is not peace-full.

Peace of Mind?

Our century has not been without its "peace of mind" literature. An eminent Jewish rabbi, Joshua Liebman, offered his volume *Peace of Mind*. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen offered his book *Peace of Soul*. Billy Graham completed the trilogy with a collection of sermons called *Peace with God*. These, together with dozens of others, have encouraged modern teachers and preachers to suggest that religious faith becomes a means whereby fears, tensions, arguments, and other anxieties that beset our minds give way to peace, poise, power, agreement, and serenity. Much of it suggests that all one needs to do is to relax in an arm chair, close one's eyes, and repeat, "the peace of God is flooding my life, filling me with quietness, relaxation, healing and spiritual power."

What explains the popularity of this peace of mind literature except that it answers a real need in people's lives? It was once said of a man, "He is not so much a personality as a civil war." That describes many of us. Like the prodigal son we are torn apart by fundamental disharmony. We're at strife with ourselves, our heritage, our friends, our environment, our homes, our church, and our God. We may flip the pages of Scripture hurriedly when it talks of sin and

salvation but let it say something about inner peace and we search in eagerness, for it speaks to our situation. However, we need much more than that.

How Alienation Began

Our plight is an ancient plight. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. What really did Adam and Eve lose through their disobedience and separation? Their lives had been caught up magnificently in three centers. First, there was God. They really knew Him. They rested in His care with no trace of distrust as they took for granted the sky above. Secondly, they were fascinated by the beauty of the Garden. Everything was theirs to enjoy. They walked through it as possessors. Thirdly, they were absorbed in each other and they lived in the glory of lovers that asked no more of one another but to give themselves completely and with joy.

In one tragic moment they lost all three centers. They hid from God. They were driven out of the Garden. They turned in upon themselves as evidenced in Cain's cynical retort to God when he had murdered his brother, Abel, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

How can man recover the centers of life? How can he be lost in the goodness and the greatness of God? How can he again possess the earth as a garden to care for and enjoy? How can he turn from self to brother? How can he have a brother again, not as a rival to Christ, but as a brother indeed to love and care for?

Back to the very beginning! In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness. That's how the history of man begins, his glory and his tragedy. God made him to be like God with the gift of freedom, with the right of self-determination, with the terrifying gift of choice. Unlike other creatures whose course was determined by disposition and appetite, man was endowed with reason and will. He could choose good or evil. He could obey God or he could obey the enemy of God. He could soar to heights or sink to the depths. God could have made us to be puppets. He could have pulled the strings and spared us from disaster. He risked everything in having no strings to pull. His only pull was love. *If love fails all fails.*

And love did fail. Man turned from the God who loved him and who destined him to the glory of eternal life with God. He turned to obey the enemy of God — Satan who despised him. It is what we know as the Fall. Satan lured man away from God, enticed him into his own clutches and threw him into a vast concentration camp. And man learned to love the darkness more than the light. His values were twisted, his desires were ignoble. He was driven by chaotic passions through all sorts of secondary goals. He moved from life to death. His estrangement from God was so complete that by his own imagination he could not, would not, have made the faintest move

toward recovery. The harsh language of Scripture puts it this way, "He was dead in trespasses and sin." (Ephesians 2:1)

The Scripture makes clear both what reconciliation means and man's need for such reconciliation.

Since the fall of man into sin the original relationship between God and man is destroyed. The marvelous free communion of Eden, sustained by love, has been changed to enmity. Man now lives in an estrangement from God and in enmity toward Him. He is diametrically opposed to God. By himself he cannot get back to his God, nor does he want to. He must be rescued. His help must lie *extra nos*, for sin and guilt are now his lot. In His holiness and righteousness God could have nothing in common with sin. He could only be wrathful and punish. The express will of God, the Law, demands of man a complete agreement with itself. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-39) God's Law demands and God's Law punishes. "It is written cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." (Gal. 3:10) His anger inexorably strikes every transgression. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Rom. 1:18) "All the world is guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19) "We are by nature children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3) *Lex enim semper accusat.* The Law is the letter that kills.

The way from man to God, therefore, is blocked. Every attempt on man's part to ascend to God is only another part, an intensification of his revolt against God. For the wrath of God, God's punitive will against sin, must be satisfied. And this satisfaction no man can render and no man wills to render. The Atonement is the high priestly work of Christ, true man and true God. The Atonement, therefore, is an act of God who is both the wrathful One and the Expiator — both the insulted One and the Propitiator. Both the initiative and the carrying out of the work of the Atonement are His.

God's Rescue Mission

The greatest love story is the story of man's rescue by God. God loved him. The incredible dimension of God's love is that He would not let man go. He put in motion the plan to recover him. He promised a Savior and in the fullness of time He sent His only begotten Son. And when the time had come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Why God let century after century go by before He sent Jesus we do not know. We do know that He singled out Abraham and his people to carry the promise of a Savior. The prophets of the nation kept

reminding people of the great day to come when the Messiah would arrive. The clues of what He would be like were increasingly clear. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. With His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The Savior came and began His ministry. People rejected Him and let Him die on the cross at the hands of Roman soldiers. That should have been the end but He rose from the dead. This was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. (John 1:29) "His was the blood of the Son of God that cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:7) It was God's eternal counsel before the foundation that "predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." (Eph. 1:15)

Both the initiative and the carrying out of the work of the Atonement was God's. This is clearly expressed by St. Paul in II Corinthians 5:18-21, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. And now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

"Christ died for all." As Luther said, "It is our understanding of that little preposition, *for*, on which hinges our eternal salvation." There's only one meaning of that word "for" and it means in my stead. That's what Paul said, "God made Him to be sin for us." In the sight and judgment of God when Christ died on the cross, I died. His obedience was mine, His payment for the penalty of sin was mine. It was the adequate abundant payment for the redemption of a lost world. "By His stripes we are healed." And He rose again. God accepted that sacrifice as a complete sacrifice and satisfaction of His divine holiness and justice, forgives sin, and receives sinners who by the call of the Spirit come to Him in faith.

It is just amazing that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ God changes us from enemies into friends. He reconciled us. He calls us today, not servants, not, first of all, disciples, not soldiers, but friends. He gives us a new life, a new hope, a new love, a new courage.

Peace With God

He gives us what we want and need most — peace with God. By peace with God, Paul means a new standing before God, a new status made possible by the redeeming work of Christ. According to one expositor the imagery suggests the picture of an Eastern court where none might enter save those

validly introduced and vouched for. We think of Joseph, summoned from prison and brought by the grace of the chief butler before Pharaoh because he interpreted a king's dream. This one-time prisoner was exalted to a new and glorified status in the royal court. While still a subject he could still come and go from the king's presence with perfect freedom, second in power only to the king himself. So Paul says that we who are prisoners in the dungeon of sin and death have been released from bondage and brought into the presence of the Most High and given a glorious freedom in the sight of God. (Romans 6:22)

Men are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. This is a statement of fact. And it is a fact that has to do with life. Christ does reconcile people. He makes enemies into friends. He brings the most widely different people into the presence of God where other differences disappear. The fruit of reconciliation is the fruit of the Spirit of God. The fruit of the Spirit, we know, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, fidelity, and self control.

Peace Among Us?

We are to be reconciled to each other. It's not just two-way traffic between God and me. It's three-way — God, me, and my neighbor. We know that God so loved us that we "ought to love one another." (John 15:12) "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loves God loves his brother also." (I Thessalonians 4:9) That has to do with our relationships to people. We are to live a life of compassion and understanding and love because God in His mercy offers to forgive our sins.

Men today are, of course, caught in the battle between the flesh and the spirit. They are yet *simul justus et peccator*. Ofttimes the old man is permitted to hammerlock the new. The evidence is all around. We see it in our everyday lives. In personal relationships there are things like suspicion, lovelessness, lack of trust, destructive criticism, harsh actions of one kind or another.

We see it in the church. Look where you will and find suspicion, jealousy, bitterness, recrimination, pride, prejudice, in-fighting, rivalry, brother set against brother. There exist not only divisions between denominations, but increasingly divisions within denominations and within congregations. As people of God deal with difficult and controversial matters relationships are increasingly disrupted. There are issues literally tearing apart The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Paul scolded the Corinthians for their conduct. You should be ashamed of yourselves he thundered, Have you no decency that you bring the faith into disrepute? In effect, he said, By your disgusting behavior you have made Christianity the laughing stock of the world.

We view this tragedy in the attitude of many to the body of Christ. God's people confess that the church of Jesus Christ is not a collection of individuals but rather a body. A person either is inseparably joined to all of it or he belongs to none of it. The fragmentation and sectarianism that disfigures the church is not only a hindrance to its mission, which is bad enough in itself. Far worse, it is a denial of its nature and destroys its credibility.

There are those who glory in the disunity of the church and scoff at responsible efforts to overcome it. When some months ago a national church leader remarked that the state of bigotry was alive and healthy today, there immediately came a letter to the *Lutheran Witness*, saying, You bet, we're bigoted where Romanism is concerned, and the majority of us intend to stay so... Lutherans don't need any dialogues with papists. We've done well without them for centuries and will continue to do so for centuries to come.

Why say more? Often we feel guilty because we reach a point where we don't get excited about the whole business of church union. There are so many more important issues. Yet if that is the truth we can also say that the Gospel is not relevant and the mind of Christ is not relevant.

We see the pitfall, too, in our response to the world. Christians, although members of a called community which is in the world but not of it, are nevertheless inseparably joined to the entire human family in the common responsible quest for peace, justice, total human development and the protection of the earth. It almost smacks of a cliché to remind ourselves that God sent His Son because He loves the world, not just the church, and that the church has a mission to the world. Nor is it new to stress that we today live in a global village where every human being is our neighbor. How much do we recognize that world neighbors are part of a world family which God created and loves and for all of whom Christ died that they too might find abundant life in Him. Yet few Christians view those remote from them as their neighbors, much less as members of their family. These are the ones with whom we are to plead "Be ye reconciled to God" — and for whose hunger, illiteracy, disease and poverty we must have a heart.

What is the basis for reconciliation between one man and another, between men and men, be it in the church or the world? Jesus told a marvelous parable of an Oriental potentate who decided to have a day of reckoning with his stewards. The spotlight, of course, falls on the man who owed his master an enormous sum, roughly the equivalent of ten million dollars. To his amazement the debt is cancelled and he is forgiven. Then on the way out of the presence of his master his eye falls on a fellow servant who owed him a couple of hundred dollars. He grips him by the throat and says, "Pay me what you owe!" When the wretched man begs for mercy he throws

him into prison. The scene is forcefully pointed, as our attention is riveted on the disparity between the colossal sum this man owed and the comparatively paltry sum that he was owed and on his astounding ingratitude and hardness of heart.

Could Jesus say any more clearly that what God is willing to forgive is infinitely more than anything we are called on to forgive in others? The almost incredible difference in the sum forgiven and the sum demanded is His way of saying that the mercy and reconciling love of God is so overwhelming that any forgiving we have to do is trivial beside it. Have we yet learned to think that way? Put it in terms of any situation you wish today and whatever human relationships you choose. Jesus pleads with us to keep in mind the vastness of our debt to God so that we can see those offenses which wrangle us, those hurts we have nourished, shrink to their proper proportion. By our immediate shocked condemnation of the man in the parable we have judged ourselves. *The Christian is one who has experienced the forgiving grace of God in Jesus Christ. We thank God for it each time we worship. Then how, He asks, can we go on nourishing in our hearts bitterness against other people no matter how deeply we have been offended? There is no surer cure for an unforgiving spirit than a new realization of what God has done for us in Christ.* Every Sunday we celebrate the mercy of God, the incredible gift of His Son — to welcome us in spite of our sins into the glad fellowship of the forgiven. And the mercy we receive is the motivation for the mercy we show. Christian life is not so much a grim struggle to follow the commandment of love as a spontaneous giving of love by one who knows how much we owe to the One who so loved that He gave His Son.

That parable also makes it clear that it is impossible for anyone to receive and experience the forgiveness of God if there is no willingness on his part to forgive. Often people ask "What must we do to receive the forgiveness of God?" and the answer is "Nothing." "Nothing in my hands I bring..." It is oftentimes added that though this grace is freely given it is conditional on our repentance. If this means that we must want to be forgiven maybe there's some truth to it. But *in the Gospels there is but one condition spoken by Jesus, and really not a condition, but a statement of fact. You cannot be forgiven if you have a totally unforgiving spirit.*

The end of the parable says even more. It ends with the wretched man being condemned to torture. It's a parable from real life and that sort of thing happened in those days. But *there's a terrible truth behind those words and that is that the lack of reconciliation, the unforgiving spirit, indeed delivers one to the torturers.*

Joseph — An Example

The Old Testament, too, is full of stories of forgiveness. Think of Joseph sold in slavery. Now

there comes the day when, brought out of the dungeon to interpret the dream of Pharaoh, Joseph moves on to a promotion and first place in Egypt after Pharaoh. Now he is prominent and wealthy. One day when the famines were great in Israel the brothers of Joseph appear before him to buy corn. The years disguised Joseph to them, but the years could never disguise his brothers to Joseph. After proving their consciences and rousing their fears, at length he disclosed himself to them. And they wept together, tears of repentance on the part of his brothers, tears of affection and forgiveness on the part of Joseph. Then comes the great act of his life when his brothers, fearing the vengeance of Joseph, discovered the heart of God in their brother and his forgiving love. And in his own forgiveness Joseph found his own peace and joy. After all, God had meant it all for good. He was the instrument of saving his own people.

Difficulties in Reconciliation

There are, of course, misconceptions about reconciliation. Reconciliation is not crying "peace" when there is no peace. Nor does it mean peace at any price. Nor does it mean complete agreement in every little point of practice or doctrine. Nor does it mean that every little difference must be reached until reconciliation is effected.

Reconciliation becomes difficult when it is set over and against what people call the truth. The crucial point is one's understanding of truth. The late Dr. Franklin Clark Fry used to speak of the twin imperatives of truth and unity each making equal claims upon the Christians. One must not betray truth for the sake of unity nor discard unity for the sake of truth. The result is that *truth and unity are always in tension so much so that some find it unbearable. How can there be unity in a body if its members have different beliefs about the nature, function, or their own relationship to that body? Searching the Scripture in the mind and spirit of the Christ whose cradle that Scripture is — that's how.*

In seeking reconciliation people will examine areas in which they surmise there is little to divide. This happened in recent Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogues. At least some common understanding was found in discussions of both the substance and role of the Nicene Creed and baptism. People discovered more harmony than they anticipated. This was at least partly due to the semantic factor. Sometimes there were different understandings of the meanings of words while at other times there had been different ways of saying the same things. Often what had seemed like contradictions turned out to be priorities in emphasis. Where disagreements remained, however, the recurring question turned out to be which or what categories of differences disrupt unity and what kind can be tolerated or even regarded as

enrichment of legitimate diversity within the body of Christ.

Someone has said that all doctrine is like concentric circles with Jesus Christ and His saving work as the center. The farther away from the center the doctrines are, the less primary and essential they become. Admittedly, there will always be a grey area in which some doctrines will fall. These should be the subject of ongoing discussion, a spirit of openness, mutual respect and love. The church has long recognized fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines.

Nor do people need to be likeminded in everything. That's not the way it was in the beginning. The whole New Testament is crowded with people, each one amazingly different — blustering Peter, shy Andrew, skeptical Thomas, and the sons of thunder. Sometimes they disagreed, as did Paul and Barnabas, but reconciled they continued to work in their own arenas. This would not be the case if being a Christian was a matter of accepting a book of rules, or giving a direction of one's life to some spiritual authority. We are not asked to change ourselves into someone else. Justification by faith means God accepts us as we are; without demanding any preliminary religious reformation of character. Christ, who surprised the religious leaders of his day by accepting a great variety of people just as they were, still creates in us a variety — a body with many members.

That brings interesting situations. How about the clash that comes when the way of one person interferes with yours? Imagine what would happen if every person in an orchestra would be free to do his own thing. We have a conductor and a score. "All of us united to Christ form one body." The Head, the center, is Christ. Together we have allegiance to Him and we are free.

The Way

When Christ comes in He "makes all things new." He makes a man pass from death to life. Christ's man is new. His thoughts, his understanding, his hopes, his actions, are new. The walls between a man and God and between a man and his fellowmen begin to crumble and then collapse. Separating differences are ruined. Ancient rivalries and old struggles for supremacy disappear. The door is slammed shut on all suspicion, all jealousy, bitterness, recrimination, prejudice, fear, and *Christ asks us to live for and not against one another. There is not time for petty in-fighting and rivalry.*

And what describes this newness best of all? A new strength, a new love, a new courage, a new hope? No. Reconciliation, the forgiveness of sins. That's what makes a man new, a church new, a world new.



WHERE IS RECONCILIATION NEEDED?

by Orville C. Walz

One look at a daily newspaper, or one viewing of the latest news on television soon convinces most people that a great deal of reconciliation is needed in this Twentieth Century world in which we live. Crime rates rise, divorce rates climb, political campaigns bring out some of the worst in mankind's vocabulary, nations use intelligence and counter-intelligence on adversaries, energy poor nations attempt to barter to their advantage with nations blessed with rich natural resources, and within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod opportunities to restore harmony between Christian brethren become more and more remote.

Where does Twentieth Century mankind need reconciliation? Who is in need of reconciliation? When is reconciliation needed? Stated succinctly, reconciliation is needed everywhere by everyone at all times. All people are in dire need for a restoration to friendship, harmony, and communion. Christ's admonition to Peter in teaching how often one is to forgive his brother is still in order today: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:22)

The purpose of this brief essay is to give the reader an opportunity to appreciate, via examples from contemporary everyday life, the numerous opportunities which children of God have to practice reconciliation. Specifically, the following areas will be examined: 1) the need for reconciliation between God and man, 2) the need for reconciliation within one's self, 3) the need for reconciliation within families, 4) the need for reconciliation in personal relationships beyond the family, 5) the need for reconciliation within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and 6) the need for reconciliation within and among nations.

I. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

Before man can attempt to be reconciled within himself or with his brother, he must be at peace and in harmony with his Almighty Maker. The Apostle Paul described the hopelessness of man's attempts to affect such a reconciliation when he wrote, "For the

good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7:19)

Mankind was not always in such a predicament. Following creation there was no need for reconciliation. At the conclusion of six magnificent days of work, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31) Man was a perfect creature, created in his maker's image. Man knew God and was happy in this knowledge. The need for reconciliation between God and man arrived with the fall of Adam and Eve. Instead of becoming more like God, man became everything that was the antithesis of what he had been before. There was enmity between God and man, and also between man and man. What a shock! What a blow! For man today to appreciate the feelings of Adam and Eve in their sudden transition from perfect beings, created and existing in God's image, to a fallen mankind, destined to spending eternity in hell is nigh impossible.

However, the same loving and gracious Heavenly Father who announced the seriousness of their sinfulness to Adam and Eve also promised them a Savior, one who was to follow and through whom salvation for eternity in heaven was possible. (Genesis 3:15) This Savior was born centuries later of the Virgin Mary, lived a number of years on earth, and during his public ministry gave man instructions on how a reconciled child of God should live. This Jesus suffered and died for the sins of all mankind, conquered the power of sin, death, and the devil, and on the third day rose from the dead. Forty days later He ascended into heaven, and there He sits at the right hand of the Father, awaiting all Christians who die with faith in Him as their Savior. Thanks be to God! Christians are now at one with God. Reconciliation between God and man is no longer impossible. One word of caution: man must continually be cognizant that this reconciliation never can be the result of his efforts. Rather, as the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of man through Word and Sacraments, it is God who does the reconciling. As Paul wrote the Corinthians, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconcilia-

tion." (II Corinthians 5:18. See also Daniel 9:24, Ephesians 2:16, Colossians 1:20, and Hebrews 2:17) For the Christian, at peace with God, reconciliation with other human beings with whom he lives is now not only possible, but such reconciliation is a requirement of the new man who daily comes forth as the Christian lives and grows in sanctification.

II. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION WITHIN ONE'S SELF

Since man is now at peace with God, he can attempt to find peace within himself. When God created man He gave him an inner voice, his conscience, which encourages him to avoid that which is wrong, and to do that which he knows God desires. Some individuals seem to find reconciliation within themselves quite readily, while others seem to find inner reconciliation difficult to obtain. Even within the same human being there are peaks and valleys in the level of peace and satisfaction experienced.

Numerous examples could be given of man trying to find peace within himself. Of high importance is finding satisfying work, employment which allows man to use his God-given talents and abilities. Two levels of employment on opposite ends of a continuum seem a pity. At one extreme is the individual who has advanced through an organization to a point where he is literally "in over his head." Peter and Hull discuss this concept in *The Peter Principle*. (Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull. *The Peter Principle*. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.) At the other end of the continuum is the individual who is underemployed. Examples include the large number of individuals with doctorates who are driving taxi cabs and school buses, and people with highly specialized skills who must earn their living performing tasks which require little in the way of advanced education or training. Worst of all, there are the individuals who are unemployed. How often do not individuals think of work as a curse, but what is worse than being without employment? Few human beings go to their places of employment on a Monday morning, looking with delight upon the large volume of work to be completed. Yet, through the years one usually finds that it is such full days which bring the greatest satisfaction to the person, giving man the feeling that something worthwhile has been accomplished for humanity. Satisfying work truly assists man in becoming reconciled within himself.

Psychologically, reconciliation within one's being often involves paradoxes. Humans have goals which they hope to reach, yet their actions often take them in a direction leading away from the goals. Consider the housewife on a diet who attends a neighborhood coffee, where she eats a large chocolate sundae, all the while lamenting, "I know I shouldn't be eating this, but . . ." She is experiencing a real inner fight,

since her goals and her actions are moving in opposite directions. For a person to know what turns him on and off, what makes him tick psychologically, is of tremendous value to his personal mental hygiene. Reconciliation within a person involves leveling with one's psychological self, examining one's goals, and then acting in a manner that brings inner harmony between goals and actions. Of great importance to a person's psychological health is a fine sense of humor. Being able to laugh at one's self, to inwardly say "how foolish of me to act that way," and to appreciate humor in others helps bring harmony to the individual, and it also decreases the likelihood of future ulcers.

Finally, in considering harmony and oneness within an individual, recreational activities should not be neglected nor minimized. Heart attacks, high blood pressure, ulcers, mental illness, and stress and strain are aspects of the lives of most individuals inhabiting the earth today. In a world which encourages people to produce larger and larger quantities, as well as materials of good quality, recreation is a necessity. What a sad sight to see someone reach retirement age with no hobbies, no hunting, fishing, or outdoor favorites, with only the four walls of a home to stare at day after day. To be sure, some aspects of recreation in current society are overemphasized, but too frequently one sees the sad transitions many retirees have to make as they attempt to adjust from their "workaholic" careers to a life with nothing to do. For such, reconciliation within themselves is a major need.

III. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION WITHIN FAMILIES

Reconciliation with his Creator a reality, and reconciliation within himself a possibility, man's next logical area of reconciliation involves his family. While the Second Table of the Law, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," includes all human beings, the need for reconciliation often exists most frequently within families since family members spend a great deal of time together. Because of the helter skelter, rapid pace of modern society, some might question whether family interactions are more numerous than business associations. It is true that some heads of households who travel a great deal often talk about spending a vacation together with the family to become reacquainted with spouse and children. As sinful human beings, it is also true that after two or three days of this longed for family togetherness, either spouse may think out loud that it is time for the breadwinner to return to work, or that husband and wife are not yet ready for retirement.

Any family which has experienced the trauma of moving, or deciding what can be moved and what has to be discarded knows of the need for reconciliation within the family. Consider the instances in which a

beloved family pet, or a pet loved by at least some members of the family, has been the catalyst calling for reconciliation. Selection of a life style to be lived, selection of forms of recreation, selection of types of food to eat and clothing to wear, selection of schools children will attend, and selection of family friends are examples of family decisions which can lead to the need for reconciliation. If a sense of humor is needed for one's own reconciliation, how much greater the need for good senses of humor by members of a family. Some newly married couples have discovered that previously considered minor differences of opinion can become major irritants in married life. Possibly wise Solomon had such an irritant in mind when he wrote, "If you shout a pleasant greeting to a friend too early in the morning, he will count it as a curse." (Proverbs 27:14)

Moving beyond the immediate family, reconciliation is frequently required to restore harmony among relatives. The Fourth Commandment places no time limit or age limit upon the honor children are to bestow to their parents. Friction develops when parents with good intentions attempt to regulate the lives of their children too far or to a great extent. Children often have ignored the wise and experienced advice of their parents after they have reached the age of majority or left home.

Solutions to problems with relatives outside the immediate family are frequently more difficult to resolve than those within an immediate family. Sons and daughters are perplexed as to what to do for their parents when the elders are in the process of losing their physical or mental health. Snooping parents or in-laws can be a source of much irritation to a young married couple. Differences in societal customs and mores, with resultant different life styles between generations in a family can be difficult, and reconciliation is needed.

Finally, as with satisfying employment in bringing reconciliation to one's self, even so problems within families can be a blessing when Christian reconciliation is the end result. Numerous are the marriages which have been strengthened through years of problem solving between spouses. Stronger and deeper have become the bonds of love between parents and children through years of reconciliation among these members of God's creation. To be sure, all family quarrels do not end in reconciliation. Some marriages end in divorce, and some parents disown their children, but such failures should never keep Christians from striving for the establishment of love and harmony within their families.

IV. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND THE FAMILY

When in the lives of man things seem darkest, frequently a close friend comes through with the

needed words of encouragement to lighten the load. Friends many times are considered closer than relatives. As friendships develop and grow, nicks and even jagged edges in the relationship can develop. When that occurs, reconciliation is required. Just as small, seemingly insignificant things — a kind word, a friendly glance, a smile, a gesture — can be the high points of one's day when given in sincerity by a friend, even so a cross word, an unfriendly glance, the lack of a smile, and the wrong type of gesture can result in a need for reconciliation between friends.

Most individuals are employed in one way or another, and the resultant personal relationships between management and labor, between employer and employee, and between buyer and seller offer many opportunities for the lack of harmonious interactions. One might wonder what could be worse than to see a fellow human being feeling coerced to labor day after day for an employer or in an occupation or vocation with fear, dislike, hatred, and an "I hate to go to work every day" attitude. Or consider the worker who feels, even though his feelings are completely in error, that his employer does not appreciate his efforts. On the other hand, consider the employer who fears the threat of a labor union organizing his workers due to employee misunderstanding of management's side of the enterprise. Animosity is frequently present in the business world, and the necessity for reconciliation is evident.

In short, unless a person desires to live as a hermit on an island or in some uninhabited area, personal relationships with others are a part of the human experience. Consider the number of people one meets in a typical day, from the milk man to the mail man, from the taxi cab driver to the gasoline station attendant, from the clerks in stores one patronizes to the people one meets in elevators in hotels and apartment stores, and from the neighbor to fellow members in our social clubs and church organizations. Many individuals experience hundreds and thousands of personal contacts daily. Acting as sinful human beings, these contacts result in many actions and reactions which require reconciliation.

V. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION WITHIN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD

Possibly a majority of the readers of this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* immediately thought of the current state of affairs in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod when they noted the theme of this *Issues*. The need for a return to harmony within the Synod probably is an assumption with which most individuals agree. Furthermore, one is tempted simply to state that the need for reconciliation within our Synod in 1976 is obvious, and stop with that. Despite that urge, let us attempt to state some rationale for the need for reconciliation within our church body

A series of occurrences two years ago emphasized the need for reconciliation in Synod. All participants attending a national convention in Atlanta, Georgia, were given identification badges which contained the name of the participant and the name of his institution. (Note that the location of the institution was not given.) My badge read:

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During the three days of this national convention, no less than six complete strangers came up, looked at the identification badge, and said, "How are things going in St. Louis these days?" They were referring to the exit of students and faculty from Concordia Seminary in early 1974. In the eyes of these individuals, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was witnessing to our society, not that Jesus Christ is Lord, not that Jesus Christ suffered and died for the sins of all mankind, not that Jesus Christ rose on the third day and later ascended to heaven, but rather our witness was to the fact that an internal fight for leadership positions, for methods of interpretation, for conservative or moderate leanings was erupting. Surely this illustrates the need for a return to harmony and communion in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Despite the obvious need for reconciliation, of even greater importance is the question of whether reconciliation is any longer possible. While traveling throughout much of the United States and Canada and visiting with brothers and sisters of conservative-leaning and moderate-leaning philosophies, one discovers that the opinion seems to exist more and more frequently that reconciliation is no longer possible, and furthermore, that the sooner a split occurs the better. Perhaps fellow Christians expressing this feeling of the depth of hopelessness are correct. I have prayerfully hoped, and continue to do so, that Almighty God might bring about a miracle and make reconciliation possible. This hope is expressed for one reason only: that the evangelism of the world which does not know Jesus Christ can continue in the most effective manner possible.

In conclusion, whether one tends to moan over the lack of love for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ expressed by some, whether one frets over the "I'm right and you're wrong" attitudes of some, whether concern is expressed over the use of the law of love and the lack of placing the best construction on a neighbor's actions, all can be comforted by knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28) Even though as sinful human beings with finite minds we cannot understand how our omniscient God can allow the current strife in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to lower the efficiency with which the Gospel is spread, we know that "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

VI. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION WITHIN AND AMONG NATIONS

In this two hundredth year since the United States of America had its inception via the Declaration of Independence, it is evident that all is not well within our beloved country. Listening to the dialogue of political candidates soon convinces one that the United States is not a utopia. Conflicts among the three branches of the federal government, the resignation of a president, power struggles between federal, state, and local governments, and outright corruption indicate that reconciliation is needed within our society. Influence peddling, outright bribes, coverups, and attempted coverups come to light on almost a daily basis. The treatment of minorities of all types leaves much to be desired. About the time that positive steps are taken toward affecting reconciliation to correct past minority mistreatment, new accusations arise which claim that reverse prejudice has been practiced.

Harmony among the nations of the world is lacking. Have-nations often use their resources in a merciless manner in dealing with have-not nations. Recently nation advantages changed considerably when third power countries found themselves with a precious commodity, huge resources of petroleum, which the military powers of the world needed to sustain their status and high standards of living. Nations blessed with advanced technology have found that resources they need which are held by less powerful nations are difficult to obtain. Bribes and special favors between private firms and heads of governments have recently been revealed. Surely reconciliation within and among nations is a necessity in the Twentieth Century.

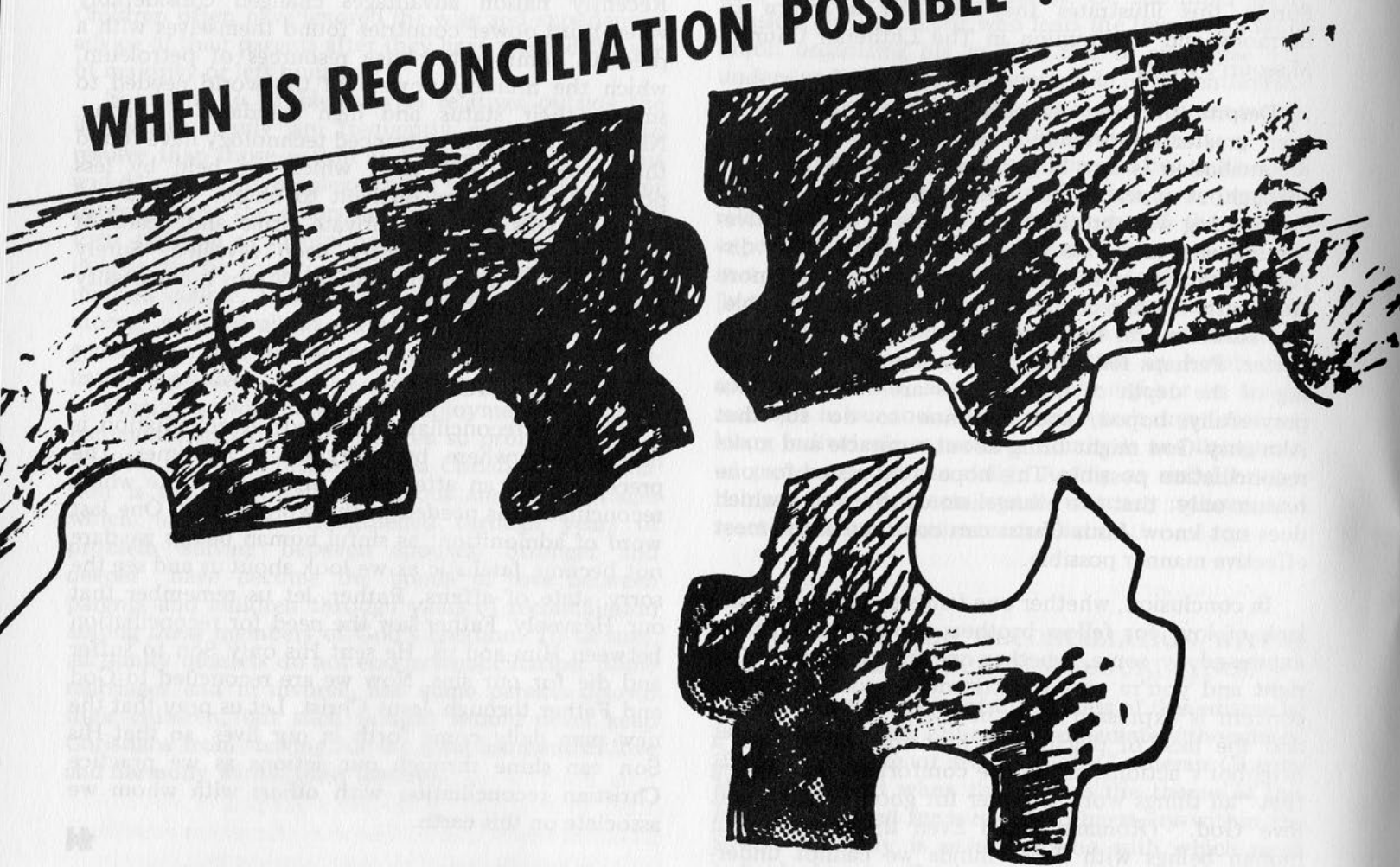
VII. CONCLUSION

Where is reconciliation needed? Reconciliation is needed everywhere by everyone at all times. The preceding was an attempt to briefly illustrate where reconciliation is needed in the world today. One last word of admonition: as sinful human beings we dare not become fatalistic as we look about us and see the sorry state of affairs. Rather, let us remember that our Heavenly Father saw the need for reconciliation between Him and us. He sent His only Son to suffer and die for our sins. Now we are reconciled to God and Father through Jesus Christ. Let us pray that the new man daily come forth in our lives, so that His Son can shine through our actions as we practice Christian reconciliation with others with whom we associate on this earth.

by Paul A. Zimmerman

In the *Issues*' trilogy of articles on reconciliation this final one is probably the most difficult to develop. Reasonable people will agree that reconciliation is a lovely concept. Few would deny that there is need for reconciliation among humans in general and members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in particular. But when is reconciliation possible? That is the tough question. It calls, not for rhetoric, but for a straight answer, clear, candid, and explicit.

WHEN IS RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE ?



In our troubled Synod many voices are heard that express the agony of the conflict that touches the lives of us all. There is a cry, indeed a demand, for reconciliation. Officials in the Synod, as well as unofficial volunteer groups, keep forming and reforming committees and councils charged with the duty of seeking out effective means of securing reconciliation. But, alas, all too many of these pleading voices are those of romantics who have no conception of what it takes to achieve a reconciliation that is worthy of the name. Many seem oblivious to the real issues that divide us. In a letter recently published in a college newspaper the writer declared, "Nowhere in the Bible do I see a reference to a 'liberal' or 'conservative' Christian. You argue consistently about which method should be used to interpret the Bible, and you seem to ignore the message that is there." The author of these comments meant well, but he is patently unaware of the fact that a method of Biblical interpretation which does not do justice to the written Word endangers and may indeed pervert the message.

In this article we propose to consider a number of conditions which must be met if reconciliation is to be achieved in the Church. Here the Lutheran Confessions can give us considerable guidance. They have often successfully brought the church out of periods of controversy into concord. They could do this again if we would genuinely apply the principles to which they point.

I

The first principle is that the reconciliation must be based on terms which do not violate the honor of God. In the *Formula of Concord* the Lutheran confessors spoke of their yearning for harmony. They wrote:

"We desire such harmony as will not violate God's honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the Holy Gospel, that will not give place to smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up thru faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save him for ever thru the sole merit of Christ and so forth."¹

This statement surely indicates that the Lutheran fathers were not prepared to give up any part of the teaching of Scripture. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession Melancton summarizes that teaching: "The sum of the proclamation of the Gospel is to denounce sin, to offer the forgiveness of sins and righteousness for Christ's sake, to grant the Holy Spirit and eternal life, and to lead us as regenerated men to do good."²

It is clear that in the opinion of the Reformers any settlement of ecclesiastical controversy which would compromise true Christian doctrine would com-

promise the honor of God. Those who take issue with the Synod's past history of insistence on doctrinal purity find no support in the Lutheran Confessions, nor, for that matter, in the Scriptures. If we are to be truly Lutheran we need to say that reconciliation is possible only when any dispute concerning false teaching has been properly solved.

Some will characterize such a position as needlessly intolerant. However, I believe Reinhold Niebuhr is correct when he writes: "The observation of G. K. Chesterton that tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe in anything is fairly true."³ Those who cringe at unpleasant publicity, some of it promoted by parties in the controversy, cry out for peace in the church in order to stop the offense. The Lutheran fathers shared this "hurt" and spoke sadly of "bitter controversies" which involved "serious offense for both the unbelievers and the weak believers." They noted, however, that the Apostles who also deplored the bitter effects of controversy were, nevertheless, compelled to denounce errors in their sermons and in their writings.⁴ The stakes were too high to buy reconciliation at the price of silence in the face of error.

II

The Lutheran fathers, however, were quick to note that controversy often does not involve Christian doctrine. It may spring from contentions about matters of opinion in areas where compromise in order to achieve reconciliation does not violate the honor of God. The Formula of Concord states:

"On this point we have reached a basic and mutual agreement that we shall at all times make a sharp distinction between needless and unprofitable contentions (which since they destroy rather than edify, should never be allowed to disturb the church) and necessary controversy (dissension concerning articles of the Creed or the chief parts of our Christian doctrine, when the contrary error must be refuted in order to preserve the truth)."⁵

In answering the question: When is reconciliation possible? we will surely say that in all matters not touching on Christian doctrine we must be prepared to meet each other half way in the interest of harmony. We will also surely say that in matters which do touch on doctrine and on practice derived from doctrine we must be prepared to examine the issues in the light of the Holy Scriptures. An earlier article in *Issues* quotes Theodore Graebner as saying:

"When (human) principles usurp the place of doctrine they have a way of spreading over into territory which is not covered by the texts on which the principle is founded. We would get rid of most of our Synodical

troubles if we strictly drew the line of action where the texts of Scripture directly apply."⁶

The present writer agrees with Graebner's first sentence but wonders if Graebner was correct in his optimistic view of how nicely Synod's problems would have vanished had this principle been observed. It is probable that Graebner did not, and could not, properly foresee the developments that were to come in the area of the authority and interpretation of the Scriptures. One wonders if he realized that the fight for a proper interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 would lead some afield into a position of such an insistent, subjective, individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures that meaningful Synodical doctrinal unity would be rendered impossible. In any event, it is not always easy to draw the line between matters of "needless contention" and of "necessary controversy." But the effort must be made. Properly carried out, it will narrow the field of controversy and reduce the number of combatants.

III

Going back to our first citation from the Confessions and to the thesis that the honor of God must be upheld above all, it should be noted that the Reformers had as their goal the "leading of the poor soul to true and sincere repentance."⁷

It is clear that true reconciliation is possible only when those who have sinned repent. This cannot be repentance in a general "shot gun pattern" where all beat their breasts in unison and acknowledge that they have been guilty of many sins. Such mass confession may prepare the way for reconciliation by creating a good climate, but it is not enough by itself. A wayward husband and his innocent wife may join with their congregation's general confession on a Sunday morning, but his wife and God are concerned that the husband face his specific sin of unfaithfulness. Similarly, reconciliation is not possible in our Synodical conflict until what is wrong has been specifically identified and acknowledged. A simplistic call to "kiss and make up" will not be effective in producing reconciliation.

Identification of wrongs must therefore be one of the purposes of discussing the issues. Discussions need to bring great funds of humility and love to their dialogues for an honest identification of wrongs. Assuming that the spirit of reconciliation is genuinely at work, then a tacit acknowledgement of the identified wrongs must be taken as generally sufficient. Specific and public acknowledgement may and perhaps ought to happen in some cases, but a requirement that everyone involved publish to the church signed and certified confessions of faults would be manifestly absurd. However, genuine reconciliation requires that Christian love's identification of wrongs be allowed to stand unchallenged, that

denial or defense of the wrongs cease, and that there be a spirit of joy in confessing with one voice the affirmations of Scriptural teaching and Scripture-based practice.

IV

Fortunately there is no controversy in the Synod as to the next requirement for reconciliation: We are agreed that God in Christ through grace forgives the repentant sinner. The world has been reconciled to God in that great reconciliation from which all other reconciliation derives. It is not amiss to quote from the doctrinal essay delivered to the Milwaukee Convention of the Synod:

"In II Corinthians 5 Paul uses the word 'reconcile' to refer to the redemptive process. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them' (5:19). Paul thus says that God has effected a changed relationship between Himself and man. The world has been reconciled to God by the death of Christ. Because of that death God no longer counts man's trespasses against him. The mountainous accumulation of man's rebellious and selfish deeds, his desperately evil record — all that is expunged because of Christ. The wall dividing man from God is gone. Paul says in Romans 5:10, 'If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by His life.'

"Indeed the reconciliation is so complete that Paul exults, 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away, behold the new has come' (II Cor. 5:17). It is as it was in the days when the earth was new, when Adam and Eve were newly created in the image of God, when all things were good — before the Fall and man's rebellion against his Creator. All is forgiven. Man is once more reconciled to God."⁸

V

However, the Scriptural requirements for reconciliation include also the "new obedience" which is to follow man's reconciliation to God. An element in true reconciliation between brothers is the readiness to restore what has been taken or to make restitution for what has been damaged or broken. The Old Testament makes it clear when dealing with reconciliation that the offender is to do his best to repair the damage. Leviticus 5:16 states simply: "He shall make restitution for what he has done." In the

church today it certainly belongs to genuine reconciliation that one sincerely attempt to right the wrongs one has done, repair the reputations one has damaged, heal the wounds one has inflicted. Without an honest effort to make such restitution, reconciliation cannot be considered effective. This principle is recognized as essential in pastoral counseling. Howard Clinebell writes:

"If confession and absolution are to facilitate reconciliation, they must never be detached from restitution and a strenuous effort to live responsibly. A person's inner channel of forgiveness stays blocked until he has done everything possible to repair his harm to others. 'Cheap grace' (Bonhoeffer) is really no grace at all."⁹

VI

Openness and utter frankness is another indispensable component of reconciliation. Reconciliation absolutely depends upon sharp enunciation of the issues and upon the recognition of the issues by both parties. For example, the church is only confused and possibly even misled when "moderates" and "conservatives" both assert that they support the concept of "inerrancy" of the Bible, while, in fact, each side applies a basically different meaning to the word. Some liberal theologians in the past have followed a practice of loading old terms with new meanings. Such a practice seriously cripples any attempts at reconciliation by clouding the issues and confusing everyone concerned.

Avoiding a meaningful discussion of the real issues also makes genuine reconciliation impossible. The synodwide theological convocation held last spring at St. Louis is a case in point. The comment was frequently heard that some of the "moderate" essayists and representatives had not come to grips with the real theological issues. When the real issues are laid out clearly on the table for all to see, the church body may then indeed find that reconciliation is impossible because the theological positions are irreconcilable. However, any reconciliation based on adumbration of the issues, if indeed it could be accomplished at all, would be doomed to an early demise.

VII

Another requirement for successful reconciliation surely is that those involved in the controversy have an appropriate "mind set." Not only must there manifestly be an earnest desire for reconciliation; there must also be an attitude of humility and of readiness to forgive. Luther's Large Catechism states:

"This is the essence of a genuinely Christian life to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace."¹⁰

Just because we are sinners, we must truly be ready to face the possibility that in a given action we have erred — in substance, in expression, or in approach. Indeed, even if our position is correct, we may by our tactics have increased the problem and diminished the possibility of reconciliation. In any controversy of long standing it is virtually certain that both sides have exhibited such human failings.

The only truly Christian attitude is to be ready and eager to forgive. The writer of Proverbs indeed cautions: "Do not say, 'I will do to him as he has done to me,' I will pay the man back for what he has done" (Proverbs 24:29). Indeed our Lord Himself gave the most positive witness when on the Via Dolorosa He prayed, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Later, the first martyr Stephen followed His Savior's example when he prayed, with his dying breath, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). In the face of all this we cannot but be eager for reconciliation and quick to accept any olive branch; yes, we will be eager to extend an olive branch of our own.

An important corollary to this is that Christians seeking reconciliation should refrain from pillorying each other in the public media. Honest, objective discussions of issues may not be condemned, but public attacks on personalities is un-Christian and surely counterproductive when the aim is reconciliation.

VIII

Moving on to another principle, basic for the achievement of reconciliation, we need to note that attempts at reconciliation should be pursued quickly and vigorously. Delays may be occasioned by reluctance to come to grips with the issues. Christians may hesitate to deal with individuals. They fear that they may appear to be contentious. However, delay is not a virtue. Reconciliation becomes progressively more difficult to achieve as time goes by. Individuals become set in their positions. Publicity highlights the struggle. The circle of combatants grows larger. Reconciliation becomes progressively more difficult.

Indeed, we find no support in Scripture for delaying reconciliation. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ teaches:

"If when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

In matters involving doctrinal aberrations the Scriptures call for similar quick action. Paul tells Titus,

"A heretic should be warned once, and once again; after that have done with him,

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recognizing that a man of that sort has a distorted mind and stands self condemned in his sin" (Titus 3:10-11).

The Lutheran Confessions likewise state that needless delay should not be allowed in the settlement of doctrinal matters. The Preface to the *Book of Concord* states:

"If the current controversies about our Christian religion should continue or new ones arise, we shall see to it that they are composed and settled in timely fashion before they become dangerously widespread in order that all kinds of scandal might be obviated."¹¹

As Luther's dispute with Zwingli over the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper illustrates, such prompt action may indeed precipitate a division in the Church's fellowship. But this is clearly preferable to a struggle that continues for years and eventually becomes so complicated that few understand the real issues. Meanwhile any attempts at working out of the maze of charges, countercharges, and personalities increase exponentially in difficulty. Such circumstances moved the early Lutherans to express concern for "poor, misguided consciences" acutely in need of "consolation and instruction."¹² Today the situation in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod illustrates perfectly what mass misery is caused among the laity when the church's officials and clergy continue their controversy without resolution year after year. People are disheartened, confused, sometimes misled. They are sheep torn between warring shepherds. No wonder they call for settlement of the strife. It is indeed obvious that even well intentioned delay of reconciliation can be harmful.

IX

Finally, reconciliation is possible only when the church as a whole is willing publicly to speak to the issues. Others have previously observed that a church which has lost the will or the ability to apply the Scriptures to current doctrinal controversies will not long survive as a confessional church. If Article II of the constitution of the Synod is to mean anything at all in terms of subscription to a functioning standard, the Synod must continue to speak to each generation in terms of what the inspired Scriptures teach as the very Word of God. One may indeed caution that due care must be taken when adopting doctrinal statements. Such statements must certainly remain subject to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and are subject to change if found wanting. Nevertheless they are to be "honored and upheld" as Synod has pleaded in every convention since 1962. Individuals who insist that their own individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions cannot be judged by the Synod are not really living

under Article II at all. Instead they are promoting a type of individualism which, if it prevails, will destroy the Synod as a confessional church.

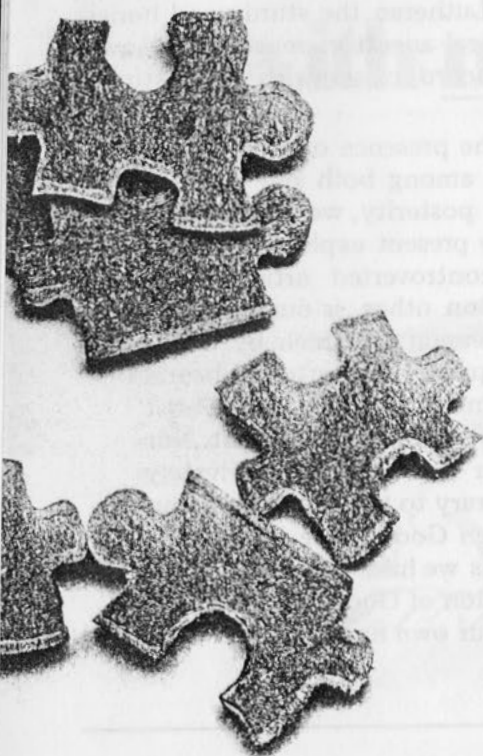
If reconciliation is to be possible for us in this last quarter of the twentieth century the principles expounded above surely must be considered. If we are to remain truly Lutheran the sturdy and honest spirit of our theological ancestors must be our own. The *Formula of Concord* closes with these stirring words:

"Therefore, in the presence of God and of all Christendom among both our contemporaries and our posterity, we wish to have testified that the present explanation of all the foregoing controverted articles here explained, and non other, is our teaching, belief, and confession in which by God's grace we shall appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and for which we shall give an account. Nor shall we speak or write anything, privately or publicly, contrary to this confession, but we intend through God's grace to abide by it. In view of this we have advisedly, in the fear and invocation of God, subscribed our signatures with our own hands."¹³

- ¹ FC SD XI, p. 632.
- ² AP XII, 29, pp. 185-186.
- ³ Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York, Harper, 1935) p. 227.
- ⁴ FC Preface 7, p. 502.
- ⁵ FC SD Rule and Norm, 15, pp. 506-507.
- ⁶ J. K. Pfabe, "Conflict in Missouri's Past — The Analysis of Theodore Graebner," *Issues*, Summer, 1974, p. 14.
- ⁷ FC SD XI, 96, p. 632.
- ⁸ Paul A. Zimmerman, "We are Ambassadors for Christ," *Proceedings 49th Regular Convention — The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, 1971, p. 70.
- ⁹ Howard Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 227.
- ¹⁰ LC, Confessions 9, p. 458.
- ¹¹ Preface to the *Book of Concord*, p. 14.
- ¹² Op. Cit., p. 13.
- ¹³ FC XII, 40, p. 636.

All page references to the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1959).

book reviews



TEACHING THE FUTURE, by Draper L. Kauffman. Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1976.

The events of tomorrow that were worried about yesterday are the ones that we are attempting to cope with today. There is great wisdom in the Sermon on the Mount directive to "take no thought for tomorrow" but rather to allow the future to remain in the hands of the Creator. Christians correctly trust that not only will God guide and govern the world in which we live but that He will grant strength and wisdom to live in a changing and challenging world of which we have limited knowledge. Lacking faith in God's desire and ability to care for His people in the future may have the effect of causing serious anxiety and the subsequent emotional problems.

Placing faith and trust in God to provide for His people is a vital part of Christianity, but to allow this faith to lull one into a fatalistic complacency which says that "whatever will happen will happen" indicates an inability to exert an influence on what transpires in an individual's life. Such a "leaf blowing in the wind" attitude is seemingly not in keeping with the ability given to mankind and also against the directive of the Father when He says that persons should "subdue" the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

TEACHING THE FUTURE by Draper L. Kauffman, Jr. is a guide to future-oriented education. It is written for teachers of all grade levels who care about assisting students to better cope with conditions in a world of rapid change. Although change in anyone's life is inevitable, it is the rapidity of change that often causes difficulty in coping. Practicality is evident throughout the book while futuristic jargon, theorizing, and rhetorical exhortation for better teaching is minimized. The emphasis is placed on exciting teaching methods along with various resources that offer teachers and students an opportunity to be "forewarned in order to be fore-armed" for future change.

The author's point of view is that students should have information about important future possibilities; they should achieve the habit of looking ahead; and, gain the skill to anticipate effectively. The relevant methods to achieve these goals are included for the teacher in clear and concise suggestions.

"Spice and fun" could be an important addition to the classroom atmosphere as teachers use some of the exercises and experiences suggested by the author. Numerous "notes" are found at the end of each chapter which provide useful supplementary background and material for the reader who desires to have further understanding of the importance of futurism in education.

This reviewer is not an expert in futurism, but the reading of **TEACHING THE FUTURE** made Toeffler's ideas more teachable and provided insight into the interesting challenges connected with

preparing students to better cope with the future. The book is filled with ideas that can cause excitement for learning in the classroom.

Lutheran teachers will want to further spice their approach to the subject by leading their students into such areas as "man in God's future or God in man's future." Learners would be challenged to give considerable thought to the idea of God and/or man controlling the density of an individual.

Excitement and thoughts about the individual's future in God's world can become more prevalent in the classroom with the aid of the many practical models, systems, and simulations which are offered in the easily read **TEACHING THE FUTURE**.

Herman L. Glaess

THE SUBURBAN WOMAN: HER CHANGING ROLE IN THE CHURCH, by Mary G. Durkin. New York, NY, Seabury Press, 1975.

Who is the suburban woman? What is the reality of her world? How can the local church and clergy assist her in coping with her changing role and in becoming a responsible Christian in her parish community? In turn, how might the suburban woman responsibly fulfill her role as a Christian in her family and community? These are some of the questions Dr. Mary G. Durkin, wife, mother, and theology professor, addresses in *The Suburban Woman*, as she attempts to begin to develop a pastoral theology of and for this singular individual.

Dr. Durkin, herself a Chicago suburbanite, recognizes the sometimes hidden frustrations of suburban women, women who were never educated to accept the changing role with which they are presently confronted. As a result, conflict occurs in their lives — a conflict between the life goals they set several decades ago and the reality of the present world.

While the middle-aged suburban housewife was preparing for marriage, she probably was exposed to themes not unlike those of Dr. Durkin's Catholic background: "Man is the head, woman is the heart," "Men and women are psychologically as well as physically different," and "Working wives cause problems for a marriage." Most young women of those days were not career oriented. They married and moved to the suburbs, conditioned and supposedly content with being lifelong wives and mothers.

Churches with a strong conservative tradition taught that the position of the woman was God-ordained and the mother must remain in the home. Her seeking of self-actualization would be a rebellion against the will of God, and submissiveness and self-sacrifice as a wife and mother were considered "the ideal."

About 1963 a new attitude began to emerge when Betty Friedan wrote *The*

Feminine Mystique and identified a problem — the boredom of the suburban housewife, the woman with time on her hands but one unprepared to make decisions. A commissioned study revealed that marriages did not suffer when the wife worked, moral questions were raised concerning birth control, and the subject of the ordination of women emerged for serious discussion.

After pointing out that "social myth dies hard," Dr. Durkin directs her task to determining the Christian response to realistically assisting the suburban woman.

The question that needs to be answered is: How does one live a responsible Christian life? All Christians, including women, are caught up in a fellowship with Christ, and live out their Christian lives in a community which includes the local church. Dr. Durkin envisions a parish as "a Spirit-filled community which knows of God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ and proclaims this knowledge in celebration and fellowship."

The *responsible woman*, then, knows that she must identify God's gifts to her and use them in proclaiming the Good News. As a result, she does what she wants, and not what is fashionable. She dreams dreams and dares to follow her star. She respects her husband and works with him in making their marriage grow. She rejoices, needs the courage of a pioneer, and supports other women.

All of the changing complexities create difficulties for both men and women as they attempt to cope with woman's changing role. The pastoral theologian needs to be prepared to listen, familiarize himself with the dilemma, and discuss the issues. Dr. Durkin equates the problem of sexual polarization with that of racial conflict, war, and poverty, and points out that most churches have not begun to recognize the critical nature of the polarization. It is manifested, however, by the great number of marriages that fail.

In dealing with the problem, most suburban churches need a form of consciousness-raising for both men and women, "a consciousness-raising which allows them to appreciate the wonder of the Good News and supports them as they attempt to deal with their fears of change." This challenge and opportunity is present in the local church, a community that proclaims the Good News in celebration and fellowship, a community that could witness to the rest of the world in eventually eliminating the tension between the sexes.

Finally churches may inaugurate programs where women may explore the needs of the local church, discover their own resources, and plan a design for implementing their findings. The responsible Christian woman could then identify her own ministry.

Dr. Durkin does not pretend to analyze and solve all theologically related problems of the suburban woman. But

she does realistically assess some pertinent problems of this woman from a unique vantage point. *The Suburban Woman* merits reading and thoughtful consideration. The reader may find parts discomfiting; however, the author's insights and suggestions should not be lightly relegated and pushed aside. The problems she mentions are real. She dares to provide solutions. Furthermore, she has faith, faith that men and women can grow together in Christ and solve their problems.

Doris A. Clatanoff

THE EVANGELICAL FAITH, by Helmut Thielicke. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Vol. One: Prolegomena. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974.

"Clearance work in a cluttered situation" is how Dr. Helmut Thielicke, the noted German preacher and professor of the University of Hamburg, describes the objective of Volume One of his projected three-volume systematics. Dualism is the fundamental threat. Whether it be existentialism with its excessive emphasis upon personal experience as the criterion for truth or historicism with its noetic fixation on facticity, Thielicke sees theology cut off from the transcendent Lord who has bowed low to man in Jesus Christ and who pours out the Spirit to make Christ known. This initial volume has an apologetic tone as it exposes the inadequacies of various contemporary theological perspectives for addressing the Christian faith to man in the modern world.

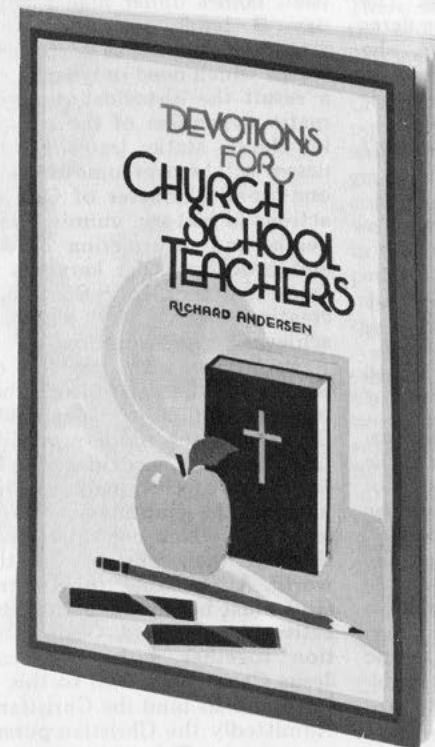
Part One begins with a description of the systematician's task, namely to "actualize Christian truth." This task involves faithful proclamation of the Word coupled with meaningful address. Dr. Thielicke then identifies two broad types of theological perspective, Theology A or the Cartesian approach, and Theology B, the non-Cartesian view. These terms are Dr. Thielicke's suggested substitutes for "modern" and "conservative." Theology A, taking its cue from Descartes' famous dictum, "I think; therefore I am," utilizes existential analysis as the most effective for speaking to modern man. This approach focuses on the addressee and his appropriation of the message. Theology B, the non-Cartesian perspective, takes more seriously the historical dimension of the faith, affirming the centrality of redemptive Biblical events for the proclamation of the Gospel. While Theology B does look to the past and finds God's normative self-disclosure in Biblical history, it seeks to make the Biblical witness of the ancient faith contemporary to the hearer so that the past becomes a present reality. Such an approach believes that the Spirit can take the givenness of Christ and make it a given for the hearer.

While Theology A and Theology B have positive contributions to make to the on-going theological task, their weaknesses must also be faced. Theology A operates with an excessive optimism as the existential analysis becomes the norm for theological analysis. The kerygma itself comes under man's control. Theology B tends toward rigidity, toward viewing the faith as a group of timeless truths which need only to be repeated. As a result the historical vitality and pneumatic dynamism of the kerygma are lost in bland, static tradition. Such weaknesses will be overcome as one affirms the one-for-all character of God's salvational actions in history, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and proclaims that kerygma with confidence in the Holy Spirit's continuous creative activity by which the Spirit achieves "re-presentation."

Part Two takes up the question of secularity, the relationship between the transcendent Lord incarnate in Jesus Christ and the modern world. Death of God theology provides the background for much of this analysis. Thielicke emphasizes the emptiness of those theological views which neglect the transcendent God in their analysis of the modern world. At the same time the transcendent God must be proclaimed as involved and active in our world. God's on-going creation together with the incarnation of Jesus Christ bind God to this world as its Lord and so bind the Christian to his age. Admittedly the Christian pursues penultimate goals. This age remains under the cross. Nonetheless the redemptive promise of God inspires the Christian with eschatological hope. This ultimate triumph gives both direction and power for spontaneous involvement in ambiguous situations. While the ideal constantly exposes the misery and failure in the present, it excites with the vision of what ought to be and will be when Christ returns.

Teachers and pastors who have had some exposure to modern philosophy and theology, especially to Descartes, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Kant, Gogarten, Kierkegaard, will be stimulated. However the reader ought to be prepared for rather heavy language and a stilted style, always a difficulty with a translation. In this respect John W. Doberstein's translation of Thielicke's sermonic works was more successful. Nonetheless *The Evangelical Faith* probes some of the most perplexing theological issues facing the pastor and teacher. If one takes the time to work through Thielicke's penetrating analysis, he will indeed experience a "clearance work in a cluttered situation."

Harvey Lange



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One of the problems in the discussion of reconciliation in our time is that it is assumed that reconciliation is something that Christians should strive for. This is wrong. Reconciliation is something that Christians have. It is not a future hope. It is a present reality.

"You are reconciled to God by Christ's blood" is Paul's central teaching. It is a present perfect condition. *Fait accompli*. All done. It is here. We have it. No effort required to achieve it.

It is like the envelope of air in the atmosphere around the world. People are choking to death every day. They are suffocating. That means they are dying for lack of sufficient air. But it is really not a lack of sufficient air at all. It can't be. Because we are, in fact, surrounded with abundant air. What, then, causes choking? People choke when the entry of the available air into the lungs gets blocked. Sometimes through malfunction from within the person's own body. Sometimes through the external violent action of someone else.

So also reconciliation. When Christ came, He brought reconciliation. He surrounded us with it. Like air, it's everywhere and it's free. The only time people die spiritually is when they themselves block it from their lives.

True, you say. This is man's reconciliation to God. But what does this have to do with the reconciliation of fellow Christians to each other? Everything. The two are inseparable.

"Be ye reconciled to one another" is not separate, as a process from "you are reconciled to God." They are present together, like the two sides of a coin.

The syllogism runs like this. God in Christ made us His sons and daughters. Being His sons and daughters we are simultaneously brothers and sisters.

Or to rephrase it. We are reconciled to God in Christ. Being reconciled to God we are reconciled to each other.

Why then the exhortatory "Be ye reconciled." Well, it's like parents saying to their children: "You are brothers and sisters; now act that way." As reconciled children of God *we are to be what we are*, we are to let the air of Christ's reconciliation permeate our beings and it will result in reconciled behavior toward each other. It is when we block the air of Christ's reconciliation in ourselves that the practice of reconciled behavior between each other breaks down.

St. John put it beautifully when he said "to love the parent means to love the child." And then added, to make it unmistakably clear: "It follows that when we love God and obey His commands we love His children too."

We ought to learn something important from this for our time.

LAST WORDS

W. Th. Janzow

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