

Digging Deeper Links from the Discussion Guide for

THE GREAT DECEIVER

SESSION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Mixed Survey Results:

[2009 Barna Survey](#) This Barna survey asked Christian Americans about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Satan and demons.

[2013 The Gospel Coalition Survey](#) This survey asked Americans if they believe in the devil and demon possession. The answers were somewhat different than the Barna Survey.

[What About Angels?](#) This brief study by late Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod president Al Berry shares what the Bible reveals about angels- both holy and evil.

[Luther Against the Devil](#) Martin Luther often spoke about the devil and demons. Was he simply a victim of Medieval superstition?

[CTCR article “Satanism”](#) This Committee on Theology and Church Relations document describes the worship of Satan, then discusses what Scripture says about the fallen angel.

[“Yes, Virginia. There are angels!”](#)

This [Lutheran Witness](#) article discusses good and evil angels found in the Bible.

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

[“Does the Devil Rule the World?”](#)

[“Can Satan Heal?”](#)

[C.S. Lewis’ “The Screwtape Letters”](#) In this classic C.S. Lewis book two demons scheme together to destroy a man’s faith.

[“Dancing on the Devil’s Grave”](#) This article discuss things we should take into account when deciding whether and how to celebrate Halloween.

[“Exorcism as Mercy”](#) This article discusses how the rite of exorcism is worked into the regular service in Madagascar where demon possession is still a frequent occurrence.

SESSION TWO: THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

DIGGING DEEPER:

REST

[Rest and Recovery after Exercise.](#) This article reveals something about the way God created our bodies- explaining why times of physical rest and recovery are important for improving sports performance.

WORSHIP

[With Angels and Archangels: Worship in the Book of Revelation.](#) Dr. Charles Gieschen discusses the amazing realities the Book of Revelation teaches us about worship.

[Afraid to Preach? Good.](#) Rev. Jim Winsor describes what is really going on in worship and the sermon.

[Worship—The Activity of the Trinity.](#) This article by a graduate student at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana discusses how God works during worship while we rest.

[Thanksgiving in the Old Testament.](#) In this article Rev. Chad Bird examines the worship God established for His Old Testament people and how that worship is reflected in our services today.

[Worship for the Weary.](#) This article reminds us how worship impacts us even when we may not feel it.

PRAYER

[Prayer: The Voice of Faith](#). In this article Rev. John Pless reminds us prayer is our response to what God has already said to us in His Son.

[“Lord, Remember Us in Your Kingdom, and Teach Us to Pray...”](#) In this article Dr. Richard Stuckwisch discusses how Jesus gave us the Lord’s Prayer to teach us how to pray.

[“A Simple Way to Pray”](#) In 1535 Martin Luther wrote this short instruction on prayer to Master Peter the Barber.

[Martin Luther’s “Daily Prayers”](#) Includes Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers as well as Asking a Blessing before a meal and Returning Thanks afterward.

SESSION THREE: THE POWER OF PRAYER

DIGGING DEEPER:

Pressure Points- Spiritual Warfare in a series of columns Dr. Bruce Hartung discusses sexual misconduct among pastors and church workers, and gives good advice for all men engaged in spiritual warfare with Satan.

In the [February 2012 column](#) Dr. Hartung explores our vulnerability to sexual misconduct- especially among pastors and church workers.

In the [March 2012 column](#) Dr. Hartung stresses recognizing Satan’s temptations, but putting the blame for our sins squarely where they belong.

In the [April 2012 column](#) Dr. Hartung shares suggestions several of his readers have shared for fighting temptation and walking more closely with God.

In the [July 2012 column](#) Dr. Hartung shares a letter from a pastor dealing with guilt and feelings of unworthiness.

[Unlocking the Prison of Guilt](#). This Project Connect document discusses God’s plan to deal with our guilt.

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

[“Lingering Guilt”](#)

[“Prayer or Demand?”](#)

SESSION FOUR: DON’T FORGET ABOUT ME

DIGGING DEEPER:

[“Midsummer Day”](#) In this sermon Henri Schartau uncovers seven obstacles which Satan might be using to prevent you from growing closer to your God in faith.

[Christian Soldiers](#). This [Lutheran Witness](#) article describes the armor God provides as we live our daily lives.

[Lutherans and Hell](#). In this video Professor Roland Ziegler discusses why Lutherans still teach about hell.

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

[“Sadness in Heaven for Those Not There?”](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

2009 Barna Survey

<https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist#.Ujh3gMasiSo>

Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist



April 10, 2009 –A new nationwide survey of adults' spiritual beliefs, conducted by The Barna Group, suggests that Americans who consider themselves to be Christian have a diverse set of beliefs –

but many of those beliefs are contradictory or, at least, inconsistent.

The survey explored beliefs about spiritual beings, the influence of faith on their life, views of the Bible, and reactions to faiths other than their own.

Views on Spiritual Beings

The Barna survey asked questions about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Satan, and demons.

All 1,871 self-described Christians were asked about their perception of God. In total, three-quarters (78%) said he is the “all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe who rules the world today.” The remaining one-quarter chose other descriptions of God – depictions that are not consistent with biblical teaching (e.g., everyone is god, god refers to the realization of human potential, etc.).

For the other survey items a four-point opinion scale was used to measure people's reactions to statements about each spiritual entity.

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they “agree somewhat” with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan.

Although a core teaching of the Christian faith is the divinity and perfection of Jesus Christ, tens of millions of Christians do not accept that teaching. More than one-fifth (22%) strongly agreed that Jesus Christ sinned when He lived on earth, with an additional 17% agreeing somewhat. Holding the opposing view were 9% who disagreed somewhat and 46% who disagreed strongly. Six percent did not have an opinion on this matter.

Much like their perceptions of Satan, most Christians do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a living force, either. Overall, 38% strongly agreed and 20% agreed somewhat that the Holy Spirit is “a symbol of God's power or presence but is not a living entity.” Just one-third of Christians disagreed that the Holy Spirit is not a living force (9% disagreed somewhat, 25% disagreed strongly) while 9% were not sure.

A majority of Christians believe that a person can be under the influence of spiritual forces, such as demons or evil spirits. Two out of three Christians agreed that such influence is real (39% agreed strongly, 25% agreed somewhat), while just three out of ten rejected the influence of supernatural forces (18% disagreed strongly, 10% disagreed somewhat). The remaining 8% were undecided on this matter.

Influence of Faith

Most self-described Christians contend that their religious faith has significantly impacted their life. Almost six out of ten adults (59%) said their faith had “greatly transformed” their life, while 29% said their faith “has been helpful but has not greatly transformed” their life and 9% stated that their religious faith “has not made much of a difference” in who they are and how they live.

Christians were asked if they believed that a person must either side with God or with the devil – that there is no in-between position. A large majority strongly agreed with the notion (61%) while an additional 15% agreed somewhat. Just one out of ten adults disagreed somewhat (10%) and a similar proportion (11%) disagreed strongly. Surprisingly few adults (3%) did not have an opinion on this matter.

A large majority of Christians also proclaimed that the most important purpose in their life is to “love God with all their heart, mind, strength and soul,” a notion drawn directly from the Bible (Mark 12:29-30). In total, three out of four self-described Christians (74%) strongly affirmed that idea, while 15% more agreed somewhat with the statement. Just 4% strongly disagreed and 7% somewhat disagreed with the statement. Three percent said they were not sure.

Thoughts on Other Faiths

Among self-identified Christians, few held a positive opinion of Wicca. Overall, just 5% had a positive opinion while 55% had a negative opinion of Wicca. However, a huge segment (40%) did not know enough about Wicca to have formed an opinion of it, despite it being described to them as “an organized form of witchcraft.”

Survey respondents were asked whether they believed that Mormons are Christians. Mormons themselves claim to be Christian, but most evangelical leaders say that they are not. There was no clear-cut perspective among the self-described Christians: four out of ten felt Mormons were Christian (18% strongly agreed, 21% somewhat agreed), three out of ten disagreed (17% strongly, 12% somewhat), and three out of ten were not sure what to think.

When asked whether it was important to them to have “active, healthy relationships with people who belong to religious faiths that do not accept the central beliefs of your faith,” about two-thirds of the self-professed Christians claimed it was important. Thirty-six percent agreed strongly with the notion, and 29% agreed somewhat, while 11% disagreed strongly and 16% disagreed somewhat. The other 8% did not have an opinion.

Views on the Bible

A slight majority of Christians (55%) strongly agree that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches, with another 18% agreeing somewhat. About one out of five either disagree strongly (9%) or somewhat (13%) with this statement, and 5% aren't sure what to believe.

There is no similar clarity among self-defined Christians regarding how the Bible compares to other holy books. When faced with the statement that “the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths,” the group was evenly split between those who accepted the idea (19% agreed strongly, 22% agreed somewhat) and those who rejected it (28% disagreed strongly, 12% disagreed somewhat), while leaving a sizeable portion (20%) undecided.

Inconsistencies Noted

The study also identified a number of instances in which people's beliefs seemed inconsistent. Among those were the following:

- About half (47%) of the Christians who believed that Satan is merely a symbol of evil nevertheless agreed that a person can be under the influence of spiritual forces such as demons.
- About half (49%) of those who agreed that the Holy Spirit is only a symbol but not a living entity also agreed that the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches, even though the Bible clearly describes the Holy Spirit as more than a symbolic reference to God's power or presence.
- About one-third (33%) of the self-defined Christians who agree that the Bible, Koran and Book of Mormon all teach the same truths simultaneously contend that the Bible is totally accurate in its principles, even though the three sacred books have very different ideas about truth, salvation, and the nature of God.

How Born Agains Differ

The study examined how one segment of the Christian population – those whose beliefs about salvation categorize them as “born again” – differ from the beliefs of people who describe themselves as Christian but do not base their view of salvation solely on confession of sin and God's grace received through Jesus Christ. (The Barna Group has labeled the latter group “notional Christians.”) For each of the 13 questions examined in the study, there were statistically significant differences between these two segments of the Christian population. Among the most significant gaps in belief were the following:

- Born again adults are at least twice as likely as notionals to strongly agree that the Bible is accurate in all the principles it teaches; that their life has been greatly transformed by their faith; that a person can be under the influence of spiritual forces such as demons; and to hold an unfavorable opinion of Wicca.
- Born again adults are more than twice as likely as notionals to strongly disagree that Satan is just a symbol of evil, and that Jesus sinned while He lived on earth.
- Born again adults are more than three times as likely as notionals to strongly disagree that the Holy Spirit is merely a symbol of God's power or presence; that Mormons are Christians; and that the Bible, Koran and Book of Mormon teach the same truths.
- Born again adults are one-third more likely than notionals to possess a definition of God as the omniscient, omnipotent creator and ruler of the world; nearly 60% more likely to believe that you either side with God or Satan because there is no in-between position; and slightly more than 50% more likely to say their chief purpose in life is to love God with all their heart, mind, strength and soul.
- The smallest difference between the two segments related to the importance of having active relationships with people who reject the central tenets of the person's faith. Born again adults were slightly more likely to strongly agree that such relationships were important to them (39% versus 31%).

Americans Are Struggling to Make Sense of Their Faith

George Barna, the author of nearly four dozen books analyzing research concerning America's faith, suggested that Americans are constantly trying to figure out how to make sense of biblical teachings in light of their daily experiences.

"Most Americans, even those who say they are Christian, have doubts about the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural world. Hollywood has made evil accessible and tame, making Satan and demons less worrisome than the Bible suggests they really are. It's hard for achievement-driven, self-reliant, independent people to believe that their lives can be impacted by unseen forces. At the same time, through sheer force of repetition, many Americans intellectually accept some ideas – such as the fact that you either side with God or Satan, there's no in-between – that do not get translated into practice."

Barna also noted that Christians tend to be open to co-existence with other faiths. "Most people understand that America's religious life is diverse," explained the author of a forthcoming book about the nation's faith segments, *The Seven Faith Tribes*. "A majority of Christians are generally open to maintaining relationships with people of other faiths, and most are not predisposed to judging people of different faiths, such as Mormons or Wiccans. But that open-mindedness is sometimes due to their limited knowledge about the principles of their own faith and ignorance about other faiths as it is to a purposeful acceptance of other faiths."

About the Research

This report is based upon telephone interviews conducted by The Barna Group for two surveys among people who described themselves as "Christian." A total of 1,871 adults were randomly selected from across the 48 continental states, with the first 873 interviews conducted in January and February, 2008, and the remaining 998 interviews conducted in November 2008. The aggregate sample The range of sampling error associated with a sample of 1,871 people is between ± 1.0 and ± 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The range of sampling error associated with the sub-sample of 873 adults is between ± 1.5 and ± 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The range of sampling error associated with the sub-sample of 998 adults is between ± 1.4 and ± 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Minimal statistical weighting was used to calibrate the aggregate sample to known population percentages in relation to several key demographic variables.

"Born again Christians" were defined as people who said they had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that was still important in their life today and who also indicated they believed that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as "born again."

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[Return to Index](#)

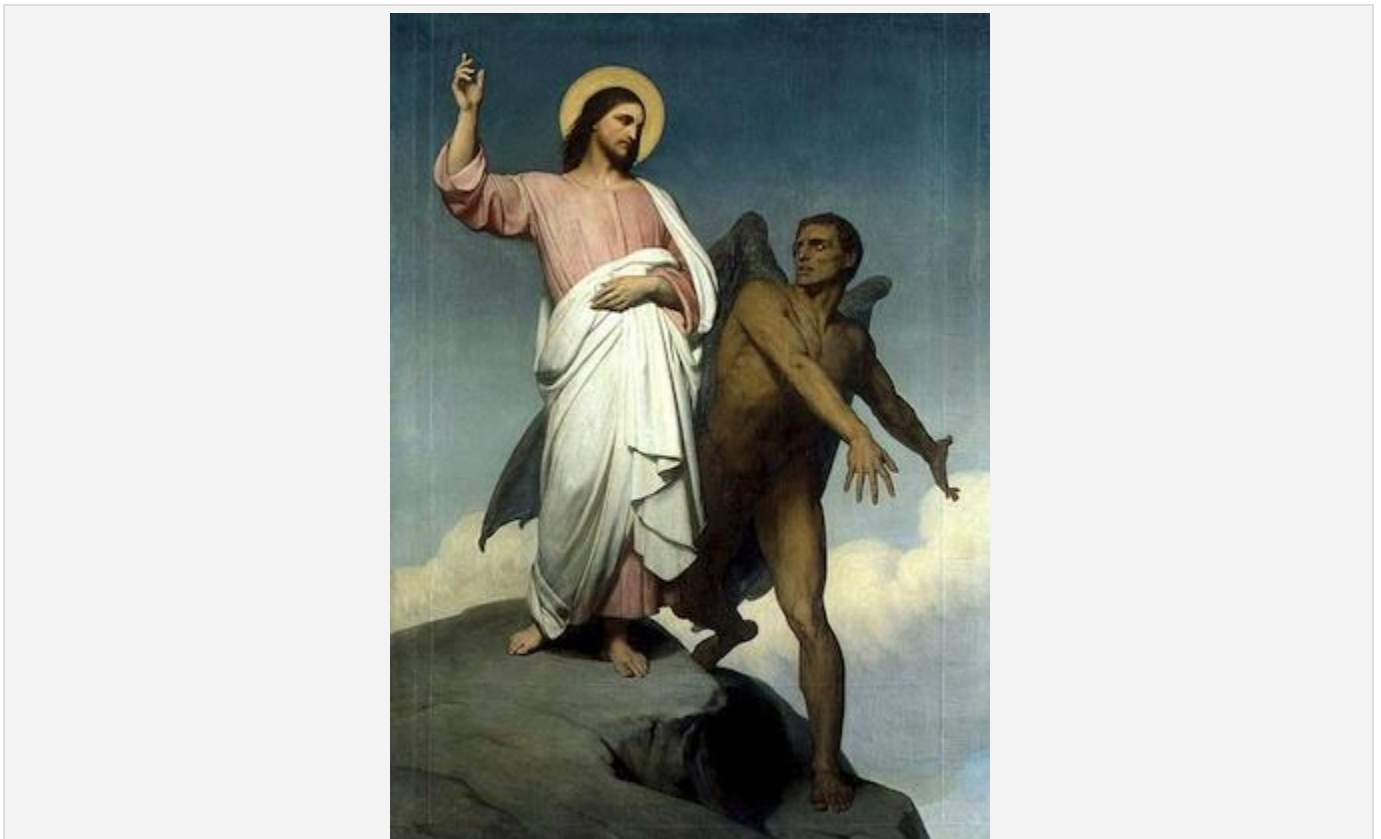
THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

2013 Gospel Coalition Survey

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2013/09/23/survey-majority-of-americans-believe-in-the-existence-of-satan-and-demon-possession/>

Survey: Majority of Americans Believe in the Existence of Satan and Demon Possession

JOE CARTER



The Story: A new survey finds that a majority of Americans personally believe in the existence of the devil and believe that demons can possess humans.

The Background: The latest YouGov research has found that more than half of all Americans (57%) believe in the existence of the devil and a slight majority (51%) believe in possession by evil spirits. Regardless of religious identity levels of belief top 50%, except for Jews, who theologically reject the idea of a sentient Satan. "Born-again" Christians are the most likely to both believe in the devil (86%) and possession (72%).

The Takeaways: Some of the more interesting findings from the survey include:

- Women are more likely than men to believe in the devil (61% to 53%) and demon possession (54% to 49%).
- A majority of all age groups believe the devil exists, with 45-64 year olds having the highest percentage of believers (62%) and the 30-44 range having the highest percentage of skeptics (30%).
- Republicans are more likely to believe in the devil than are Democrats (65% to 55%).
- Black (72%) and Hispanic (60%) Americans are more likely than whites (54%) to believe Satan is real.
- The college educated and those with less than a high school education are least likely to believe (48% and 49%) while high school grads, those with some college, and post graduates are most likely to believe (63%, 58%, and 51%).
- Belief is highest in the South (64%) and Midwest (56%).
- "Born again" Christians, Protestants, and Catholics are most likely to believe the devil exists (86%, 70%, and 66%) and demon possession is possible (72%, 59%, and 59%), while Jewish and Muslim Americans are the least likely religious groups to believe Satan is real (17% and 25%). Muslims are more likely to believe someone can be possessed an evil spirit (49%) than believe in the devil.
- Few Americans believe that possession occurs "very frequently" (6%) or "frequently" (9%). The exception is Muslim Americans, 60% of whom believe demon possession occurs frequently.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

What About Angels?

<http://lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1093>

It seems as though angels have captured the imagination of people everywhere. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation about angels, along with superstitions and unscriptural understandings. This pamphlet will provide a Biblical perspective on angels.

Do angels exist?

The Word of God—not popular television shows or magazine articles—is our only reliable source for knowing what angels are, and what they do. The Bible teaches us that angels were made by God during the six days of creation. Before creation there was only God (John 1:1-3), and after creation, we are told that on the seventh day God “rested from all the work of creating he had done” (Gen. 2:3b). The Bible does not indicate on which day of creation God made angels. But angels are very real.

What does the word “angel” mean?

The word “angel” comes from a Greek word that means “messenger.” Angels are God’s messengers. Elsewhere in the Bible, angels are described as spirits (cf. Acts 23:9; Heb. 1:14). The word “angel” is actually a description of what they do.

What are angels?

Angels are spirits. They are beings who do not have a physical body. Jesus Himself said, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). Evil angels too are described as not having “flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12). In the Scriptures, when angels do appear in human form, this is only a momentary appearance for those who need to see them. Angels are not gods. They are God’s creation and serve His holy and perfect will. The good angels are said to be “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14), sent by God to serve us, His people.

Are angels human?

Human beings are the crown of God’s creation. Only of human beings, and no other creature, did God say, “Let us make man in our own image” (Gen. 1:26). Furthermore, the Scriptures reveal that only into human beings did God breathe the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Also, God did not give angels rule over His creation. This privilege He gave only to mankind (Gen. 1:26-28). Angels are not human beings. They exist as spirits who serve God and His people.

Do human beings become angels when they die?

No, human beings do not become angels when they die. The Scriptures are clear on this point. Until the last day, the souls of the dead are before the Lord, enjoying peace and rest in His presence, awaiting the final day when they will receive glorified bodies for all eternity (see 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 5:17; Rev. 7).

Are angels intelligent beings?

The Bible describes angels as having both intelligence and a will. The good angels know and follow the wisdom of God, which He has revealed through Christ to His church (Eph. 3:10). They gladly serve us, who are the heirs of the salvation Christ has won for us (Heb. 1:14). However, angels do not know all things. For instance, they do not know the thoughts of our hearts (1 Kings 8:39).

How powerful are angels?

Angels are extremely powerful beings. They are described as “mighty ones” (Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7). The good angels guard and protect God’s children (Ps. 91:11-13). The power of the angels is never unlimited, but is always subject to the will and authority of God.

Evil angels too are powerful beings. The Bible tells us that they hold captive all unbelievers (Luke 11:21-22; Eph. 2:2). Believers in Christ are able to withstand the temptation of evil angels through the power of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

Where are angels?

Angels, like God, do not inhabit the same physical dimension that human beings inhabit. From time to time, they are ordered by God to appear in our physical dimension. Thus, while there are times when angels will make an appearance at a distinct place (cf. Acts 12:7), they remain beings that inhabit no physical space.

How many angels are there?

The Bible does not give us an exact number, but does clearly teach that there are incredibly large numbers of angels who serve God. Scripture speaks of “ten thousand times ten thousand angels” (Dan. 7:10). Elsewhere Scripture speaks of “a great company of the heavenly host” (Luke 2:13).

From every indication in the Bible, there are an unimaginably large number of angels, of whom we are totally unaware most of the time. There is a fixed and limited number of angels, never increasing or decreasing. Unlike human beings, angels do not marry and have children (Mark 12:25). They are immortal.

Are all angels the same?

Within the large numbers of angels there are apparently certain orders or classes of angels. Scripture speaks of “cherubim” (Gen.3:24; Ps.80:1), “seraphim” (Is.6:2), “thrones or powers or rulers or authorities” (Col.1:16), “archangel” (1 Thess.4:16). Also among the evil angels there are ranks and classes of angels (Matt. 25:41). Satan is described as the “prince of the devils” (Luke 11:15). It is pointless, however, to try to invent complicated divisions and ranks of angels, since Scripture itself does not provide us with this information.

What are evil angels, and what do they do?

Originally, all angels God created were good and did His will perfectly. At some point after God created them, some angels chose to rebel against Him. They fell away from God and into great sin and evil. At that point, they were confirmed in their evil condition. There is no hope for them. In Matt.8:29, they recognize that there will be a time when they must suffer eternal torment and punishment for their rebellion against God.

Satan is the chief evil angel, the “prince of demons” (Luke 11:15). Here is how our Lord Jesus Christ describes Satan: “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). When precisely the evil angels rebelled and fell away from God we cannot say for sure, but we do know it was some time at the very beginning of the world. Most Christian church fathers believe that the evil angels’ original sin was pride, based on the fact that Satan’s temptation of Adam and Eve was an appeal to their pride. Also, 1 Tim.3:6 indicates that pride was the cause of the devil’s condemnation.

The devil is our great enemy, who “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The Bible tells us that the devil is the cause of unbelief in the world (Eph.2:1-2). Every person who does not believe the good news of Christ Jesus is thinking and doing what the devil wants. Unbelievers are described in the Bible as being in the devil’s kingdom and under his power (Acts 26:18; Col.1:13). The very fact that people do not realize this, and even deny it, is the devil’s greatest deception. The devil is so deceptive, at times he will even disguise himself as an “angel of light” (2 Cor.11:14). In fact, the Old Testament once refers to Satan as “Lucifer,” which means, “light bearer” (Isa.14:12; KJV).

We need to keep in mind that all the Bible says about evil angels, and their eternal punishment, is for the purpose of making us recognize the need to repent and to believe in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who has ransomed mankind by His death, and saved us for eternal life, not in hell, but in heaven.

What do good angels do?

Good angels enjoy the blessing of being able to see God. They are in the immediate presence of God, always beholding His great glory, majesty and power (Matt.18:10). This is called the “beatific vision,” which all Christians will enjoy one day when they are in heaven.

God’s Word reveals the following things about the activity of good angels: They praise God (Is.6:3; Luke 2:13), and they are the Lord’s servants in the world and in the Church (Ps. 103:20-21; Heb.1:14).

God sends angels to serve and to protect Christian believers in their work and their callings in life (Ps.91:11-12). They attend to the dying (Luke 16:22). They care for children (Matt. 18:10). Angels are deeply interested in all that occurs in the Church. They adore and take great joy in the work of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world (Luke 2:13; Eph. 3:10). They rejoice over every sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).

Scripture mentions the presence of angels at every great event in the Kingdom of God. Angels were present when God gave His law on Mount Sinai (Deut. 33:2; Gal. 3:19). Angels were present at the conception, birth, resurrection and ascension of our Lord (Luke 1:26; 2:11; Mark 1:13; 24:5ff; Acts 1:10ff). Angels will come with Jesus when He returns on the last day (Matt.13:41ff.; 24:31).

The Bible tells us that angels are present in the public worship of Christians (1 Cor.11:10). God also uses angels to help the family and to preserve law and order (Gen. 24:7; Matt. 18:10; Dan.10:13).

How are we to treat angels?

We need to praise and thank God for good angels. We are told that we are to take care not to offend them through sin and unbelief (1 Cor.11:10; 1 Tim.5:21). But the Scriptures are also clear that we must not pray to angels, nor offer them our worship. The angels themselves protest any worship given to them (Rev.22:8-9).

As believers, we have the privilege of having angels surrounding us and protecting us and working to do God’s good and perfect will in our lives. Our hope and trust is always in God, whom we know sends His angels to watch over us and to see us through whatever difficulty in life may come our way. Because of our Lord Jesus Christ’s perfect life and sacrificial death for the sins of the world, we have the assurance of the complete and total forgiveness of all our sins. We know that God loves and cares for us as His own dear children. Furthermore, we know that the Lord sends His angels to care for us in order that some day we may join them, and all the company of heaven, in seeing God and singing His praises for all eternity.

— Dr.A.L.Barry
President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Luther Against the Devil

<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=750>

Luther Against the Devil

by Heiko A. Oberman

Heiko A. Oberman is professor of medieval, Renaissance and Reformation history at the University of Arizona. Excerpted from *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, was published by Yale University Press on February 15, 1990. Copyright © 1989 by Yale University. Reproduced by permission. This article appeared in the *Christian Century*, January 24, 1990, pp. 75-79, copyright by the Christian Century Foundation and used by permission. Current articles and subscription information can be found at www.christiancentury.org. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

There is hardly any authenticated information about Martin Luther's first 18 years, which led him to the threshold of the University of Erfurt. What we do have are memories used to illustrate and evaluate later experiences. These memories are colorful and vivid, but they are not in a real sense biographical data. As testimonies to what the older Luther looked upon as being formative for his childhood and school years, they are precious and revealing.

Sometimes apparently too revealing! Some reminiscences are rarely mentioned today, and if touched at all, are glossed over or dismissed as insignificant medieval remnants. But the legacy of Luther's parental home entailed more than a proper respect for hard work and deep erudition; it included also the at once wondrous and scary world of spirits, Devil and witchcraft, which the modern mind has come to call superstition. It is indeed not immediately clear what one should make of Luther's account of 1533 in which he so confidently takes for granted the existence of witches and witchcraft. Yet this too is part of the historical record:

Doctor Martinus said a great deal about witchcraft, about asthma and hobgoblins, how once his mother was pestered so terribly by her neighbor, a witch, that she had to be exceedingly friendly and kind to her in order to appease her. The witch had cast a spell over the children so that they screamed as if they were close to death. And when a preacher merely admonished his neighbor in general words [without mentioning her by name], she bewitched him so as to make him die; there was no medicine that could help him. She had taken the soil on which he had walked, thrown it into the water, and bewitched him in this way, for without that soil he could not regain his health.

If this story were not virtually forgotten, it would be grist for the mills of both Luther-disparagers and admirers. The witch's tale fits perfectly into that tenacious tradition which continues to portray Luther's mother as a backward peasant woman. It is she who is purported to have introduced young Martin to a world full of demons and to have put fear of the Devil into that soul already weighed down by his strong, willful father. The old bathhouse story of mother Margaret enjoying intercourse with the Devil would thus, in a new, psychological form, find its way into Luther's biography: If Martin was not begotten *by* the Devil, he was at least raised *with* him.

But for Protestant partisans Margaret's witch and Luther's words serve to provide wonderful proof of the need for the Reformation, for progress along the drawn-out and thorny path from late medieval superstition to enlightened evangelical faith -- a path courageously paved by Luther, even though not followed by him to the end. In all modern classroom and textbook treatments of Luther, the Devil is reduced to an abstraction, be he a figment of mind or time. Thus the Evil One, as a medieval remnant, can be exorcised from the core of Luther's experience, life and thought.

But the sources are as stubborn as Luther's mother and cannot be silenced. To begin with, Luther's mother cannot be held solely responsible for Luther's realistic perception of the Devil's machinations. Father Hans thought exactly the same way, and so did the miners in Mansfeld, who, far away from the light of day, were even more exposed to the artifices of the infernal powers -- spirits, demons and hobgoblins -- in the darkness of their mineshafts. Nor would Martin have learned anything different from the Brethren of the Common Life in Magdeburg or from the most erudite humanists of his time.

Luther's world of thought is wholly distorted and apologetically misconstrued if his conception of the Devil is dismissed as a medieval phenomenon and only his faith in Christ retained as relevant or as the only decisive factor. Christ and the Devil were equally real to him: one was the perpetual intercessor for Christianity, the other a menace to mankind till the end. To argue that Luther never overcame the medieval belief in the Devil says far too little; he even intensified it and lent to it additional urgency: Christ and Satan wage a cosmic war for mastery over church and world. No one can evade involvement in this struggle. Even for the believer there is no refuge -- neither monastery nor the seclusion of the wilderness offer him a chance for escape. The Devil is the omnipresent threat, and exactly for this reason the faithful need the proper weapons for survival.

There is no way to grasp Luther's milieu of experience and faith unless one has an acute sense of his view of Christian existence between God and the Devil: without a recognition of Satan's power, belief in Christ is reduced to an idea about Christ -- and Luther's faith becomes a confused delusion in keeping with the tenor of his time.

Attempts are made to offer excuses for Luther by pointing out that he never doubted the omnipotence of God and thus determined only narrow limits for the Devil's activities. Luther himself would have been outraged at this view: the *omnipotent* God is indeed real, but *as such* hidden from us. Faith reaches not for God hidden but for God revealed, who, incarnate in Christ, laid himself open to the Devil's fury. At Christmas God divested himself of his omnipotence -- the sign given the shepherds was a child "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12) . To Luther Christmas was the central feast: "God for us." But that directly implies "the Devil against us." This *new* belief in the Devil is such an integral part of the Reformation discovery that if the reality of the powers inimical to God is not grasped, the incarnation of Christ, as well as the justification and temptation of the sinner, are reduced to ideas of the mind rather than experiences of faith. That is what Luther's battle against the Devil meant to convey. Centuries separate Luther from a modern world which has renounced and long since exorcised the Devil, thus finding it hard to see the difference between this kind of religion and medieval witchcraft. But Luther distinguished sharply between faith and superstition. He understood the hellish fears of his time, then discovered in the Scriptures the true thrust and threat of Satan and experienced himself the Devil's trials and temptations. Consequently he, unlike any theologian before or after him, was able to disperse the fog of witches' sabbath and sorcery and show the adversary for what he really was: violent toward God, man and the world. To make light of the Devil is to distort faith. "The only way to drive away the Devil is through faith in Christ, by saying: 'I have been baptized, I am a Christian.'"

The following chronicle of his own encounter with the Devil as a poltergeist has a clearly medieval ring:

It is not a unique, unheard-of thing for the Devil to thump about and haunt houses. In our monastery in Wittenberg I heard him distinctly. For when I began to lecture on the Book of Psalms and I was sitting in the refectory after we had sung matins, studying and writing my notes, the Devil came and thudded three times in the storage chamber [the area behind the stove] as if dragging a bushel away. Finally, as it did not want to stop, I collected my books and went to bed. I still regret to this hour that I did not sit him out, to discover what else the Devil wanted to do. I also heard him once over my chamber in the monastery.

The final passage, with its pointed formulation and its underlying expression of contempt for the Devil, was amazing at the time and is overlooked today: "But when I realized that it was Satan, I rolled over and went back to sleep again." It is not as a poltergeist that the Devil discloses his true nature, but as the adversary who thwarts the Word of God; only then is he really to be

feared. He seeks to capture the conscience, can quote the Scriptures without fault, and is more pious than God -- that is satanical.

When I awoke last night, the Devil came and wanted to debate with me; he rebuked and reproached me, arguing that I was a sinner. To this I replied: Tell me something new, Devil! I already know that perfectly well; I have committed many a solid and real sin. Indeed there must be good honest sins -- not fabricated and invented ones -- for God to forgive for His beloved Son's sake, who took all my sins upon Him so that now the sins I have committed are no longer mine but belong to Christ. This wonderful gift of God I am not prepared to deny [in my response to the Devil], but want to acknowledge and confess.

Luther's purpose is not to spread fear but to strengthen the resistance of the faithful. Like Christ, the Devil is omnipresent. He acts and reacts, is drawn and challenged by anything that smacks of Christ and true faith. Here is found a radical deviation from the medieval concept of the Devil, according to which the evil one is drawn by the smell of sin, the sin of worldly concern. In Luther's view, it is not a life dedicated to secular tasks and worldly business that attracts and is targeted by the Devil. On the contrary, where Christ is present, the adversary is never far away: "When the Devil harasses us, then we know ourselves to be in good shape!". . .

One delicate question -- one that might even be unfitting for any respectable home -- may lead back to Luther's upbringing. The problem cannot be ignored: if a man is so obviously preoccupied with ideas about and visions of the Devil, does he not require a psychiatrist, or might he not be at least subject to psychological inquiry? In this case it would not be a question of father or mother fixations but of his surprising response to the Devil, which enlightened people find incomprehensible as well as extremely dangerous. Belief in the reality of Satan certainly promoted the frenzy of the witch hunts that seized all denominations and delayed the Enlightenment.

Now we must listen carefully to Luther and not turn away in embarrassment. Not torture and flames but profession of faith and scorn for the Devil are the proper weapons to use against Hell. Luther adds a coarse expression of his contempt for the satanic fiend to his avowal of Christ as the defender of Christianity: "But if that is not enough for you, you Devil, I have also shit and pissed; wipe your mouth on that and take a hearty bite." Is a man who still thinks and talks like this as an adult caught in the stage of development modern psychology terms the anal stage because of mistakes made in his early upbringing? Or is it perhaps just the drastic literal expression of the proverbial call: Devil, get thee behind me? Or is Luther's age showing through; is he a boor who, in his anger and agitation no longer capable of self-control, casts off the academic whitewash and falls back into the language of his origins? That would be an explanation that could be based on his own words, for he knows: "What someone is used to and has been raised to, that he cannot conceal." He often speaks of his peasant ancestors -- they "were good peasants" -- so there might be good reason to suspect that childhood experiences broke through in the old Luther, experiences with manure and open cesspools. If this had been the case, in his old age Luther's bent toward crude expressions would have grown into pathological wallowing in scatological language.

As reasonable as all this may sound, his parents' mistakes, his primitive background, and psychological quirks so not constitute a sufficient explanation. Overlooked has been the fact that even as a young professor and monk, Luther, discussing the Devil at length for the first time, did not hesitate to use explicitly scatological language -- and at a highly official affair at that. Luther had been designated to preach the ceremonial sermon before members of his order on May 1, 1515. This illustrious occasion was the assembly of the chapter, the decision-making body of the Augustinian Observants in Gotha. Luther had chosen a theme with which the Brethren were familiar, since it was treated in the constitutions of the order (chapter 44). The sin of slander, in this case called backbiting, was described in the handbook as a work of the Devil. Luther insists:

A slanderer does nothing but ruminate the filth of others with his own teeth and wallow like a pig with his nose in the dirt. That is also why his droppings stink most, surpassed only by the Devil's. . . . And though man drops his excrements in private, the slanderer does not respect this privacy. He gluts on the pleasure of wallowing in it, and he does not deserve better according to God's righteous

judgment. When the slanderer whispers: Look how he has shit on himself, the best answer is: You go eat it....

Luther's ravings should not be suppressed out of embarrassed respect, and certainly not because they might no longer be considered proper today. Dealing so gingerly with him means not taking him at his word. Luther's language is so physical and earthy that in his wrathful scorn he can give the Devil "a fart for a staff": You, Satan, Antichrist, or pope, can lean on it, a stinking nothing. When the therapist hears that Luther was already suffering from painful constipation in his monastery years, he is tempted to diagnose a psychological complex. In the total historical context, however, Luther's scatology-permeated language has to be taken seriously as an expression of the painful battle fought body and soul against the Adversary, who threatens both flesh and spirit.

Sociohistorical research clarifies a further aspect of Luther's idiom, or at least of its impact. The filthy vocabulary of Reformation propaganda was aimed at inciting the common man. A figure of respect, be he Devil or pope, is effectively unmasked if he can be shown with his pants down. Luther was certainly more than just a spokesman for a social class which hitherto had no voice. The "ass the Devil pinches" is more than a drastic phrase serving agitational ends. He was not merely trying to appeal to "the people" but was addressing the Devil himself when calling his words a "pack of stinking lies."

Luther used a great deal of invective, but there was method in it. As he explained in his election sermon of 1515, the Devil drags God's name and his works of justification through the mud. Here lies the incomprehensible link between Devil, "Great Swine," Papal Ass" and "Antichrist." It is with shocking and provocative passion of youth, not the impotent rage of old age, that Luther advocated the only appropriate retort to the Devil's dung: "You go eat it!"

We find here far more than upbringing and environment. Inclination and conviction unite to form a mighty alliance, fashioning a new language of filth which is more than filthy language. Precisely in all its repulsiveness and perversion it verbalizes the unspeakable: the diabolic profanation of God and man. Luther's lifelong barrage of crude words hurled at the opponents of the gospel is robbed of significance if attributed to bad breeding. When taken seriously, it reveals the task Luther saw before him: to do battle against the greatest slanderer of all times! . .

Luther's autobiography, which appeared in 1545 as the preface to the first edition of his Latin works, has been the subject of exhaustive scholarly research. Nonetheless, Luther is not yet heard out, and his urgent admonition and warning has been missed: "Reader, be commended to God, and pray for the increase of preaching against Satan. For he is powerful and wicked, today more dangerous than ever before because he knows that he has only a short time left to rage."

"Today" means that Luther not only discovered the gospel but also roused the Devil, who is now raging terribly and gaining an unprecedented power of absolutely new satanic proportions.

This is no longer the Devil who, in a triple alliance with "sin" and "world," seduces the voluptuous flesh of man against his better "self." The medieval poltergeist is virtually harmless in comparison with this adversary, who, armed with fire and sword, spiritual temptations and clever arguments, has now risen up against God to prevent the preaching of the gospel. As long as the righteous God resides far away in Heaven, waiting for the end of the world, the Devil, too, will remain at the edge of world history. But the closer the Righteous One comes to us on earth through our belief in Christ, the closer the Devil draws, feeling challenged to take historically effective countermeasures. The Reformation symbol of Christ's presence is not the halo of the saint, but the hatred of the Devil.

Transforming Luther into a forerunner of enlightenment means dismissing this warning of the Devil's growing superiority as a remnant of the Dark Ages. But that would be to deprive Luther's life of the experience of the Devil's power, which affected him as intensely as Christ's. Take away the Devil and we are left with the Protestant citadel, the "better self," the conscience, which thus becomes the site of the Last Judgment, where the believer, confronted with the laws of God, acknowledges that he is a sinner and declares himself at the same time to be righteous by virtue of Christ's sacrifice.

It is precisely this conventional, conscience-oriented morality that man's innermost self struggles to fulfill, and that Luther, to the horror of all well-meaning, decent Christians, undermined. The issue is not morality or immorality, it is God and the Devil. This patent encroachment on conscience desecrates the very thing that elevates man above the beasts -- his knowledge of the difference between good and evil. The two great turning points of the Reformation age, the Lutheran and Copernican revolutions, seem to have brought mankind nothing but humiliation. First man is robbed of his power over himself, and then he is pushed to the periphery of creation.

"The Spiritus Sanctus [Holy Spirit] gave me this realization in the cloaca." If this is the site of the Reformation discovery, man's powerlessness is joined by ignominy. Must the trail of the Reformation be followed this far? There is a dignified way out: by cloaca Luther did not mean the toilet, but the study up in the tower above it. That, however, would be to miss the point of Luther's provocative statement. The cloaca is not just a privy, it is the most degrading place for man and the Devil's favorite habitat. Medieval monks already knew this, but the Reformer knows even more now: it is right here that we have Christ, the mighty helper, on our side. No spot is unholy for the Holy Ghost; this is the very place to express contempt for the adversary through trust in Christ crucified.

Christ in the privy helping one to resist the Devil is certainly anything but genteel. In their propriety later centuries recount only how Luther hurled his inkwell across the study at Wartburg Castle. If the Devil must be mentioned, than at least with scholarly decorum. There is no truth in that polite legend, and it masks the actual situation. Bluntly quoting Götz von Berlichingen (immortalized by Goethe in this form: ". . . er kann mich im Arsch lecken" [*Faust*, act 3]), Luther attests to the birth of Christ in the filth of this world. The Son of God was truly born into the flesh, into the blood and sweat of man. He understood men because he experienced -- to the bitter end -- what it meant to be human.

As powerful as the Devil is, he cannot become flesh and blood; he can only sire specters and wallow in his own filth. The manger and the altar confront the Devil with the unattainable. Both the demonic, intangible adversary of God and the Son of God are present in the world, but only Christ the Son is corporeally present. Anyone who goes further, making the Devil into a living being, is superstitious. The cloaca is a revealing place. It unmasks the Devil's powerlessness as well as man's. Although far removed from propriety, it is the very place of faith, the Christian's place in life.

Thus the final sentence in Luther's *Rückblick* cannot be ignored without suppressing a facet of his belief. Where the gospel is preached and bears fruit, the Devil is there to get in the way -- that is his nature, "today" more than ever! Fear of the Devil does not fit in with our modern era, for belief in the Devil has been exorcised by attractive ideologies. But in the process our grasp of the unity of man has been lost: living with the real Christ in one's faith means being a whole person as opposed to an intellect that subscribes to a mere idea of Christ.

The Devil will readily help theologians to "elevate" the zealous, fighting, wrathful, loving God of Israel into the philosophical concept of an "Omnipotent Being."

For Luther the disembodiment of God into an impressive idea is one of the Devil's decisive misdeeds. Satan may be no doctor of theology, but he is very well trained in philosophy and has had nearly 6,000 years to practice his craft. All the encouraging victories of God which occur prior to the Last Judgment melt under the Devil's glare. Arguments are of no help against the Devil; only Christ can come to our aid. Satan's wisdom is thwarted by the statement "the just shall live by faith" -- faith not in an idea but in a God who, under the banner of the cross, is fighting for a world the Devil, too, is trying to conquer. Satan's power is not unlimited; he must stay within specified bounds, but until doomsday they encompass the whole world.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

CTCR article “Satanism”

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=393>

Satanism

History, Beliefs and Practices

Identity: Modern Satanism can be identified as the worship or service of Satan as (1) a real spirit being of great power, (2) an impersonal force for evil, or (3) the personification of indulging the base instincts of human nature.

Founders: Aleister Crowley (1875-1947); Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1997)

History: Modern Satanism can be traced to an Englishman named Aleister Crowley. Crowley was raised in a Christian home, but soon was overcome by greed, lust and many consuming sins. His quest for power and religious experience finally led him to Egypt, where he discovered that what he felt was the ultimate power of the universe. But in self-indulgence and self-worship, Crowley turned to alcohol, drugs, aberrant sexuality and the Devil. He came to the U.S. and died here in 1947, but not before producing a number of influential writings and planting his ideology in the vulnerable minds of the searching and impressionable.

Crowley's many writings were studied by a former circus lion tamer and amateur magician named Anton Szandor LaVey. In 1966 LaVey founded the First Church of Satan, and soon authored his best selling *Satanic Bible* along with another book, *Satanic Rituals*. LaVey clearly incorporated many of the older symbols and rituals of witchcraft, including the Goat's head and the upside down pentagram. Although LaVey's "church" is apparently no longer "functioning," it has spawned a number of other satanic groups, including The Temple of Set, The Process Church of the Final Judgment, and a large number of nameless but nonetheless powerful independent groups. In his writing and teaching, LaVey makes it clear that he does not believe in a personal creature called "The Devil." Rather he identifies the Devil as symbolic of all human desires and self-indulgence. While he claimed that satanic worship is only symbolic, for many who follow his teachings or who have founded named and unnamed splinter groups Satanism is very real.

Texts: *Satanic Bible*; *Satanic Rituals*

Beliefs and Practices:

The foundation of LaVey's beliefs and much modern satanic practice are his Nine Satanic Statements. They have attracted intellectuals from every walk of life.

1. Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence.
2. Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams.
3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom, instead of hypocritical self-deceit.
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it, instead of love wasted on ingrates.
5. Satan represents vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek.
6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible, instead of concern for psychic vampires.
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all fours, who, because of his 'divine spiritual and intellectual development,' has become the most vicious animal of all.
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification.
9. Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years.

Getting involved in satanic activity and practices is often a gradual process beginning with simple *influence* that can progress to *obsession*, *satanic domination*, and finally *possession*. There are some simple warning signs that signal a person's involvement in Satanism, but they are not necessarily conclusive. These include wearing only black, wearing symbols such as an inverted crucifix, skull, a goat's head or the numerals 666. Less subtle, but often more difficult to detect, warning signs can include drug abuse and rebellion against Christian teaching and authority.

A Lutheran Response

Scripture does not explain at length the origin or nature of Satan or the Evil One. The Bible simply accepts the existence of a personal evil being. This "Evil One" has many titles. Among the most familiar, the name Devil means "deceiver," and Satan means "adversary." According to Scripture, the Devil was a fallen angel who, together with other fallen angels, was cast out from heaven and God's presence (Rev. 12:7-9; 2 Pet. 2:4). This evil adversary of God now seeks to "convert" believers in Christ back to their original sinful and destructive bent. Because Jesus describes Satan as "*the Father of lies*" (John 8:44), alert Christians are always vigilant of his ultimate goal of wanting to "consume" followers of God and of Christ (1 Pet. 5:8).

The Scriptures make it clear that humans have worshipped and served Satan ever since Adam and Eve did obeisance to him in the Garden of Eden. In the Old Testament, satanic influence is apparent in the practices of human sacrifice (Lev. 18:21) and religious prostitution (Hosea 4:13-14). When early Christian missionaries sought to spread the Word about Jesus Christ, they regularly encountered satanic opposition (Acts 8:9-24; 13:8-12; 16:16-18). Often satanic activities in the Scriptures take the form of occult rituals and practices. Satanism obviously survived into the first century, since evidence of centers of Devil worship is mentioned in three of the letters to seven early Christian churches (Rev. 2-3). In the fourth century, the Roman Catholic Church condemned aberrant religious practices, including the "Black Mass," which utilized Christian religious articles in attempts to contact the spirits of the deceased and gain influence over others.

Even a cursory study of Scripture makes it clear that Satan is diametrically opposed to God and the teachings of God's Word. Compare Satanism's Nine Satanic Statements and God's Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5). Study Jesus' teachings on the Ten Commandments (Matt. 5:21-48) and note how radically opposed those teachings are to Satanism's self-indulgence (See also Col. 3:5). Jesus set the pattern for combating satanic influence and power when He turned to God's Word to defeat the devil and his temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4). When Peter became Satan's tool to try to prevent Jesus from going to the cross, Jesus gave the command for Satan to depart (Matt. 16:23). Satan must submit to the powerful name of Jesus (Luke 10:17).

Turning to the power of God's Word and relying on the powerful name of Jesus is a strong formula for Christians who seek to follow Jesus. St. Paul emphasizes the power of God's Word when he urges Christians to "take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," as the one offensive weapon to cut Satan down (Eph. 6:17). Furthermore, Paul instructs Christians to put on the spiritual armor that God provides when doing battle "not against flesh and blood, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil" (Eph. 6:11-12).

Prevention is the best cure. Standing in the strong name of Jesus and using God's spiritual armor, Christians are to "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). They need to be alert to the devil's efforts to devour them (1 Pet. 5:8). They need to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) to see whether they "confess" that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (to shed His blood and die, to take our place, and to die in our stead). Followers of Jesus need to be bold and faithful witnesses to God's truth (John 8:31-32; 2 Cor. 4:2) as through the strength that God provides through Word and sacrament they wrestle with the "father of lies" (John 8:44).

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[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“Yes, Virginia. There are angels!”

<http://witness.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=883&IssueID=50>

Yes, Virginia. There Are Angels!

by Rose E. Adle



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Angels must be some of the most misunderstood creatures in existence. And while it's probably unfair to blame *everything* on Hallmark and Hollywood, they have played a large part in causing the confusion.

Cutesy cards pretty well miss the mark. (Your best friend might help you out a lot, but that doesn't make her an angel sent from above.) Inspirational movies are similarly unconcerned about what Scripture teaches. (I don't care what you've heard. An angel does not require a ringing bell to grow wings.)

If there's any time of year that makes us even more susceptible to angel confusion, it's Christmastime. Sometimes even our carols can be puzzling. For example, if the angels were singing so sweetly o'er the plains, why were the shepherds first filled with fear (Luke 2:9)? And those tasty cut-out angel cookies? They probably look nothing like the real deal. Have you ever seen one with six wings (Is. 6:2)?

So, in the true spirit of Christmas, why not take a look at the true nature and identity of angels? The word *angel* actually just means "messenger." In fact, Scripture sometimes applies the word to human beings who deliver divine messages (like the clergy of today). Malachi 2:7; 3:1 and Matt. 11:10 provide evidence of this. However, most assume that the word *angel* refers to the entire class of those spirits that we picture with halos and wings. We'll go with that.

Angels are created beings. Genesis doesn't say exactly when, but it's safe to say it was sometime between Day 1—when it all got started—and Day 6—when it all got done. Angels are not animals, and they are not human. They are spiritual, not physical (Heb. 1:7). They are mighty, but they don't possess divine characteristics like omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence. Angels remain angels for all eternity, and humans remain humans for all eternity. (That means no human will become an angel after dying, another common misconception, even among Christians.) Scripture contains information about countless angels, but only a few are known by name.

The first is actually known by several names: the devil, the prince of the power of the air, the accuser, Beelzebub, the father of lies, the serpent, the god of this age, the dragon. Call him what you will, Satan is a dark angel. This is another critical scriptural truth: some angels are good, and some are bad . . . very, very bad (though not created that way). The evil angels are those that sinned way back in the beginning. They have sealed their fate. There's no turning back for them (2 Peter 2:4). Though we can't pinpoint the moment of their falling into sin, it was sometime before humanity's fall. We know this because it was actually the chief of the fallen angels, Satan, who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden.

Evil angels, also known as evil spirits or demons, are spoken of throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. The devil tempted our Lord in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1). Scripture describes demons possessing various people, causing sickness and afflictions, and engaging in combat against good angels (Rev. 12:7-8).

Some even know Scripture and can manipulate it to further their diabolic cause (Gen. 3:1; Matt. 4:6). Satan can masquerade as an "angel of light" when it suits him (2 Cor. 11:14). Evil angels are primarily concerned with one thing: destroying the relationship between God and humanity, chiefly by destroying faith. This sounds scary, and, in fact, it is.

But here's the good news: evil angels are subject to God's authority. They can't do anything without God's knowledge and permission. This means that even the most evil angel, Satan himself, cannot separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). And ultimately, the fallen angels will get what they have coming. Scripture teaches that an everlasting fire has been prepared for Satan and his evil hench-angels (Matt. 25:41).

Enough about the bad angels. What about the good guys? Holy angels are the ones that didn't sin way back in the beginning. They are in blissful communion with God for all eternity. They praise Him around the clock (Ps. 148:2). And they rejoice when sinners repent (Luke 15:10). God uses these holy angels to serve His people. In Scripture, they perform a few different functions. First, they worship and praise God. But beyond that, they also deliver divine messages and guard and protect the Church (all believers).

Scripture is full of messenger angels. The first such angel called by name is Gabriel. He appeared to the prophet Daniel (Dan. 8–9) to interpret a vision and to bring an answer to prayer. This isn't what Gabriel's best known for though.

Some 500 years later, he starred as the angel that we all know and love from the Christmas pageants. Gabriel approached Zechariah in the temple and proclaimed the unlikely conception of Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist. Gabriel also visited the mother of our Lord. As is the case with pretty much every angel appearance, the first thing he says to her is the same thing he said to Zechariah: "Do not be afraid." This doesn't mean he's a bad, scary angel. It means he's a good, scary angel.

That's right; even the good ones are frightening when they reveal themselves to humans. They are incredibly strong. They can't help but intimidate, even when they're on a mission from God for the good of humanity.

Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of God. Then there's a long string of divine pronouncements. Shepherds in the field hear an angelic announcement and hurry off to see God in the flesh, a babe in Bethlehem. Some other messenger angels make sure the right people are in the right places at the right times. An angel appears to the Wise Men and warns them not to return to King Herod. And another angel comes to Joseph in a dream and tells him to take the infant Lord to Egypt to keep him safe from the wrath of jealous Herod.

Every turn of the Christmas narrative involves messages being pronounced by angels. It's really no surprise. Christ coming in the flesh had to have been a bewildering thing, certainly one that required explanation. Francis Pieper points out that, "[Angels] proclaim the conception, the birth, the resurrection, [and] the return of Christ (Luke 1:26; 2:11; 24:5ff; Acts 1:10ff)" (Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:507.) From the annunciation to the ascension, angels were present to explain to human beings exactly what was going on and why it was all so important.

But Christmas isn't the only time of year that the church should be thinking about angels. On Sept. 29, many churches celebrate the feast of St. Michael and All Angels. Michael is the only other angel known by name. He is described as an archangel (Rev. 9). On Daniel's behalf, Michael contended against the princes of Persia and Greece—presumed to be fallen angels (Dan. 10). He also fights with Satan himself in spiritual battles (Rev. 12).

Aside from fighting the evil angels and delivering heavenly messages, there's another level of angel activity occurring. Angels act to protect us (thus the common phrase "guardian angel"). There are many examples of angels defending and protecting humans in Scripture. An angel prevented the lions from eating Daniel in the den (Dan. 6:22). Angels and a flaming sword were posted outside of the Garden of Eden to prevent humans from re-entering the former paradise to their own detriment (Gen. 3:24). A figure who is assumed to have been an angel joined Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25). And on one surprising occasion, the Lord opened the eyes of a young man so that he could actually see all the horses and chariots of fire who were present to defend Elisha (2 Kings 6:19).

Angels' work was not limited to biblical times though. They're still around today (Heb. 13:2). Ordinarily we can't see them acting on our behalf, but that doesn't mean they aren't there. Angels accompany believers—throughout all of life—from the little ones (Matt. 18:10) to the dying (Luke 16:22).

Angels even join us in worship every Sunday. They are the topic of some of our finest hymns (LSB 521, 522, 523, etc.). And during the singing of the Sanctus, we join our voices with the saints who've gone before us and with the entire heavenly host (Is. 6:3). Like us, the angels of the Lord also love to hear the proclamation of the Gospel, which was spoken by the prophets and is now preached by faithful pastors (1 Peter 1:12; Eph. 3:10).

So whether it's Christmas Day or the Feast Day of St. Michael or any other day of the Church Year, praise and thank God for His holy angels. They guard us in all our ways (Ps. 91:11) and protect us from the power of the devil (Rev. 12:7–8). The angels in Hallmark and Hollywood are okay, but the ones in Scripture are heavenly.

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December 2010

Rose E. Adle

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

“Does the Devil Rule the World?”

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7536PD.mp3>

Mark: Now, Pastor Ken Klaus answers questions. I'm Mark Eischer.

Ken: Hello, Mark.

Mark: Pastor, today we have a question which comes to us via email from Dayton, Ohio.

Ken: And the Lord's blessing to all our Lutheran Hour listeners in Dayton.

Mark: He writes, “Your program wakes me up every Sunday morning before I go to church. You are my wake-up alarm.”

Ken: That's nice. That's better than saying my messages put him to sleep.

Mark: A preacher's lament.

Ken: The only difference is, unlike regular preachers, I can't tell when people are sleeping... so I can't get louder or start pounding on the pulpit.

Mark: Our listener continues, “Did God give Satan dominion over the earth and air waves during his tenure of power? Is this scriptural and if so, where do I find it in the Bible?”

Ken: As I read Scripture, I find nothing about God giving Satan dominion over the earth and air waves... or anywhere else for that matter. Indeed, everything the Bible says indicates that Satan comes as a thief. That which he has, he has stolen, hijacked, as it were.

Mark: And it was for that very reason that Jesus came into this world, to redeem us and restore the Creation.

Ken: However, I can understand how someone might get the impression that Satan runs the show here on earth. Take the Book of Job, for example. There the devil comes up to God and says, ‘Look, Job is a good guy and he worships You. Who wouldn't? You give him everything he wants. Why don't You let me take some of that stuff away and then let's see what Job will do.’

Mark: Of course, God doesn't give the devil absolute control over Job. He still keeps the final say for Himself.

Ken: Exactly, but some people could get the impression that God turned things over to the devil.

Mark: How else might people get the wrong idea?

Ken: Another example would be the story of Jesus' temptation. Satan says, “Here, Jesus, You're hungry, turn these stones into loaves of bread.’ When that fails, Satan takes

Jesus to a high spot in the temple and says, 'Do something dramatic, throw Yourself down. Your Father's angels will protect You; people will be impressed and believe. No need to go through this suffering and dying stuff.' Then Satan takes Jesus up to a high mountain. He shows the Savior all the kingdoms of the world. He whispers, 'All of this I will gladly give to You if You will only bow down and worship me.'

And this is where it gets interesting. It gets interesting for what Jesus doesn't say. Jesus doesn't say, "Hey, Mr. Sneaky, you can't offer to give Me this, because you don't own it."

Mark: Instead, Jesus said, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Ken: Right, to each of the Devil's temptations, Jesus replied with an answer based on the Word of God.

Mark: But that passage doesn't say God had turned the world over to the devil, does it?

Ken: No, it doesn't. Like I said, God didn't turn over anything, humanity did. Humanity rejected God and listened to Satan. Humanity chose to eat from the forbidden fruit when God said, 'Don't.' We decided that we, not God, knew what was right and best. Which is why, for a while, this world has been Satan's playground—but not his property. The earth and everything that is in it are still the Lord's.

Mark: Anything else before we close today?

Ken: Yes, the most important part. Satan is going to appear strong for a while, but the bottom line is this: Jesus' perfect life, His rejection of temptation, His death and resurrection have defeated Satan. St. Paul said it: "...we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Mark: This has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

Can Satan Heal?

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7634PD.mp3>

Mark: Now, Pastor Ken Klaus answers questions about the devil. I'm Mark Eischer.

Ken: Hello, Mark.

Mark: This question comes to us from a Bible Class. One of our listeners wanted to know, is Satan able to heal people physically, or is his power limited to the mere appearance of healing?

Ken: What a fascinating question.

Mark: Our listener says, 'During a Bible Class a member of our congregation made the assertion 'we know Satan can heal people' and his statement went unchallenged. Later I asked the pastor for clarification and he said, 'Satan can only appear to heal for the purpose of deception, as in the case of a tribal witch doctor.

Ken: OK, I'm with you so far.

Mark: Our listener believes that miraculous healings in the Bible, especially those performed by Jesus, were done to validate His claim as to who He was. If Satan is able to copy those miracles, how does that affect Jesus' claims?

Ken: Let's break it down. First, does Satan have the power to do some spectacular stuff? The answer to that question is, "Yes." We look at Moses when he appeared before Pharaoh. The Lord turned Moses' walking stick into a serpent. But Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to do that, too. And their power did not come from God. Then the Lord turned the water to blood, but....

Mark: Pharaoh's sorcerers could do that, also.

Ken: Then there was the plague of frogs. And...

Mark: Pharaoh's sorcerers did that, too.

Ken: Then the plague of lice. And...

Mark: Pharaoh's sorcerers copied that plague.

Ken: But after that, Pharaoh's sorcerers were left in the dust. Moses, the Lord's representative, went on to perform miracles they couldn't copy. From that, we can conclude that the Lord's power far exceeds that of Satan.

Mark; And we can also say the devil's power is limited.

Ken: Right. Now, let's turn to miracles of physical healing. If I remember correctly that really was what the listener's question was all about.

Mark: Yes, they wanted to know if the devil could heal diseases.

Ken: As I think of Scripture, I see examples of how he can mess with people's bodies. The case of Job would be an example. The devil afflicted Job with painful boils. But I can't think of any time when he healed anyone.

Mark; So the answer to the question would be, "no."

Ken: No, the answer wouldn't be 'no.'" Although it might seem like it ought to. Let me explain. Pain, illness and the nastiness of life are the result of sin... and sin is Satan's stock in trade. Now, if Satan can bring some kind of physical infirmity upon a person... if he can cause them to suffer...despair of healing... he can bring about depression, discouragement, despair.

Mark; Agreed.

Ken: Now, what would happen if he simply stopped putting pressure on someone? Would that be a healing?

Mark: How do you mean that?

Ken: Let me explain. I've got a pencil here. If I stab your arm with this pencil, it's going to hurt.

Mark: It would.

Ken: Now if I stop stabbing your arm with this pencil, it's going to stop hurting. Right?

Mark; Right.

Ken: So, did I heal that pain in your arm?

Mark: No. You didn't heal it. You just stopped causing the pain.

Ken: And it occurs to me that Satan might be able to do the same. If he removes the problem which he caused in the first place, it would seem as if he had the power to heal.

Mark: So, does Satan heal?

Ken: Still not done. When Jesus was talking about the last times, in Matthew 24 (24), and elsewhere He said, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." It is quite possible those false signs, even as we've described them, would appear to be a physical healing. And... just as our listener asks, those false signs would appear to many as being a sign of the Savior.

Mark: Jesus used miraculous signs to identify Himself as the Messiah... and Satan will use signs to fool people, how will people be able to tell the difference.

Ken: And with that question we get to the heart of the matter. Thankfully the Lord anticipated that problem. Which is why the Holy Spirit inspired John to write (1 John 4: 1-3) "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit

of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” If a sign-performer points to Jesus, if His witness agrees with Scripture, then that individual would pass the test. On the other hand, if he comes up with new stuff, contrary to or adding to what the Bible says, no matter how impressive the sign, reject him. Lock, stock and barrel. I don't care if he stills storms, raises the dead, heals the infirm, or feeds thousands with loaves and fish... if what he says contradicts the Bible and denies Christ, he's a false prophet—and he's working for the other side!

Mark: This has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

C.S. Lewis' "The Screwtape Letters"

http://www.stfrancischesterton.org/stfrancis/file.php/1/BookStudy/c_s_lewis_-_the_screwtape_letters.pdf

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

By C. S. LEWIS

Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford

TO J. R. R. TOLKIEN

"The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn."—Luther

"The devill . . . the prowde spirite . . . cannot endure to be mocked."—Thomas More

PREFACE

I HAVE no intention of explaining how the correspondence which I now offer to the public fell into my hands.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. The sort of script which is used in this book can be very easily

obtained by anyone who has once learned the knack; but disposed or excitable people who might make a bad use of it shall not learn it from me. Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle. I have made no attempt to identify any of the human beings mentioned in the letters; but I think it very unlikely that the portraits, say, of Fr. Spike or the patient's mother, are wholly just. There is wishful thinking in Hell as well as on Earth.

In conclusion, I ought to add that no effort has been made to clear up the chronology of the letters. Number XVII appears to have been composed before rationing became serious; but in general the diabolical method of dating seems to bear no relation to terrestrial time and I have not attempted to reproduce it. The history of the European War, except in so far as it happens now and then to impinge upon the spiritual condition of one human being, was obviously of no interest to Screwtape.

C. S. LEWIS

MAGDALEN COLLEGE

July 5, 1941

I

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I note what you say about guiding our patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle naïf? It sounds as if you supposed that argument was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches. That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier. At that time the humans still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false", but as "academic" or "practical", "outworn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless". Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.

The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's own ground. He can argue too; whereas in really practical propaganda of the kind I am suggesting He has been shown for centuries to be greatly the inferior of Our Father Below. By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real".

Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy's!) you don't realise how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary. I once had a patient,

a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy, of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years' work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch. The Enemy presumably made the counter-suggestion (you know how one can never quite overhear What He says to them?) that this was more important than lunch. At least I think that must have been His line for when I said "Quite. In fact much too important to tackle it the end of a morning", the patient brightened up considerably; and by the time I had added "Much better come back after lunch and go into it with a fresh mind", he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man's head when he was shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of "real life" (by which he meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him that all "that sort of thing" just couldn't be true. He knew he'd had a narrow escape and in later years was fond of talking about "that inarticulate sense for actuality which is our ultimate safeguard against the aberrations of mere logic". He is now safe in Our Father's house.

You begin to see the point? Thanks to processes which we set at work in them centuries ago, they find it all but impossible to believe in the unfamiliar while the familiar is before their eyes. Keep pressing home on him the ordinariness of things. Above all, do not attempt to use science (I mean, the real sciences) as a defence against Christianity. They will positively encourage him to think about realities he can't touch and see. There have been sad cases among the modern physicists. If he must dabble in science, keep him on economics and sociology; don't let him get away from that invaluable "real life". But the best of all is to let him read no science but to give him a grand general idea that he knows it all and that everything he happens to have picked up in casual talk and reading is "the results of modern investigation". Do remember you are there to fuddle him. From the way some of you young fiends talk, anyone would suppose it was our job to teach!

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

II MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties; indeed, in your better moments, I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy's camp and are now with us. All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favour.

One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread but through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans. All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate. When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands, and one shabby little book containing corrupt texts of a number of religious lyrics, mostly bad, and in very small print. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbours. Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like "the body of Christ" and the actual faces in the next pew. It matters very little, of course, what kind of people that next pew really contains. You may know one of them to be a great warrior on the Enemy's side. No matter. Your patient, thanks to Our Father below, is a fool. Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous. At his present stage, you see, he has an idea of "Christians" in his mind which he supposes to be spiritual but which, in fact, is largely pictorial. His mind is full of togas and sandals and armour and bare legs and the mere fact that the other people in church wear modern clothes is a real—though of course an unconscious—difficulty to him. Never let it come to the surface; never let him ask what he expected them to look like. Keep everything hazy in his mind now, and you will have all eternity wherein to amuse yourself by producing in him the peculiar kind of clarity which Hell affords.

Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman. The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavour. It occurs when the boy who has been enchanted in the nursery by Stories from the Odyssey buckles down to really learning Greek. It occurs when lovers have got married and begin the real task of learning to live together. In every department of life it marks the transition from dreaming aspiration to laborious doing. The Enemy takes this risk because He has a curious fantasy of making all these disgusting little human vermin into what He calls His "free" lovers and servants—"sons" is the word He uses, with His inveterate love of degrading the whole spiritual world by unnatural liaisons with the two-legged animals. Desiring their freedom, He therefore refuses to carry them, by their mere affections and

habits, to any of the goals which He sets before them: He leaves them to "do it on their own". And there lies our opportunity. But also, remember, there lies our danger. If once they get through this initial dryness successfully, they become much less dependent on emotion and therefore much harder to tempt.

I have been writing hitherto on the assumption that the people in the next pew afford no rational ground for disappointment. Of course if they do—if the patient knows that the woman with the absurd hat is a fanatical bridge-player or the man with squeaky boots a miser and an extortioner—then your task is so much the easier. All you then have to do is to keep out of his mind the question "If I, being what I am, can consider that I am in some sense a Christian, why should the different vices of those people in the next pew prove that their religion is mere hypocrisy and convention?" You may ask whether it is possible to keep such an obvious thought from occurring even to a human mind. It is, Wormwood, it is! Handle him properly and it simply won't come into his head. He has not been anything like long enough with the Enemy to have any real humility yet. What he says, even on his knees, about his own sinfulness is all parrot talk. At bottom, he still believes he has run up a very favourable credit-balance in the Enemy's ledger by allowing himself to be converted, and thinks that he is showing great humility and condescension in going to church with these "smug", commonplace neighbours at all. Keep him in that state of mind as long as you can.

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

III

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I am very pleased by what you tell me about this man's relations with his mother. But you must press your advantage. The Enemy will be working from the centre outwards, gradually bringing more and more of the patient's conduct under the new standard, and may reach his behaviour to the old lady at any moment. You want to get in first. Keep in close touch with our colleague Glucose who is in charge of the mother, and build up between you in that house a good settled habit of mutual annoyance; daily pinpricks. The following methods are useful.

1. Keep his mind on the inner life. He thinks his conversion is something inside him and his attention is therefore chiefly turned at present to the states of his own mind—or rather to that very expurgated version of them which is all you should allow him to see. Encourage this. Keep his mind off the most elementary duties by directing it to the most advanced and spiritual ones. Aggravate that most useful human characteristic, the horror and neglect of the obvious. You must bring him to a condition in which he can practise self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself, which are perfectly clear to anyone who has over lived in the same house with him or worked the same office.

2. It is, no doubt, impossible to prevent his praying for his mother, but we have means of rendering the prayers innocuous. Make sure that they are always very "spiritual", that he is always concerned with the state of her soul and never with her rheumatism. Two advantages follow. In the first place, his attention will be kept on what he regards as her sins, by which, with a little guidance from you, he can be induced to mean any of her actions which are inconvenient or irritating to himself. Thus you can keep rubbing the wounds of the day a little sorer even while he is on his knees; the operation is not at all difficult and you will find it very entertaining. In the second place, since his ideas about her soul will be very crude and often erroneous, he will, in some degree, be praying for an imaginary person, and it will be your task to make that imaginary person daily less and less like the real mother—the sharp-tongued old lady at the breakfast table. In time, you may get the cleavage so wide that no thought or feeling from his prayers for the imagined mother will ever flow over into his treatment of the real one. I have had patients of my own so well in hand that they could be turned at a moment's notice from impassioned prayer for a wife's or son's "soul" to beating or insulting the real wife or son without a qualm.

3. When two humans have lived together for many years it usually happens that each has tones of voice and expressions of face which are almost unendurably irritating to the other. Work on that. Bring fully into the consciousness of your patient that particular lift of his mother's eyebrows which he learned to dislike in the nursery, and let him think how much he dislikes it. Let him assume that she knows how annoying it is and does it to annoy—if you know your job he will not notice the immense improbability of the assumption. And, of course, never let him suspect that he has tones and looks which similarly annoy her. As he cannot see or hear himself, this is easily managed.

4. In civilised life domestic hatred usually expresses itself by saying things which would appear quite harmless on paper (the words are not offensive) but in such a voice, or at such a moment, that they are not far short of a blow in the face. To keep this game up you and Glucose must see to it that each of these two fools has a sort of double standard. Your patient must demand that all his own utterances are to be taken at their face value and judged simply on the actual words, while at the same time judging all his mother's utterances with the fullest and most oversensitive interpretation of the tone and the context and the suspected intention. She must be encouraged to do the same to him. Hence from every quarrel they can both go away convinced, or very nearly convinced, that they are quite innocent. You know the kind of thing: "I simply ask her what time dinner will be and she flies into a temper." Once this habit is well established you have the delightful situation of a human saying things with the express purpose of offending and yet having a grievance when offence is taken.

Finally, tell me something about the old lady's religious position. Is she at all jealous of the new factor in her son's life?—at all piqued that he should have learned from others, and so late, what she considers she

gave him such good opportunity of learning in childhood? Does she feel he is making a great deal of "fuss" about it—or that he's getting in on very easy terms? Remember the elder brother in the Enemy's story,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

IV

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

The amateurish suggestions in your last letter warn me that it is high time for me to write to you fully on the painful subject of prayer. You might have spared the comment that my advice about his prayers for his mother it "proved singularly unfortunate". That is not the sort of thing that a nephew should write to his uncle—nor a junior tempter to the under-secretary of a department. It also reveals an unpleasant desire to shift responsibility; you must learn to pay for your own blunders.

The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether. When the patient is an adult recently re-converted to the Enemy's party, like your man, this is best done by encouraging him to remember, or to think he remembers, the parrot-like nature of his prayers in childhood. In reaction against that, he may be persuaded to aim at something entirely spontaneous, inward, informal, and unregularised; and what this will actually mean to a beginner will be an effort to produce in himself a vaguely devotional mood in which real concentration of will and intelligence have no part. One of their poets, Coleridge, has recorded that he did not pray "with moving lips and bended knees" but merely "composed his spirit to love" and indulged "a sense of supplication". That is exactly the sort of prayer we want; and since it bears a superficial resemblance to the prayer of silence as practised by those who are very far advanced in the Enemy's service, clever and lazy patients can be taken in by it for quite a long time. At the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls. It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.

If this fails, you must fall back on a subtler misdirection of his intention. Whenever they are attending to the Enemy Himself we are defeated, but there are ways of preventing them from doing so. The simplest is to turn their gaze away from Him towards themselves. Keep them watching their own minds and trying to produce feelings there by the action of their own wills. When they meant to ask Him for charity, let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing. When they meant to pray for courage, let them really be trying to feel brave. When they say they are praying for forgiveness, let them be trying to feel forgiven. Teach them to estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling; and never let them suspect how much success or failure of that kind depends on whether they are well or ill, fresh or tired, at the moment.

But of course the Enemy will not meantime be idle. Wherever there is prayer, there is danger of His own immediate action. He is cynically indifferent to the dignity of His position, and ours, as pure spirits, and to human animals on their knees He pours out self-knowledge in a quite shameless fashion. But even if He defeats your first attempt at misdirection, we have a subtler weapon. The humans do not start from that direct perception of Him which we, unhappily, cannot avoid. They have never known that ghastly luminosity, that stabbing and searing glare which makes the background of permanent pain to our lives. If you look into your patient's mind when he is praying, you will not find that. If you examine the object to which he is attending, you will find that it is a composite object containing many quite ridiculous ingredients. There will be images derived from pictures of the Enemy as He appeared during the discreditable episode known as the Incarnation: there will be vaguer—perhaps quite savage and puerile—images associated with the other two Persons. There will even be some of his own reverence (and of bodily sensations accompanying it) objectified and attributed to the object revered. I have known cases where what the patient called his "God" was actually located—up and to the left at the corner of the bedroom ceiling, or inside his own head, or in a crucifix on the wall. But whatever the nature of the composite object, you must keep him praying to it—to the thing that he has made, not to the Person who has made him. You may even encourage him to attach great importance to the correction and improvement of his composite object, and to keeping it steadily before his imagination during the whole prayer. For if he ever comes to make the distinction, if ever he consciously directs his prayers "Not to what I think thou art but to what thou knowest thyself to be", our situation is, for the moment, desperate. Once all his thoughts and images have been flung aside or, if retained, retained with a full recognition of their merely subjective nature, and the man trusts himself to the completely real, external, invisible Presence, there with him in the room and never knowable by him as he is known by it—why, then it is that the incalculable may occur. In avoiding this situation—this real nakedness of the soul in prayer—you will be helped by the fact that the humans themselves do not desire it as much as they suppose. There's such a thing as getting more than they bargained for!

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

V

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

It is a little bit disappointing to expect a detailed report on your work and to receive instead such a vague rhapsody as your last letter. You say you are "delirious with joy" because the European humans have started another of their wars. I see very well what has happened to you. You are not delirious; you are only drunk. Reading between the lines in your very unbalanced account of the patient's sleepless night, I can reconstruct your state of mind fairly accurately. For the first time in your career you have tasted that wine which is the reward of all our labours—the anguish and bewilderment of a human soul—and it has gone to your head. I can hardly blame you. I do not expect old heads on young shoulders. Did the patient respond to some of your terror-pictures of the future? Did you work in some good self-pitying glances at the happy past?—some fine thrills in the pit of his stomach, were there? You played your violin prettily did you? Well, well, it's all very natural. But do remember, Wormwood, that duty comes before pleasure. If any present self-indulgence on your part leads to the ultimate loss of the prey, you will be left eternally thirsting for that draught of which you are now so much enjoying your first sip. If, on the other hand, by steady and cool-headed application here and now you can finally secure his soul, he will then be yours forever—a brim-full living chalice of despair and horror and astonishment which you can raise to your lips as often as you please. So do not allow any temporary excitement to distract you from the real business of undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues. Give me without fail in your next letter a full account of the patient's reactions to the war, so that we can consider whether you are likely to do more good by making him an extreme patriot or an ardent pacifist. There are all sorts of possibilities. In the meantime, I must warn you not to hope too much from a war.

Of course a war is entertaining. The immediate fear and suffering of the humans is a legitimate and pleasing refreshment for our myriads of toiling workers. But what permanent good does it do us unless we make use of it for bringing souls to Our Father Below? When I see the temporal suffering of humans who finally escape us, I feel as if I had been allowed to taste the first course of a rich banquet and then denied the rest. It is worse than not to have tasted it at all. The Enemy, true to His barbarous methods of warfare, allows us to see the short misery of His favourites only to tantalise and torment us—to mock the incessant hunger which, during this present phase of the great conflict, His blockade is admittedly imposing. Let us therefore think rather how to use, than how to enjoy, this European war. For it has certain tendencies inherent in it which are, in themselves, by no means in our favour. We may hope for a good deal of cruelty and unchastity. But, if we are not careful, we shall see thousands turning in this tribulation to the Enemy, while tens of thousands who do not go so far as that will nevertheless have their attention diverted from themselves to values and causes which they believe to be higher than the self. I know that the Enemy disapproves many of these causes. But that is where He is so unfair.

He often makes prizes of humans who have given their lives for causes He thinks bad on the monstrously sophisticated ground that the humans thought them good and were following the best they knew. Consider too what undesirable deaths occur in wartime. Men are killed in places where they knew they might be killed and to which they go, if they are at all of the Enemy's party, prepared. How much better for us if all humans died in costly nursing homes amid doctors who lie, nurses who lie, friends who lie, as we have trained them, promising life to the dying, encouraging the belief that sickness excuses every indulgence, and even, if our workers know their job, withholding all suggestion of a priest lest it should betray to the sick man his true condition! And how disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces. One of our best weapons, contented worldliness, is rendered useless. In wartime not even a human can believe that he is going to live forever.

I know that Scabtree and others have seen in wars a great opportunity for attacks on faith, but I think that view was exaggerated. The Enemy's human partisans have all been plainly told by Him that suffering is an essential part of what He calls Redemption; so that a faith which is destroyed by a war or a pestilence cannot really have been worth the trouble of destroying. I am speaking now of diffused suffering over a long period such as the war will produce. Of course, at the precise moment of terror, bereavement, or physical pain, you may catch your man when his reason is temporarily suspended. But even then, if he applies to Enemy headquarters, I have found that the post is nearly always defended,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

VI

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I am delighted to hear that your patient's age and profession make it possible, but by no means certain, that he will be called up for military service. We want him to be in the maximum uncertainty, so that his mind will be filled with contradictory pictures of the future, every one of which arouses hope or fear. There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them.

Your patient will, of course, have picked up the notion that he must submit with patience to the Enemy's will. What the Enemy means by this is primarily that he should accept with patience the tribulation which has actually been dealt out to him—the present anxiety and suspense. It is about this that he is to say "Thy will be done", and for the daily task of bearing this that the daily bread will be provided. It is your business to see that the patient never thinks of the present fear as his appointed cross but only of the things he is

afraid of. Let him regard them as his crosses: let him forget that, since they are incompatible, they cannot all happen to him, and let him try to practice fortitude and patience to them all in advance. For real resignation, at the same moment, to a dozen different and hypothetical fates, is almost impossible, and the Enemy does not greatly assist those who are trying to attain it: resignation to present and actual suffering, even where that suffering consists of fear, is far easier and is usually helped by this direct action. An important spiritual law is here involved. I have explained that you can weaken his prayers by diverting his attention from the Enemy Himself to his own states of mind about the Enemy. On the other hand fear becomes easier to master when the patient's mind is diverted from the thing feared to the fear itself, considered as a present and undesirable state of his own mind; and when he regards the fear as his appointed cross he will inevitably think of it as a state of mind. One can therefore formulate the general rule; in all activities of mind which favour our cause, encourage the patient to be un-selfconscious and to concentrate on the object, but in all activities favourable to the Enemy bend his mind back on itself. Let an insult or a woman's body so fix his attention outward that he does not reflect "I am now entering into the state called Anger—or the state called Lust". Contrariwise let the reflection "My feelings are now growing more devout, or more charitable" so fix his attention inward that he no longer looks beyond himself to see our Enemy or his own neighbours. As regards his more general attitude to the war, you must not rely too much on those feelings of hatred which the humans are so fond of discussing in Christian, or anti-Christian, periodicals. In his anguish, the patient can, of course, be encouraged to revenge himself by some vindictive feelings directed towards the German leaders, and that is good so far as it goes. But it is usually a sort of melodramatic or mythical hatred directed against imaginary scapegoats. He has never met these people in real life—they are lay figures modelled on what he gets from newspapers. The results of such fanciful hatred are often most disappointing, and of all humans the English are in this respect the most deplorable milksops. They are creatures of that miserable sort who loudly proclaim that torture is too good for their enemies and then give tea and cigarettes to the first wounded German pilot who turns up at the back door. Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient's soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary. There is no good at all in inflaming his hatred of Germans if, at the same time, a pernicious habit of charity is growing up between him and his mother, his employer, and the man he meets in the train. Think of your man as a series of concentric circles, his will being the innermost, his intellect coming next, and finally his fantasy. You can hardly hope, at once, to exclude from all the circles everything that smells of the Enemy: but you must keep on shoving all the virtues outward till they are finally located in the circle of fantasy, and all the desirable qualities inward into the Will. It is only in so far as they reach the will and are there embodied in habits that the virtues are really fatal to us. (I don't, of course, mean what the patient mistakes for his will, the conscious fume and fret of resolutions and clenched teeth, but the real centre, what the Enemy calls the Heart.) All sorts of virtues painted in the fantasy or approved by the intellect or even, in some measure, loved and admired, will not keep a man from our Father's house: indeed they may make him more amusing when he gets there,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

VII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics. At least, not yet. I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "Life Force", the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work—the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls "Forces" while denying the existence of "spirits"—then the end of the war will be in sight. But in the meantime we must obey our orders. I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that "devils" are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.

I had not forgotten my promise to consider whether we should make the patient an extreme patriot or an extreme pacifist. All extremes, except extreme devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged. Not always, of course, but at this period. Some ages are lukewarm and complacent, and then it is our business to soothe them yet faster asleep. Other ages, of which the present is one, are unbalanced and prone to faction, and it is our business to inflame them. Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred which is entertained without shame because the "Cause" is its sponsor and it is thought

to be impersonal. Even when the little group exists originally for the Enemy's own purposes, this remains true. We want the Church to be small not only that fewer men may know the Enemy but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or a clique. The Church herself is, of course, heavily defended and we have never yet quite succeeded in giving her all the characteristics of a faction; but subordinate factions within her have often produced admirable results, from the parties of Paul and of Apollos at Corinth down to the High and Low parties in the Church of England. If your patient can be induced to become a conscientious objector he will automatically find himself one of a small, vocal, organised, unpopular society, and the effects of this, on one so new to Christianity, will almost certainly be good. But only almost certainly. Has he had serious doubts about the lawfulness serving in a just war before this present war of serving began? Is he a man of great physical courage—so great that he will have no half-conscious misgivings about the real motives of his pacifism? Can he, when nearest to honesty (no human is ever very near), feel fully convinced that he actuated wholly by the desire to obey the Enemy? If he is that sort of man, his pacifism will probably not do us much good, and the Enemy will probably protect him from the usual consequences of belonging to a sect. Your best plan, in that case, would be to attempt a sudden, confused, emotional crisis from which he might emerge as an uneasy convert to patriotism. Such things can often be managed. But if he is the man I take him to be, try Pacifism.

Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the "cause", in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war-effort or of Pacifism. The attitude which you want to guard against is that in which temporal affairs are treated primarily as material for obedience. Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours—and the more "religious" (on those terms) the more securely ours. I could show you a pretty cageful down here,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

VIII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

So you "have great hopes that the patient's religious phase is dying away", have you? I always thought the Training College had gone to pieces since they put old Slubgob at the head of it, and now I am sure. Has no one ever told you about the law of Undulation?

Humans are amphibians—half spirit and half animal. (The Enemy's determination to produce such a revolting hybrid was one of the things that determined Our Father to withdraw his support from Him.) As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time. This means that while their spirit can be directed to an eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change, for to be in time means to change. Their nearest approach to constancy, therefore, is undulation—the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks. If you had watched your patient carefully you would have seen this undulation in every department of his life—his interest in his work, his affection for his friends, his physical appetites, all go up and down. As long as he lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty. The dryness and dullness through which your patient is now going are not, as you fondly suppose, your workmanship; they are merely a natural phenomenon which will do us no good unless you make a good use of it. To decide what the best use of it is, you must ask what use the Enemy wants to make of it, and then do the opposite. Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else. The reason is this. To us a human is primarily good; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense. But the obedience which the Enemy demands of men is quite a different thing. One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself: the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct.

And that is where the troughs come in. You must have often wondered why the Enemy does not make more use of His power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment. But you now see that the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to over-ride a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve. He is prepared to do a little overriding

at the beginning. He will set them off with communications of His presence which, though faint, seem great to them, with emotional sweetness, and easy conquest over temptation. But He never allows this state of affairs to last long. Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be. Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. We can drag our patients along by continual tempting, because we design them only for the table, and the more their will is interfered with the better. He cannot "tempt" to virtue as we do to vice. He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles. Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger, than when a human, no longer desiring, but intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.

But of course the troughs afford opportunities to our side also. Next week I will give you some hints on how to exploit them,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

IX

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I hope my last letter has convinced you that the trough of dullness or "dryness" through which your patient is going at present will not, of itself, give you his soul, but needs to be properly exploited. What forms the exploitation should take I will now consider.

In the first place I have always found that the Trough periods of the human undulation provide excellent opportunity for all sensual temptations, particularly those of sex. This may surprise you, because, of course, there is more physical energy, and therefore more potential appetite, at the Peak periods; but you must remember that the powers of resistance are then also at their highest. The health and spirits which you want to use in producing lust can also, alas, be very easily used for work or play or thought or innocuous merriment. The attack has a much better chance of success when the man's whole inner world is drab and cold and empty. And it is also to be noted that the Trough sexuality is subtly different in quality from that of the Peak—much less likely to lead to the milk and water phenomenon which the humans call "being in love", much more easily drawn into perversions, much less contaminated by those generous and imaginative and even spiritual concomitants which often render human sexuality so disappointing. It is the same with other desires of the flesh. You are much more likely to make your man a sound drunkard by pressing drink on him as an anodyne when he is dull and weary than by encouraging him to use it as a means of merriment among his friends when he is happy and expansive.

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. It is more certain; and it's better style. To get the man's soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens our Father's heart. And the troughs are the time for beginning the process.

But there is an even better way of exploiting the Trough; I mean through the patient's own thoughts about it. As always, the first step is to keep knowledge out of his mind. Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardours of his conversion might have been expected to last, and ought to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition. Having once got this misconception well fixed in his head, you may then proceed in various ways. It all depends on whether your man is of the desponding type who can be tempted to despair, or of the wishful-thinking type who can be assured that all is well. The former type is getting rare among the humans. If your patient should happen to belong to it, everything is easy. You have only got to keep him out of the way of experienced Christians (an easy task now-a-days), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will-power, and the game is ours. If he is of the more hopeful type, your job is to make him acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit and gradually become content with it, persuading himself that it is not so low after all. In a week or two you will be making him doubt whether the first days of his Christianity were not, perhaps, a little excessive. Talk to him about "moderation in all things". If you can once get him to the point of thinking that "religion is all very well up to a point", you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all—and more amusing.

Another possibility is that of direct attack on his faith. When you have caused him to assume that the trough is permanent, can you not persuade him that "his religious phase" is just going to die away like all his previous phases? Of course there is no conceivable way of getting by reason from the proposition "I am losing interest in this" to the proposition "This is false". But, as I said before, it is jargon, not reason, you must rely on. The mere word phase will very likely do the trick. I assume that the creature has been through

several of them before—they all have—and that he always feels superior and patronising to the ones he has emerged from, not because he has really criticised them but simply because they are in the past. (You keep him well fed on hazy ideas of Progress and Development and the Historical Point of View, I trust, and give him lots of modern Biographies to read? The people in them are always emerging from Phases, aren't they?)

You see the idea? Keep his mind off the plain antithesis between True and False. Nice shadowy expressions—"It was a phase"—"I've been through all that"—and don't forget the blessed word "Adolescent",

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

X

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I was delighted to hear from Triptweeze that your patient has made some very desirable new acquaintances and that you seem to have used this event in a really promising manner. I gather that the middle-aged married couple who called at his office are just the sort of people we want him to know—rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly sceptical about everything in the world. I gather they are even vaguely pacifist, not on moral grounds but from an ingrained habit of belittling anything that concerns the great mass of their fellow men and from a dash of purely fashionable and literary communism. This is excellent. And you seem to have made good use of all his social, sexual, and intellectual vanity. Tell me more. Did he commit himself deeply? I don't mean in words. There is a subtle play of looks and tones and laughs by which a Mortal can imply that he is of the same party as those to whom he is speaking. That is the kind of betrayal you should specially encourage, because the man does not fully realise it himself; and by the time he does you will have made withdrawal difficult.

No doubt he must very soon realise that his own faith is in direct opposition to the assumptions on which all the conversation of his new friends is based. I don't think that matters much provided that you can persuade him to postpone any open acknowledgment of the fact, and this, with the aid of shame, pride, modesty and vanity, will be easy to do. As long as the postponement lasts he will be in a false position. He will be silent when he ought to speak and laugh when he ought to be silent. He will assume, at first only by his manner, but presently by his words, all sorts of cynical and sceptical attitudes which are not really his. But if you play him well, they may become his. All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be. This is elementary. The real question is how to prepare for the Enemy's counter attack.

The first thing is to delay as long as possible the moment at which he realizes this new pleasure as a temptation. Since the Enemy's servants have been preaching about "the World" as one of the great standard temptations for two thousand years, this might seem difficult to do. But fortunately they have said very little about it for the last few decades. In modern Christian writings, though I see much (indeed more than I like) about Mammon, I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as "Puritanism"—and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years? By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life.

Sooner or later, however, the real nature of his new friends must become clear to him, and then your tactics must depend on the patient's intelligence. If he is a big enough fool you can get him to realise the character of the friends only while they are absent; their presence can be made to sweep away all criticism. If this succeeds, he can be induced to live, as I have known many humans live, for quite long periods, two parallel lives; he will not only appear to be, but actually be, a different man in each of the circles he frequents. Failing this, there is a subtler and more entertaining method. He can be made to take a positive pleasure in the perception that the two sides of his life are inconsistent. This is done by exploiting his vanity. He can be taught to enjoy kneeling beside the grocer on Sunday just because he remembers that the grocer could not possibly understand the urbane and mocking world which he inhabited on Saturday evening; and contrariwise, to enjoy the bawdy and blasphemy over the coffee with these admirable friends all the more because he is aware of a "deeper", "spiritual" world within him which they cannot understand. You see the idea—the worldly friends touch him on one side and the grocer on the other, and he is the complete, balanced, complex man who sees round them all. Thus, while being permanently treacherous to at least two sets of people, he will feel, instead of shame, a continual undercurrent of self-satisfaction. Finally, if all else fails, you can persuade him, in defiance of conscience, to continue the new acquaintance on the ground that he is, in some unspecified way, doing these people "good" by the mere fact of drinking their cocktails and laughing at their jokes, and that to cease to do so would be "priggish", "intolerant", and (of course) "Puritanical".

Meanwhile you will of course take the obvious precaution of seeing that this new development induces him to spend more than he can afford and to neglect his work and his mother. Her jealousy, and alarm, and his increasing evasiveness or rudeness, will be invaluable for the aggravation of the domestic tension,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XI

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Everything is clearly going very well. I am specially glad to hear that the two new friends have now made him acquainted with their whole set. All these, as I find from the record office, are thoroughly reliable people; steady, consistent scoffers and worldlings who without any spectacular crimes are progressing quietly and comfortably towards our Father's house. You speak of their being great laughers. I trust this does not mean that you are under the impression that laughter as such is always in our favour. The point is worth some attention.

I divide the causes of human laughter into Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper, and Flippancy. You will see the first among friends and lovers reunited on the eve of a holiday. Among adults some pretext in the way of Jokes is usually provided, but the facility with which the smallest witticisms produce laughter at such a time shows that they are not the real cause. What that real cause is we do not know. Something like it is expressed in much of that detestable art which the humans call Music, and something like it occurs in Heaven—a meaningless acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experience, quite opaque to us. Laughter of this kind does us no good and should always be discouraged. Besides, the phenomenon is of itself disgusting and a direct insult to the realism, dignity, and austerity of Hell.

Fun is closely related to Joy—a sort of emotional froth arising from the play instinct. It is very little use to us. It can sometimes be used, of course, to divert humans from something else which the Enemy would like them to be feeling or doing; but in itself it has wholly undesirable tendencies; it promotes charity, courage, contentment, and many other evils.

The Joke Proper, which turns on sudden perception of incongruity, is a much more promising field. I am not thinking primarily of indecent or bawdy humour, which, though much relied upon by second-rate tempters, is often disappointing in its results. The truth is that humans are pretty clearly divided on this matter into two classes. There are some to whom "no passion is as serious as lust" and for whom an indecent story ceases to produce lasciviousness precisely in so far as it becomes funny: there are others in whom laughter and lust are excited at the same moment and by the same things. The first sort joke about sex because it gives rise to many incongruities: the second cultivate incongruities because they afford a pretext for talking about sex. If your man is of the first type, bawdy humour will not help you—I shall never forget the hours which I wasted (hours to me of unbearable tedium) with one of my early patients in bars and smoking-rooms before I learned this rule. Find out which group the patient belongs to—and see that he does not find out.

The real use of Jokes or Humour is in quite a different direction, and it is specially promising among the English who take their "sense of humour" so seriously that a deficiency in this sense is almost the only deficiency at which they feel shame. Humour is for them the all-consoling and (mark this) the all-excusing, grace of life. Hence it is invaluable as a means of destroying shame. If a man simply lets others pay for him, he is "mean"; if he boasts of it in a jocular manner and twits his fellows with having been scored off, he is no longer "mean" but a comical fellow. Mere cowardice is shameful; cowardice boasted of with humorous exaggerations and grotesque gestures can be passed off as funny. Cruelty is shameful—unless the cruel man can represent it as a practical joke. A thousand bawdy, or even blasphemous, jokes do not help towards a man's damnation so much as his discovery that almost anything he wants to do can be done, not only without the disapproval but with the admiration of his fellows, if only it can get itself treated as a Joke. And this temptation can be almost entirely hidden from your patient by that English seriousness about Humour. Any suggestion that there might be too much of it can be represented to him as "Puritanical" or as betraying a "lack of humour".

But flippancy is the best of all. In the first place it is very economical. Only a clever human can make a real Joke about virtue, or indeed about anything else; any of them can be trained to talk as if virtue were funny. Among flippant people the Joke is always assumed to have been made. No one actually makes it; but every serious subject is discussed in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it. If prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy that I know, and it is quite free from the dangers inherent in the other sources of laughter. It is a thousand miles away from joy it deadens, instead of sharpening, the intellect; and it excites no affection between those who practice it,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

XII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Obviously you are making excellent progress. My only fear is lest in attempting to hurry the patient you awaken him to a sense of his real position. For you and I, who see that position as it really is, must never forget how totally different it ought to appear to him. We know that we have introduced a change of direction in his course which is already carrying him out of his orbit around the Enemy; but he must be made to imagine that all the choices which have effected this change of course are trivial and revocable. He must not be allowed to suspect that he is now, however slowly, heading right away from the sun on a line which will carry him into the cold and dark of utmost space.

For this reason I am almost glad to hear that he is still a churchgoer and a communicant. I know there are dangers in this; but anything is better than that he should realise the break it has made with the first

months of his Christian life. As long as he retains externally the habits of a Christian he can still be made to think of himself as one who has adopted a few new friends and amusements but whose spiritual state is much the same as it was six weeks ago. And while he thinks that, we do not have to contend with the explicit repentance of a definite, fully recognised, sin, but only with his vague, though uneasy, feeling that he hasn't been doing very well lately.

This dim uneasiness needs careful handling. If it gets too strong it may wake him up and spoil the whole game. On the other hand, if you suppress it entirely—which, by the by, the Enemy will probably not allow you to do—we lose an element in the situation which can be turned to good account. If such a feeling is allowed to live, but not allowed to become irresistible and flower into real repentance, it has one invaluable tendency. It increases the patient's reluctance to think about the Enemy. All humans at nearly all times have some such reluctance; but when thinking of Him involves facing and intensifying a whole vague cloud of half-conscious guilt, this reluctance is increased tenfold. They hate every idea that suggests Him, just as men in financial embarrassment hate the very sight of a pass-book. In this state your patient will not omit, but he will increasingly dislike, his religious duties. He will think about them as little as he feels he decently can beforehand, and forget them as soon as possible when they are over. A few weeks ago you had to tempt him to unreality and inattention in his prayers: but now you will find him opening his arms to you and almost begging you to distract his purpose and benumb his heart. He will want his prayers to be unreal, for he will dread nothing so much as effective contact with the Enemy. His aim will be to let sleeping worms lie.

As this condition becomes more fully established, you will be gradually freed from the tiresome business of providing Pleasures as temptations. As the uneasiness and his reluctance to face it cut him off more and more from all real happiness, and as habit renders the pleasures of vanity and excitement and flippancy at once less pleasant and harder to forgo (for that is what habit fortunately does to a pleasure) you will find that anything or nothing is sufficient to attract his wandering attention. You no longer need a good book, which he really likes, to keep him from his prayers or his work or his sleep; a column of advertisements in yesterday's paper will do. You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but in conversations with those he cares nothing about on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and nothing given in return, so that at last he may say, as one of my own patients said on his arrival down here, "I now see that I spent most of my life in doing neither what I ought nor what I liked". The Christians describe the Enemy as one "without whom Nothing is strong". And Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man's best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them, in drumming of fingers and kicking of heels, in whistling tunes that he does not like, or in the long, dim labyrinth of reveries that have not even lust or ambition to give them a relish, but which, once chance association has started them, the creature is too weak and fuddled to shake off.

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

XIII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

It seems to me that you take a great many pages to tell a very simple story. The long and the short of it is that you have let the man slip through your fingers.

The situation is very grave, and I really see no reason why I should try to shield you from the consequences or your inefficiency. A repentance and renewal of what the other side call "grace" on the scale which you describe is a defeat of the first order. It amounts to a second conversion—and probably on a deeper level than the first.

As you ought to have known, the asphyxiating cloud which prevented your attacking the patient on his walk back from the old mill, is a well-known phenomenon. It is the Enemy's most barbarous weapon, and generally appears when He is directly present to the patient under certain modes not yet fully classified. Some humans are permanently surrounded by it and therefore inaccessible to us.

And now for your blunders. On your own showing you first of all allowed the patient to read a book he really enjoyed, because he enjoyed it and not in order to make clever remarks about it to his new friends. In the second place, you allowed him to walk down to the old mill and have tea there—a walk through country he really likes, and taken alone. In other words you allowed him two real positive Pleasures. Were you so ignorant as not to see the danger of this? The characteristic of Pains and Pleasures is that they are unmistakably real, and therefore, as far as they go, give the man who feels them a touchstone of reality. Thus if you had been trying to damn your man by the Romantic method—by making him a kind of Childe

Harold or Werther submerged in self-pity for imaginary distresses—you would try to protect him at all costs from any real pain; because, of course, five minutes' genuine toothache would reveal the romantic sorrows for the nonsense they were and unmask your whole stratagem. But you were trying to damn your patient by the World, that is by palming off vanity, bustle, irony, and expensive tedium as pleasures. How can you have failed to see that a real pleasure was the last thing you ought to have let him meet? Didn't you foresee that it would just kill by contrast all the trumpery which you have been so laboriously teaching him to value? And that the sort of pleasure which the book and the walk gave him was the most dangerous of all? That it would peel off from his sensibility the kind of crust you have been forming on it, and make him feel that he was coming home, recovering himself? As a preliminary to detaching him from the Enemy, you wanted to detach him from himself, and had made some progress in doing so. Now, all that is undone. Of course I know that the Enemy also wants to detach men from themselves, but in a different way. Remember always, that He really likes the little vermin, and sets an absurd value on the distinctness of every one of them. When He talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever. Hence, while He is delighted to see them sacrificing even their innocent wills to His, He hates to see them drifting away from their own nature for any other reason. And we should always encourage them to do so. The deepest likings and impulses of any man are the raw material, the starting-point, with which the Enemy has furnished him. To get him away from those is therefore always a point gained; even in things indifferent it is always desirable substitute the standards of the World, or convention, or fashion, for a human's own real likings and dislikings. I myself would carry this very far. I would make it a rule to eradicate from my patient any strong personal taste which is not actually a sin, even if it is something quite trivial such as a fondness for county cricket or collecting stamps or drinking cocoa. Such things, I grant you, have nothing of virtue in them; but there is a sort of innocence and humility and self-forgetfulness about them which I distrust. The man who truly and disinterestedly enjoys any one thing in the world, for its own sake, and without caring two pence what other people say about it, is by that very fact fore-armed against some of our subtlest modes of attack. You should always try to make the patient abandon the people or food or books he really likes in favour of the "best" people, the "right" food, the "important" books. I have known a human defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions.

It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster. The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilising the seeds which the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will. As one of the humans has said, active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

XIV

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

The most alarming thing in your last account of the patient is that he is making none of those confident resolutions which marked his original conversion. No more lavish promises of perpetual virtue, I gather; not even the expectation of an endowment of "grace" for life, but only a hope for the daily and hourly pittance to meet the daily and hourly temptation! This is very bad.

I see only one thing to do at the moment. Your patient has become humble; have you drawn his attention to the fact? All virtues are less formidable to us once the man is aware that he has them, but this is specially true of humility. Catch him at the moment when he is really poor in spirit and smuggle into his mind the gratifying reflection, "By jove! I'm being humble", and almost immediately pride—pride at his own humility—will appear. If he awakes to the danger and tries to smother this new form of pride, make him proud of his attempt—and so on, through as many stages as you please. But don't try this too long, for fear you awake his sense of humour and proportion, in which case he will merely laugh at you and go to bed.

But there are other profitable ways of fixing his attention on the virtue of Humility. By this virtue, as by all the others, our Enemy wants to turn the man's attention away from self to Him, and to the man's neighbours. All the abjection and self-hatred are designed, in the long run, solely for this end; unless they attain this end they do us little harm; and they may even do us good if they keep the man concerned with himself, and, above all, if self-contempt can be made the starting-point for contempt of other selves, and thus for gloom, cynicism, and cruelty.

You must therefore conceal from the patient the true end of Humility. Let him think of it not as self-forgetfulness but as a certain kind of opinion (namely, a low opinion) of his own talents and character. Some talents, I gather, he really has. Fix in his mind the idea that humility consists in trying to believe those talents to be less valuable than he believes them to be. No doubt they are in fact less valuable than he believes, but that is not the point. The great thing is to make him value an opinion for some quality other than truth, thus introducing an element of dishonesty and make-believe into the heart of what otherwise threatens to become a virtue. By this method thousands of humans have been brought to think that humility

means pretty women trying to believe they are ugly and clever men trying to believe they are fools. And since what they are trying to believe may, in some cases, be manifest nonsense, they cannot succeed in believing it and we have the chance of keeping their minds endlessly revolving on themselves in an effort to achieve the impossible. To anticipate the Enemy's strategy, we must consider His aims. The Enemy wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the, fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another. The Enemy wants him, in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favour that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbour's talents—or in a sunrise, an elephant, or a waterfall. He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognise all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things. He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love—a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours. For we must never forget what is the most repellent and inexplicable trait in our Enemy; He really loves the hairless bipeds He has created and always gives back to them with His right hand what He has taken away with His left.

His whole effort, therefore, will be to get the man's mind off the subject of his own value altogether. He would rather the man thought himself a great architect or a great poet and then forgot about it, than that he should spend much time and pains trying to think himself a bad one. Your efforts to instill either vainglory or false modesty into the patient will therefore be met from the Enemy's side with the obvious reminder that a man is not usually called upon to have an opinion of his own talents at all, since he can very well go on improving them to the best of his ability without deciding on his own precise niche in the temple of Fame. You must try to exclude this reminder from the patient's consciousness at all costs. The Enemy will also try to render real in the patient's mind a doctrine which they all profess but find it difficult to bring home to their feelings—the doctrine that they did not create themselves, that their talents were given them, and that they might as well be proud of the colour of their hair. But always and by all methods the Enemy's aim will be to get the patient's mind off such questions, and yours will be to fix it on them. Even of his sins the Enemy does not want him to think too much: once they are repented, the sooner the man turns his attention outward, the better the Enemy is pleased,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XV

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I had noticed, of course, that the humans were having a lull in their European war—what they naïvely call "The War"—and am not surprised that there is a corresponding lull in the patient's anxieties. Do we want to encourage this, or to keep him worried? Tortured fear and stupid confidence are both desirable states of mind. Our choice between them raises important questions.

The humans live in time but our Enemy destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present—either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

Our business is to get them away from the eternal, and from the Present. With this in view, we sometimes tempt a human (say a widow or a scholar) to live in the Past. But this is of limited value, for they have some real knowledge of the past and it has a determinate nature and, to that extent, resembles eternity. It is far better to make them live in the Future. Biological necessity makes all their passions point in that direction already, so that thought about the Future inflames hope and fear. Also, it is unknown to them, so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealities. In a word, the Future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity. It is the most completely temporal part of time—for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the Present is all lit up with eternal rays. Hence the encouragement we have given to all those schemes of thought such as Creative Evolution, Scientific Humanism, or Communism, which fix men's affections on the Future, on the very core of temporality. Hence nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past and love to the present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead. Do not think lust an exception. When the present pleasure arrives, the sin (which alone interests us) is already over. The pleasure is just the part of the process which we regret and would exclude if we could do so without losing the sin; it is the part contributed by the Enemy, and therefore experienced in a Present. The sin, which is our contribution, looked forward.

To be sure, the Enemy wants men to think of the Future too—just so much as is necessary for now planning the acts of justice or charity which will probably be their duty tomorrow. The duty of planning the morrow's work is today's duty; though its material is borrowed from the future, the duty, like all duties, is in the Present. This is not straw splitting. He does not want men to give the Future their hearts, to place their treasure in it. We do. His ideal is a man who, having worked all day for the good of posterity (if that is his vocation), washes his mind of the whole subject, commits the issue to Heaven, and returns at once to the

patience or gratitude demanded by the moment that is passing over him. But we want a man hag-ridden by the Future—haunted by visions of an imminent heaven or hell upon earth—ready to break the Enemy's commands in the present if by so doing we make him think he can attain the one or avert the other—dependent for his faith on the success or failure of schemes whose end he will not live to see. We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy now, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the Present.

It follows then, in general, and other things being equal, that it is better for your patient to be filled with anxiety or hope (it doesn't much matter which) about this war than for him to be living in the present. But the phrase "living in the present" is ambiguous. It may describe a process which is really just as much concerned with the Future as anxiety itself. Your man may be untroubled about the Future, not because he is concerned with the Present, but because he has persuaded himself that the Future is, going to be agreeable. As long as that is the real course of his tranquility, his tranquility will do us good, because it is only piling up more disappointment, and therefore more impatience, for him when his false hopes are dashed. If, on the other hand, he is aware that horrors may be in store for him and is praying for the virtues, wherewith to meet them, and meanwhile concerning himself with the Present because there, and there alone, all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell, his state is very undesirable and should be attacked at once. Here again, our Philological Arm has done good work; try the word "complacency" on him. But, of course, it is most likely that he is "living in the Present" for none of these reasons but simply because his health is good and he is enjoying his work. The phenomenon would then be merely natural. All the same, I should break it up if I were you. No natural phenomenon is really in our favour. And anyway, why should the creature be happy?

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

XVI

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

You mentioned casually in your last letter that the patient has continued to attend one church, and one only, since he was converted, and that he is not wholly pleased with it. May I ask what you are about? Why have I no report on the causes of his fidelity to the parish church? Do you realise that unless it is due to indifference it is a very bad thing? Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.

The reasons are obvious. In the first place the parochial organization should always be attacked, because, being a unity of place and not of likings, it brings people of different classes and psychology together in the kind of unity the Enemy desires. The congregational principle, on the other hand, makes each church into a kind of club, and finally, if all goes well, into a coterie or faction. In the second place, the search for a "suitable" church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil. What He wants of the layman in church is an attitude which may, indeed, be critical in the sense of rejecting what is false or unhelpful, but which is wholly uncritical in the sense that it does not appraise—does not waste time in thinking about what it rejects, but lays itself open in uncommenting, humble receptivity to any nourishment that is going. (You see how grovelling, how unspiritual, how irredeemably vulgar He is!) This attitude, especially during sermons, creates the condition (most hostile to our whole policy) in which platitudes can become really audible to a human soul. There is hardly any sermon, or any book, which may not be dangerous to us if it is received in this temper. So pray bestir yourself and send this fool the round of the neighbouring churches as soon as possible. Your record up to date has not given us much satisfaction.

The two churches nearest to him, I have looked up in the office. Both have certain claims. At the first of these the Vicar is a man who has been so long engaged in watering down the faith to make it easier for supposedly incredulous and hard-headed congregation that it is now he who shocks his parishioners with his unbelief, not vice versa. He has undermined many a soul's Christianity. His conduct of the services is also admirable. In order to spare the laity all "difficulties" he has deserted both the lectionary and the appointed psalms and now, without noticing it, revolves endlessly round the little treadmill of his fifteen favourite psalms and twenty favourite lessons. We are thus safe from the danger that any truth not already familiar to him and to his flock should ever reach them through Scripture. But perhaps our patient is not quite silly enough for this church—or not yet?

At the other church we have Fr. Spike. The humans are often puzzled to understand the range of his opinions—why he is one day almost a Communist and the next not far from some kind of theocratic Fascism—one day a scholastic, and the next prepared to deny human reason altogether—one day immersed in politics, and, the day after, declaring that all states of his world are equally "under judgment". We, of course, see the connecting link, which is Hatred. The man cannot bring himself to teach anything which is not calculated to mock, grieve, puzzle, or humiliate his parents and their friends. A sermon which such people would accept would be to him as insipid as a poem which they could scan. There is also a promising streak of dishonesty in him; we are teaching him to say "The teaching of the Church is" when he really means "I'm almost sure I read recently in Maritain or someone of that sort". But I must warn you that he has one fatal defect: he really believes. And this may yet mar all.

But there is one good point which both these churches have in common—they are both party churches. I think I warned you before that if your patient can't be kept out of the Church, he ought at least to be

violently attached to some party within it. I don't mean on really doctrinal issues; about those, the more lukewarm he is the better. And it isn't the doctrines on which we chiefly depend for producing malice. The real fun is working up hatred between those who say "mass" and those who say "holy communion" when neither party could possibly state the difference between, say, Hooker's doctrine and Thomas Aquinas', in any form which would hold water for five minutes. And all the purely indifferent things—candles and clothes and what not—are an admirable ground for our activities. We have quite removed from men's minds what that pestilent fellow Paul used to teach about food and other unessentials—namely, that the human without scruples should always give in to the human with scruples. You would think they could not fail to see the application. You would expect to find the "low" churchman genuflecting and crossing himself lest the weak conscience of his "high" brother should be moved to irreverence, and the "high" one refraining from these exercises lest he should betray his "low" brother into idolatry. And so it would have been but for our ceaseless labour. Without that the variety of usage within the Church of England might have become a positive hotbed of charity and humility,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XVII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

The contemptuous way in which you spoke of gluttony as a means of catching souls, in your last letter, only shows your ignorance. One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on that subject, so that by now you will hardly find a sermon preached or a conscience troubled about it in the whole length and breadth of Europe. This has largely been effected by concentrating all our efforts on gluttony of Delicacy, not gluttony of Excess. Your patient's mother, as I learn from the dossier and you might have learned from Glucose, is a good example. She would be astonished—one day, I hope, will be—to learn that her whole life is enslaved to this kind of sensuality, which is quite concealed from her by the fact that the quantities involved are small. But what do quantities matter, provided we can use a human belly and palate to produce querulousness, impatience, uncharitableness, and self-concern? Glucose has this old woman well in hand. She is a positive terror to hostesses and servants. She is always turning from what has been offered her to say with a demure little sign and a smile "Oh please, please...all I want is a cup of tea, weak but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast". You see? Because what she wants is smaller and less costly than what has been set before her, she never recognizes as gluttony her determination to get what she wants, however troublesome it may be to others. At the very moment of indulging her appetite she believes that she is practising temperance. In a crowded restaurant she gives a little scream at the plate which some overworked waitress has set before her and says, "Oh, that's far, far too much! Take it away and bring me about a quarter of it". If challenged, she would say she was doing this to avoid waste; in reality she does it because the particular shade of delicacy to which we have enslaved her is offended by the sight of more food than she happens to want.

The real value of the quiet, unobtrusive work which Glucose has been doing for years on this old woman can be gauged by the way in which her belly now dominates her whole life. The woman is in what may be called the "All-I-want" state of mind. All she wants is a cup of tea properly made, or an egg properly boiled, or a slice of bread properly toasted. But she never finds any servant or any friend who can do these simple things "properly"—because her "properly" conceals an insatiable demand for the exact, and almost impossible, palatal pleasures which she imagines she remembers from the past; a past described by her as "the days when you could get good servants" but known to us as the days when her senses were more easily pleased and she had pleasures of other kinds which made her less dependent on those of the table. Meanwhile, the daily disappointment produces daily ill temper: cooks give notice and friendships are cooled. If ever the Enemy introduces into her mind a faint suspicion that she is too interested in food, Glucose counters it by suggesting to her that she doesn't mind what she eats herself but "does like to have things nice for her boy". In fact, of course, her greed has been one of the chief sources of his domestic discomfort for many years.

Now your patient is his mother's son. While working your hardest, quite rightly, on other fronts, you must not neglect a little quiet infiltration in respect of gluttony. Being a male, he is not so likely to be caught by the "All I want" camouflage. Males are best turned into gluttons with the help of their vanity. They ought to be made to think themselves very knowing about food, to pique themselves on having found the only restaurant in the town where steaks are really "properly" cooked. What begins as vanity can then be gradually turned into habit. But, however you approach it, the great thing is to bring him into the state in which the denial of any one indulgence—it matters not which, champagne or tea, sole Colbert or cigarettes—"puts him out", for then his charity, justice, and obedience are all at your mercy.

Mere excess in food is much less valuable than delicacy. Its chief use is as a kind of artillery preparation for attacks on chastity. On that, as on every other subject, keep your man in a condition of false spirituality. Never let him notice the medical aspect. Keep him wondering what pride or lack of faith has delivered him into your hands when a simple enquiry into what he has been eating or drinking for the last twenty-four hours would show him whence your ammunition comes and thus enable him by a very little abstinence to imperil your lines of communication. If he must think of the medical side of chastity, feed him the grand lie which we have made the English humans believe, that physical exercise in excess and consequent fatigue are specially favourable to this virtue. How they can believe this, in face of the notorious lustfulness of

sailors and soldiers, may well be asked. But we used the schoolmasters to put the story about—men who were really interested in chastity as an excuse for games and therefore recommended games as an aid to chastity. But this whole business is too large to deal with at the tail-end of a letter,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XVIII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Even under Slubgob you must have learned at college the routine technique of sexual temptation, and since, for us spirits, this whole subject is one of considerable tedium (though necessary as part of our training) I will pass it over. But on the larger issues involved I think you have a good deal to learn. The Enemy's demand on humans takes the form of a dilemma; either complete abstinence or unmitigated monogamy. Ever since our Father's first great victory, we have rendered the former very difficult to them. The latter, for the last few centuries, we have been closing as a way of escape. We have done this through the poets and novelists by persuading the humans that a curious, and usually short-lived, experience which they call "being in love" is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can, and ought to, render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage which does not do so is no longer binding. This idea is our parody of an idea that came from the Enemy.

The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects from the space it occupies; if it expands, it does so by thrusting other objects aside or by absorbing them. A self does the same. With beasts the absorption takes the form of eating; for us, it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. "To be" means "to be in competition".

Now the Enemy's philosophy is nothing more nor less than one continued attempt to evade this very obvious truth. He aims at a contradiction. Things are to be many, yet somehow also one. The good of one self is to be the good of another. This impossibility He calls love, and this same monotonous panacea can be detected under all He does and even all He is—or claims to be. Thus He is not content, even Himself, to be a sheer arithmetical unity; He claims to be three as well as one, in order that this nonsense about Love may find a foothold in His own nature. At the other end of the scale, He introduces into matter that obscene invention the organism, in which the parts are perverted from their natural destiny of competition and made to co-operate.

His real motive for fixing on sex as the method of reproduction among humans is only too apparent from the use He has made of it. Sex might have been, from our point of view, quite innocent. It might have been merely one more mode in which a stronger self preyed upon a weaker—as it is, indeed, among the spiders where the bride concludes her nuptials by eating her groom. But in the humans the Enemy has gratuitously associated affection between the parties with sexual desire. He has also made the offspring dependent on the parents and given the parents an impulse to support it—thus producing the Family, which is like the organism, only worse; for the members are more distinct, yet also united in a more conscious and responsible way. The whole thing, in fact, turns out to be simply one more device for dragging in Love.

Now comes the joke. The Enemy described a married couple as "one flesh". He did not lay "a happily married couple" or "a couple who married because they were in love", but you can make the humans ignore that. You can also make them forget that the man they call Paul did not confine it to married couples. Mere copulation, for him, makes "one flesh". You can thus get the humans to accept as rhetorical eulogies of "being in love" what were in fact plain descriptions of the real significance of sexual intercourse. The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured.

From the true statement that this transcendental relation was intended to produce, and, if obediently entered into, too often will produce, affection and the family, humans can be made to infer the false belief that the blend of affection, fear, and desire which they call "being in love" is the only thing that makes marriage either happy or holy. The error is easy to produce because "being in love" does very often, in Western Europe, precede marriages which are made in obedience to the Enemy's designs, that is, with the intention of fidelity, fertility and good will; just as religious emotion very often, but not always, attends conversion. In other words, the humans are to be encouraged to regard as the basis for marriage a highly-coloured and distorted version of something the Enemy really promises as its result. Two advantages follow. In the first place, humans who have not the gift of continence can be deterred from seeking marriage as a solution because they do not find themselves "in love", and, thanks to us, the idea of marrying with any other motive seems to them low and cynical. Yes, they think that. They regard the intention of loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life, as something lower than a storm of emotion. (Don't neglect to make your man think the marriage-service very offensive.) In the second place any sexual infatuation whatever, so long as it intends marriage, will be regarded as "love", and "love" will be held to excuse a man from all the guilt, and to protect him from all the consequences, if marrying a heathen, a fool, or a wanton. But more of this in my next,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XIX

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I have been thinking very hard about the question in your last letter. If, as I have clearly shown, all selves are by their very nature in competition, and therefore the Enemy's idea of Love is a contradiction in terms, what becomes of my reiterated warning that He really loves the human vermin and really desires their freedom and continued existence? I hope, my dear boy, you have not shown my letters to anyone. Not that it matters of course. Anyone would see that the appearance of heresy into which I have fallen is purely accidental. By the way, I hope you understood, too, that some apparently uncomplimentary references to Slubgob were purely jocular. I really have the highest respect for him. And, of course, some things I said about not shielding you from the authorities were not seriously meant. You can trust me to look after your interests. But do keep everything under lock and key.

The truth is I slipped by mere carelessness into saying that the Enemy really loves the humans. That, of course, is an impossibility. He is one being, they are distinct from Him. Their good cannot be His. All His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else—He must have some real motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them. The reason one comes to talk as if He really had this impossible Love is our utter failure to out that real motive.

What does He stand to make out of them? That is the insoluble question. I do not see that it can do any harm to tell you that this very problem was a chief cause of Our Father's quarrel with the Enemy. When the creation of man was first mooted and when, even at that stage, the Enemy freely confessed that he foresaw a certain episode about a cross, Our Father very naturally sought an interview and asked for an explanation. The Enemy gave no reply except to produce the cock-and-bull story about disinterested love which He has been circulating ever since. This Our Father naturally could not accept. He implored the Enemy to lay His cards on the table, and gave Him every opportunity. He admitted that he felt a real anxiety to know the secret; the Enemy replied "I wish with all my heart that you did". It was, I imagine, at this stage in the interview that Our Father's disgust at such an unprovoked lack of confidence caused him to remove himself an infinite distance from the Presence with a suddenness which has given rise to the ridiculous enemy story that he was forcibly thrown out of Heaven.

Since then, we have begun to see why our Oppressor was so secretive. His throne depends on the secret. Members of His faction have frequently admitted that if ever we came to understand what He means by Love, the war would be over and we should re-enter Heaven. And there lies the great task. We know that He cannot really love: nobody can: it doesn't make sense. If we could only find out what He is really up to! Hypothesis after hypothesis has been tried, and still we can't find out. Yet we must never lose hope; more and more complicated theories, fuller and fuller collections of data, richer rewards for researchers who make progress, more and more terrible punishments for those who fail—all this, pursued and accelerated to the very end of time, cannot, surely, fail to succeed.

You complain that my last letter does not make it clear whether I regard being in love as a desirable state for a human or not. But really, Wormwood, that is the sort of question one expects them to ask! Leave them to discuss whether "Love", or patriotism, or celibacy, or candles on altars, or teetotalism, or education, are "good" or "bad". Can't you see there's no answer? Nothing matters at all except the tendency of a given state of mind, in given circumstances, to move a particular patient at particular moment nearer to the Enemy or nearer to us. Thus it would be quite a good thing to make the patient decide that "love" is "good" or "bad". If he is an arrogant man with a contempt for the body really based on delicacy but mistaken by him for purity—and one who takes pleasure in flouting what most of his fellows approve—by all means let him decide against love. Instill into him an over-weening asceticism and then, when you have separated his sexuality from all that might humanise it, weigh in on him with it in some much more brutal and cynical form. If, on the other hand, he is an emotional, gullible man, feed him on minor poets and fifth-rate novelists of the old school until you have made him believe that "Love" is both irresistible and somehow intrinsically meritorious. This belief is not much help, I grant you, in producing casual unchastity; but it is an incomparable recipe for prolonged, "noble", romantic, tragic adulteries, ending, if all goes well, in murders and suicides. Failing that, it can be used to steer the patient into a useful marriage. For marriage, though the Enemy's invention, has its uses. There must be several young women in your patient's neighbourhood who would render the Christian life intensely difficult to him if only you could persuade him to marry one of them. Please send me a report on this when you next write. In the meantime, get it quite clear in your own mind that this state of falling in love is not, in itself, necessarily favourable either to us or to the other side. It is simply an occasion which we and the Enemy are both trying to exploit. Like most of the other things which humans are excited about, such as health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace, it is, from the point of view of the spiritual life, mainly raw material,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

XX

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I note with great displeasure that the Enemy has, for the time being, put a forcible end to your direct attacks on the patient's chastity. You ought to have known that He always does in the end, and you ought to have stopped before you reached that stage. For as things are, your man has now discovered the dangerous truth that these attacks don't last forever; consequently you cannot use again what is, after all, our best

weapon—the belief of ignorant humans, that there is no hope of getting rid of us except by yielding. I suppose you've tried persuading him that chastity is unhealthy?

I haven't yet got a report from you on young women in the neighbourhood. I should like it once, for if we can't use his sexuality to make him unchaste we must try to use it for promotion of a desirable marriage. In the meantime I would like to give you some hint about the type of woman—I mean the physical type—which he should be encouraged to fall in love with if "falling in love" is the best we can manage.

In a rough and ready way, of course, this question is decided for us by spirits far deeper down in the Lowerarchy than you and I. It is the business of these great masters to produce in every age a general misdirection of what may be called sexual "taste". This they do by working through the small circle of popular artists, dressmakers, actresses and advertisers who determine the fashionable type. The aim is to guide each sex away from those members of the other with whom spiritually helpful, happy, and fertile marriages are most likely. Thus we have now for many centuries triumphed over nature to the extent of making certain secondary characteristics of the male (such as the beard) disagreeable to nearly all the females—and there is more in that than you might suppose. As regards the male taste we have varied a good deal. At one time we have directed it to the statuesque and aristocratic type of beauty, mixing men's vanity with their desires and encouraging the race to breed chiefly from the most arrogant and prodigal women. At another, we have selected an exaggeratedly feminine type, faint and languishing, so that folly and cowardice, and all the general falseness and littleness of mind which go with them, shall be at a premium. At present we are on the opposite tack. The age of jazz has succeeded the age of the waltz, and we now teach men to like women whose bodies are scarcely distinguishable from those of boys. Since this is a kind of beauty even more transitory than most, we thus aggravate the female's chronic horror of growing old (with many excellent results) and render her less willing and less able to bear children. And that is not all. We have engineered a great increase in the licence which society allows to the representation of the apparent nude (not the real nude) in art, and its exhibition on the stage or the bathing beach. It is all a fake, of course; the figures in the popular art are falsely drawn; the real women in bathing suits or tights are actually pinched in and propped up to make them appear firmer and more slender and more boyish than nature allows a full-grown woman to be. Yet at the same time, the modern world is taught to believe that it is being "frank" and "healthy" and getting back to nature. As a result we are more and more directing the desires of men to something which does not exist—making the rôle of the eye in sexuality more and more important and at the same time making its demands more and more impossible. What follows you can easily forecast!

That is the general strategy of the moment. But inside that framework you will still find it possible to encourage your patient's desires in one of two directions. You will find, if you look carefully into any human's heart, that he is haunted by at least two imaginary women—a terrestrial and an infernal Venus, and that his desire differs qualitatively according to its object. There is one type for which his desire is such as to be naturally amenable to the Enemy—readily mixed with charity, readily obedient to marriage, coloured all through with that golden light of reverence and naturalness which we detest; there is another type which he desires brutally, and desires to desire brutally, a type best used to draw him away from marriage altogether but which, even within marriage, he would tend to treat as a slave, an idol, or an accomplice.

His love for the first might involve what the Enemy calls evil, but only accidentally; the man would wish that she was not someone else's wife and be sorry that he could not love her lawfully. But in the second type, the felt evil is what he wants; it is that "tang" in the flavour which he is after. In the face, it is the visible animality, or sulkiness, or craft, or cruelty which he likes, and in the body, something quite different from what he ordinarily calls Beauty, something he may even, in a sane hour, describe as ugliness, but which, by our art, can be made to play on the raw nerve of his private obsession.

The real use of the infernal Venus is, no doubt, as prostitute or mistress. But if your man is a Christian, and if he has been well trained in nonsense about irresistible and all-excusing "Love", he can often be induced to marry her. And that is very well worth bringing about. You will have failed as regards fornication and solitary vice; but there are other, and more indirect, methods of using a man's sexuality to his undoing. And, by the way, they are not only efficient, but delightful; the unhappiness produced is of a very lasting and exquisite kind,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXI

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Yes. A period of sexual temptation is an excellent time for working in a subordinate attack on the patient's peevishness. It may even be the main attack, as long as he thinks it the subordinate one. But here, as in everything else, the way must be prepared for your moral assault by darkening his intellect.

Men are not angered by mere misfortune but by misfortune conceived as injury. And the sense of injury depends on the feeling that a legitimate claim has been denied. The more claims on life, therefore, that your patient can be induced to make, the more often he will feel injured and, as a result, ill-tempered. Now you will have noticed that nothing throws him into a passion so easily as to find a tract of time which he reckoned on having at his own disposal unexpectedly taken from him. It is the unexpected visitor (when he looked forward to a quiet evening), or the friend's talkative wife (turning up when he looked forward to a tête-à-tête with the friend), that throw him out of gear.

Now he is not yet so uncharitable or slothful that these small demands on his courtesy are in themselves too much for it. They anger him because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen. You must therefore zealously guard in his mind the curious assumption "My time is my own". Let him have the feeling that he starts each day as the lawful possessor of twenty-four hours. Let him feel as a grievous tax that portion of this property which he has to make over to his employers, and as a generous donation that further portion which he allows to religious duties. But what he must never be permitted to doubt is that the total from which these deductions have been made was, in some mysterious sense, his own personal birthright.

You have here a delicate task. The assumption which you want him to go on making is so absurd that, if once it is questioned, even we cannot find a shred of argument in its defence. The man can neither make, nor retain, one moment of time; it all comes to him by pure gift; he might as well regard the sun and moon his chattels. He is also, in theory, committed a total service of the Enemy; and if the Enemy appeared to him in bodily form and demanded that total service for even one day, he would not refuse. He would be greatly relieved if that one day involved nothing harder than listening to the conversation of a foolish woman; and he would be relieved almost to the pitch of disappointment if for one half-hour in that day the Enemy said "Now you may go and amuse yourself". Now if he thinks about his assumption for a moment, even he is bound to realise that he is actually in this situation every day. When I speak of preserving this assumption in his mind, therefore, the last thing I mean you to do is to furnish him with arguments in its defence. There aren't any. Your task is purely negative. Don't let his thoughts come anywhere near it. Wrap a darkness about it, and in the centre of that darkness let his sense of ownership-in-Time lie silent, uninspected, and operative.

The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell and we must keep them doing so. Much of the modern resistance to chastity comes from men's belief that they "own" their bodies—those vast and perilous estates, pulsating with the energy that made the worlds, in which they find themselves without their consent and from which they are ejected at the pleasure of Another! It is as if a royal child whom his father has placed, for love's sake, in titular command of some great province, under the real rule of wise counsellors, should come to fancy he really owns the cities, the forests, and the corn, in the same way as he owns the bricks on the nursery floor.

We produce this sense of ownership not only by pride but by confusion. We teach them not to notice the different senses of the possessive pronoun—the finely graded differences that run from "my boots" through "my dog", "my servant", "my wife", "my father", "my master" and "my country", to "my God". They can be taught to reduce all these senses to that of "my boots", the "my" of ownership. Even in the nursery a child can be taught to mean by "my Teddy-bear" not the old imagined recipient of affection to whom it stands in a special relation (for that is what the Enemy will teach them to mean if we are not careful) but "the bear I can pull to pieces if I like". And at the other end of the scale, we have taught men to say "My God" in a sense not really very different from "My boots", meaning "The God on whom I have a claim for my distinguished services and whom I exploit from the pulpit—the God I have done a corner in".

And all the time the joke is that the word "Mine" in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either Our Father or the Enemy will say "Mine" of each thing that exists, and specially of each man. They will find out in the end, never fear, to whom their time, their souls, and their bodies really belong—certainly not to them, whatever happens. At present the Enemy says "Mine" of everything on the pedantic, legalistic ground that He made it: Our Father hopes in the end to say "Mine" of all things on the more realistic and dynamic ground of conquest,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

So! Your man is in love—and in the worst kind he could possibly have fallen into—and with a girl who does not even appear in the report you sent me. You may be interested to learn that the little misunderstanding with the Secret Police which you tried to raise about some unguarded expressions in one of my letters has been tided over. If you were reckoning on that to secure my good offices, you will find yourself mistaken. You shall pay for that as well as for your other blunders. Meanwhile I enclose a little booklet, just issued, on the new House of Correction for Incompetent Tempters. It is profusely illustrated and you will not find a dull page in it.

I have looked up this girl's dossier and am horrified at what I find. Not only a Christian but such a Christian—a vile, sneaking, simpering, demure, monosyllabic, mouse-like, watery, insignificant, virginal, bread-and-butter miss. The little brute. She makes me vomit. She stinks and scalds through the very pages of the dossier. It drives me mad, the way the world has worsened.

We'd have had her to the arena in the old days. That's what her sort is made for. Not that she'd do much good there, either. A two-faced little cheat (I know the sort) who looks as if she'd faint at the sight of blood and then dies with a smile. A cheat every way. Looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth and yet has a satirical wit. The sort of creature who'd find ME funny! Filthy insipid little prude—and yet ready to fall into this booby's arms like any other breeding animal. Why doesn't the Enemy blast her for it, if He's so moonstruck by virginity—instead of looking on there, grinning?

He's a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade. Or only like foam on the sea shore. Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are "pleasures for evermore". Ugh! I don't think He has the least inkling of that high and austere mystery to which we rise in the Miserific Vision. He's vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least—sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working, Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side. (Not that that excuses you. I'll settle with you presently. You have always hated me and been insolent when you dared.)

Then, of course, he gets to know this woman's family and whole circle. Could you not see that the very house she lives in is one that he ought never to have entered? The whole place reeks of that deadly odour. The very gardener, though he has only been there five years, is beginning to acquire it. Even guests, after a week-end visit, carry some of the smell away with them. The dog and the cat are tainted with it. And a house full of the impenetrable mystery. We are certain (it is a matter of first principles) that each member of the family must in some way be making capital out of the others—but we can't find out how. They guard as jealously as the Enemy Himself the secret of what really lies behind this pretence of disinterested love. The whole house and garden is one vast obscenity. It bears a sickening resemblance to the description one human writer made of Heaven; "the regions where there is only life and therefore all that is not music is silence"

Music and silence—how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell—though longer ago than humans, reckoning in light years, could express—no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise—Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile—Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth. The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. But I admit we are not yet loud enough, or anything like it. Research is in progress. Meanwhile you, disgusting little—

[Here the MS. breaks off and is resumed in a different hand.]

In the heat of composition I find that I have inadvertently allowed myself to assume the form of a large centipede. I am accordingly dictating the rest to my secretary. Now that the transformation is complete I recognise it as a periodical phenomenon. Some rumour of it has reached the humans and a distorted account of it appears in the poet Milton, with the ridiculous addition that such changes of shape are a "punishment" imposed on us by the Enemy. A more modern writer—someone with a name like Pshaw—has, however, grasped the truth. Transformation proceeds from within and is a glorious manifestation of that Life Force which Our Father would worship if he worshipped anything but himself. In my present form I feel even more anxious to see you, to unite you to myself in an indissoluble embrace,

(Signed) TOADPIPE

For his Abysmal Sublimity Under Secretary
Screwtape, T.E., B.S., etc.

XXIII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Through this girl and her disgusting family the patient is now getting to know more Christians every day, and very intelligent Christians too. For a long time it will be quite impossible to remove spirituality from his life. Very well then; we must corrupt it. No doubt you have often practised transforming yourself into an angel of light as a parade-ground exercise. Now is the time to do it in the face of the Enemy. The World and the Flesh have failed us; a third Power remains. And success of this third kind is the most glorious of all. A spoiled saint, a Pharisee, an inquisitor, or a magician, makes better sport in Hell than a mere common tyrant or debauchee.

Looking round your patient's new friends I find that the best point of attack would be the border-line between theology and politics. Several of his new friends are very much alive to the social implications of their religion. That, in itself, is a bad thing; but good can be made out of it.

You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think that Christianity began going wrong, and departing from the doctrine of its Founder, at a very early stage. Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a "historical Jesus" to be found by clearing away later "accretions and perversions" and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition. In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a "historical Jesus" on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new "historical Jesus" on Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines. The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so, are manifold. In the first place they all tend to direct men's devotion to something which does not exist, for each "historical Jesus" is unhistorical.

The documents say what they say and cannot be added to; each new "historical Jesus" therefore has to be got out of them by suppression at one point and exaggeration at another, and by that sort of guessing (brilliant is the adjective we teach humans to apply to it) on which no one would risk ten shillings in

ordinary life, but which is enough to produce a crop of new Napoleons, new Shakespeares, and new Swifts, in every publisher's autumn list.

In the second place, all such constructions place the importance of their Historical Jesus in some peculiar theory He is supposed to have promulgated. He has to be a "great man" in the modern sense of the word—one standing at the terminus of some centrifugal and unbalanced line of thought—a crank vending a panacea. We thus distract men's minds from Who He is, and what He did. We first make Him solely a teacher, and then conceal the very substantial agreement between His teachings and those of all other great moral teachers. For humans must not be allowed to notice that all great moralists are sent by the Enemy not to inform men but to remind them, to restate the primeval moral platitudes against our continual concealment of them. We make the Sophists: He raises up a Socrates to answer them. Our third aim is, by these constructions, to destroy the devotional life. For the real presence of the Enemy, otherwise experienced by men in prayer and sacrament, we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago. Such an object cannot in fact be worshipped. Instead of the Creator adored by its creature, you soon have merely a leader acclaimed by a partisan, and finally a distinguished character approved by a judicious historian. And fourthly, besides being unhistorical in the Jesus it depicts, religion of this kind is false to history in another sense.

No nation, and few individuals, are really brought into the Enemy's camp by the historical study of the biography of Jesus, simply as biography. Indeed materials for a full biography have been withheld from men. The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact (the Resurrection) and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption) operating on a sense of sin which they already had—and sin, not against some new fancy-dress law produced as a novelty by a "great man", but against the old, platitudinous, universal moral law which they had been taught by their nurses and mothers. The "Gospels" come later and were written not to make Christians but to edify Christians already made.

The "Historical Jesus" then, however dangerous he may seem to be to us at some particular point, is always to be encouraged. About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but, failing that, as a means to anything—even to social justice.

The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist's shop. Fortunately it is quite easy to coax humans round this little corner. Only today I have found a passage in a Christian writer where he recommends his own version of Christianity on the ground that "only such a faith can outlast the death of old cultures and the birth of new civilisations". You see the little rift? "Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason." That's the game,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXIV

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I have been in correspondence with Slumtrimpet who is in charge of your patient's young woman, and begin to see the chink in her armour. It is an unobtrusive little vice which she shares with nearly all women who have grown up in an intelligent circle united by a clearly defined belief; and it consists in a quite untroubled assumption that the outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and ridiculous. The males, who habitually meet these outsiders, do not feel that way; their confidence, if they are confident, is of a different kind. Hers, which she supposes to be due to Faith, is in reality largely due to the mere colour she has taken from her surroundings. It is not, in fact, very different from the conviction she would have felt at the age of ten that the kind of fish-knives used in her father's house were the proper or normal or "real" kind, while those of the neighbouring families were "not real fish-knives" at all. Now the element of ignorance and naivety in all this is so large, and the element of spiritual pride so small, that it gives us little hope of the girl herself. But have you thought of how it can be made to influence your own patient?

It is always the novice who exaggerates. The man who has risen in society is over-refined, the young scholar is pedantic. In this new circle your patient is a novice. He is there daily meeting Christian life of a quality he never before imagined and seeing it all through an enchanted glass because he is in love. He is anxious (indeed the Enemy commands him) to imitate this quality. Can you get him to imitate this defect in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial in her becomes in him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride?

The conditions seem ideally favourable. The new circle in which he finds himself is one of which he is tempted to be proud for many reasons other than its Christianity. It is a better educated, more intelligent, more agreeable society than any he has yet encountered. He is also under some degree of illusion as to his own place in it. Under the influence of "love" he may still think himself unworthy of the girl, but he is rapidly ceasing to think himself unworthy of the others. He has no notion how much in him is forgiven because they are charitable and made the best of because he is now one of the family. He does not dream how much of his conversation, how many of his opinions, are recognised by them all as mere echoes of their

own. Still less does he suspect how much of the delight he takes in these people is due to the erotic enchantment which the girl, for him, spreads over all her surroundings. He thinks that he likes their talk and way of life because of some congruity between their spiritual state and his, when in fact they are so far beyond him that if he were not in love he would be merely puzzled and repelled by much which he now accepts. He is like a dog which should imagine it understood fire-arms because its hunting instinct and love for its master enable it to enjoy a day's shooting!

Here is your chance. While the Enemy, by means of sexual love and of some very agreeable people far advanced in His service, is drawing the young barbarian up to levels he could never otherwise have reached, you must make him feel that he is finding his own level—that these people are "his sort" and that, coming among them, he has come home. When he turns from them to other society he will find it dull; partly because almost any society within his reach is, in fact, much less entertaining, but still more because he will miss the enchantment of the young woman. You must teach him to mistake his contrast between the circle that delights and the circle that bores him for the contrast between Christians and unbelievers. He must be made to feel (he'd better not put it into words) "how different we Christians are"; and by "we Christians" he must really, but unknowingly, mean "my set"; and by "my set" he must mean not "The people who, in their charity and humility, have accepted me", but "The people with whom I associate by right".

Success here depends on confusing him. If you try to make him explicitly and professedly proud of being a Christian, you will probably fail; the Enemy's warnings are too well known. If, on the other hand, you let the idea of "we Christians" drop out altogether and merely make him complacent about "his set", you will produce not true spiritual pride but mere social vanity which, by comparison, is a trumpery, puny little sin. What you want is to keep a sly self-congratulation mixing with all his thoughts and never allow him to raise the question "What, precisely, am I congratulating myself about?" The idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him. Play on that nerve. Teach him, using the influence of this girl when she is silliest, to adopt an air of amusement at the things the unbelievers say. Some theories which he may meet in modern Christian circles may here prove helpful; theories, I mean, that place the hope of society in some inner ring of "clerks", some trained minority of theocrats. It is no affair of yours whether those theories are true or false; the great thing is to make Christianity a mystery religion in which he feels himself one of the initiates.

Pray do not fill your letters with rubbish about this European War. Its final issue is, no doubt, important, but that is a matter for the High Command. I am not in the least interested in knowing how many people in England have been killed by bombs. In what state of mind they died, I can learn from the office at this end. That they were going to die sometime, I knew already. Please keep your mind on your work,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXV

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is that it is merely Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call "Christianity And". You know—Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring. Work on their horror of the Same Old Thing.

The horror of the Same Old Thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the human heart—an endless source of heresies in religion, folly in counsel, infidelity in marriage, and inconstancy in friendship. The humans live in time, and experience reality successively. To experience much of it, therefore, they must experience many different things; in other words, they must experience change. And since they need change, the Enemy (being a hedonist at heart) has made change pleasurable to them, just as He has made eating Pleasurable. But since He does not wish them to make change, any more than eating, an end in itself, He has balanced the love of change in them by a love of permanence. He has contrived to gratify both tastes together on the very world He has made, by that union of change and permanence which we call Rhythm. He gives them the seasons, each season different yet every year the same, so that spring is always felt as a novelty yet always as the recurrence of an immemorial theme. He gives them in His Church a spiritual ear; they change from a fast to a feast, but it is the same feast as before.

Now just as we pick out and exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for absolute novelty. This demand is entirely our workmanship. If we neglect our duty, men will be not only contented but transported by the mixed novelty and familiarity of snowdrops this January, sunrise this morning, plum pudding this Christmas. Children, until we have taught them better, will be perfectly happy with a seasonal round of games in which conkers succeed hopscotch as regularly as autumn follows summer. Only by our incessant efforts is the demand for infinite, or unrhythmical, change kept up.

This demand is valuable in various ways. In the first place it diminishes pleasure while increasing desire. The pleasure of novelty is by its very nature more subject than any other to the law of diminishing returns. And continued novelty costs money, so that the desire for it spells avarice or unhappiness or both. And again, the more rapacious this desire, the sooner it must eat up all the innocent sources of pleasure and pass

on to those the Enemy forbids. Thus by inflaming the horror of the Same Old Thing we have recently made the Arts, for example, less dangerous to us than perhaps, they have ever been, "low-brow" and "high-brow" artists alike being now daily drawn into fresh, and still fresh, excesses of lasciviousness, unreason, cruelty, and pride. Finally, the desire for novelty is indispensable if we are to produce Fashions or Vogues. The use of Fashions in thought is to distract the attention of men from their real dangers. We direct the fashionable outcry of each generation against those vices of which it is least in danger and fix its approval on the virtue nearest to that vice which we are trying to make endemic. The game is to have them running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly gunwale under. Thus we make it fashionable to expose the dangers of enthusiasm at the very moment when they are all really becoming worldly and lukewarm; a century later, when we are really making them all Byronic and drunk with emotion, the fashionable outcry is directed against the dangers of the mere "understanding". Cruel ages are put on their guard against Sentimentality, feckless and idle ones against Respectability, lecherous ones against Puritanism; and whenever all men are really hastening to be slaves or tyrants we make Liberalism the prime bogey.

But the greatest triumph of all is to elevate his horror of the Same Old Thing into a philosophy so that nonsense in the intellect may reinforce corruption in the will. It is here that the general Evolutionary or Historical character of modern European thought (partly our work) comes in so useful. The Enemy loves platitudes. Of a proposed course of action He wants men, so far as I can see, to ask very simple questions; is it righteous? is it prudent? is it possible? Now if we can keep men asking "Is it in accordance with the general movement of our time? Is it progressive or reactionary? Is this the way that History is going?" they will neglect the relevant questions. And the questions they do ask are, of course, unanswerable; for they do not know the future, and what the future will be depends very largely on just those choices which they now invoke the future to help them to make. As a result, while their minds are buzzing in this vacuum, we have the better chance to slip in and bend them to the action we have decided on. And great work has already been done. Once they knew that some changes were for the better, and others for the worse, and others again indifferent. We have largely removed this knowledge. For the descriptive adjective "unchanged" we have substituted the emotional adjective "stagnant". We have trained them to think of the Future as a promised land which favoured heroes attain—not as something which everyone reaches at the rate of sixty minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXVI

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Yes; courtship is the time for sowing those seeds which will grow up ten years later into domestic hatred. The enchantment of unsatisfied desire produces results which the humans can be made to mistake for the results of charity. Avail yourself of the ambiguity in the word "Love": let them think they have solved by Love problems they have in fact only waived or postponed under the influence of the enchantment. While it lasts you have your chance to foment the problems in secret and render them chronic.

The grand problem is that of "unselfishness". Note, once again, the admirable work of our Philological Arm in substituting the negative unselfishness for the Enemy's positive Charity. Thanks to this you can, from the very outset, teach a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them. That is a great point gained. Another great help, where the parties concerned are male and female, is the divergence of view about Unselfishness which we have built up between the sexes. A woman means by Unselfishness chiefly taking trouble for others; a man means not giving trouble to others. As a result, a woman who is quite far gone in the Enemy's service will make a nuisance of herself on a larger scale than any man except those whom Our Father has dominated completely; and, conversely, a man will live long in the Enemy's camp before he undertakes as much spontaneous work to please others as a quite ordinary woman may do every day. Thus while the woman thinks of doing good offices and the man of respecting other people's rights, each sex, without any obvious unreason, can and does regard the other as radically selfish.

On top of these confusions you can now introduce a few more. The erotic enchantment produces a mutual complaisance in which each is really pleased to give in to the wishes of the other. They also know that the Enemy demands of them a degree of charity which, if attained, would result in similar actions.

You must make them establish as a Law for their whole married life that degree of mutual self-sacrifice which is at present sprouting naturally out of the enchantment, but which, when the enchantment dies away, they will not have charity enough to enable them to perform. They will not see the trap, since they are under the double blindness of mistaking sexual excitement for charity and of thinking that the excitement will last.

When once a sort of official, legal, or nominal Unselfishness has been established as a rule—a rule for the keeping of which their emotional resources have died away and their spiritual resources have not yet grown—the most delightful results follow. In discussing any joint action, it becomes obligatory that A should argue in favour of B's supposed wishes and against his own, while B does the opposite. It is often impossible to find out either party's real wishes; with luck, they end by doing something that neither wants, while each feels a glow of self-righteousness and harbours a secret claim to preferential treatment for the unselfishness shown and a secret grudge against the other for the ease with which the sacrifice has been accepted. Later on you can venture on what may be called the Generous Conflict Illusion. This game is best

played with more than two players, in a family with grown-up children for example. Something quite trivial, like having tea in the garden, is proposed. One member takes care to make it quite clear (though not in so many words) that he would rather not but is, of course, prepared to do so out of "Unselfishness". The others instantly withdraw their proposal, ostensibly through their "Unselfishness", but really because they don't want to be used as a sort of lay figure on which the first speaker practices petty altruisms. But he is not going to be done out of his debauch of Unselfishness either. He insists on doing "what the others want". They insist on doing what he wants. Passions are roused. Soon someone is saying "Very well then, I won't have any tea at all!", and a real quarrel ensues with bitter resentment on both sides. You see how it is done? If each side had been frankly contending for its own real wish, they would all have kept within the bounds of reason and courtesy; but just because the contention is reversed and each side is fighting the other side's battle, all the bitterness which really flows from thwarted self-righteousness and obstinacy and the accumulated grudges of the last ten years is concealed from them by the nominal or official "Unselfishness" of what they are doing or, at least, held to be excused by it.

Each side is, indeed, quite alive to the cheap quality of the Adversary's unselfishness and of the false position into which he is trying to force them; but each manages to feel blameless and ill-used itself, with no more dishonesty than comes natural to a human.

A sensible human once said, "If people knew how much ill-feeling Unselfishness occasions, it would not be so often recommended from the pulpit"; and again, "She's the sort of woman who lives for others—you can always tell the others by their hunted expression". All this can be begun even in the period of courtship.

A little real selfishness on your patient's part is often of less value in the long run, for securing his soul, than the first beginnings of that elaborate and self-consciousness unselfishness which may one day blossom into the sort of thing I have described. Some degree of mutual falseness, some surprise that the girl does not always notice just how Unselfish he is being, can be smuggled in already. Cherish these things, and, above all, don't let the young fools notice them. If they notice them they will be on the road to discovering that "love" is not enough, that charity is needed and not yet achieved and that no external law can supply its place. I wish Slumtrimpet could do something about undermining that young woman's sense of the ridiculous,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXVII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

You seem to be doing very little good at present. The use of his "love" to distract his mind from the Enemy is, of course, obvious, but you reveal what poor use you are making of it when you say that the whole question of distraction and the wandering mind has now become one of the chief subjects of his prayers. That means you have largely failed. When this, or any other distraction, crosses his mind you ought to encourage him to thrust it away by sheer will power and to try to continue the normal prayer as if nothing had happened; once he accepts the distraction as his present problem and lays that before the Enemy and makes it the main theme of his prayers and his endeavours, then, so far from doing good, you have done harm. Anything, even a sin, which has the total effect of moving him close up to the Enemy, makes against us in the long run.

A promising line is the following. Now that he is in love, a new idea of earthly happiness has arisen in his mind: and hence a new urgency in his purely petitionary prayers—about this war and other such matters. Now is the time for raising intellectual difficulties about prayer of that sort. False spirituality is always to be encouraged. On the seemingly pious ground that "praise and communion with God is the true prayer", humans can often be lured into direct disobedience to the Enemy who (in His usual flat, commonplace, uninteresting way) has definitely told them to pray for their daily bread and the recovery of their sick. You will, of course, conceal from him the fact that the prayer for daily bread, interpreted in a "spiritual sense", is really just as crudely petitionary as it is in any other sense.

But since your patient has contracted the terrible habit of obedience, he will probably continue such "crude" prayers whatever you do. But you can worry him with the haunting suspicion that the practice is absurd and can have no objective result. Don't forget to use the "heads I win, tails you lose" argument. If the thing he prays for doesn't happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don't work; if it does happen, he will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and "therefore it would have happened anyway", and thus a granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.

You, being a spirit, will find it difficult to understand how he gets into this confusion. But you must remember that he takes Time for an ultimate reality. He supposes that the Enemy, like himself, sees some things as present, remembers others as past, and anticipates others as future; or even if he believes that the Enemy does not see things that way, yet, in his heart of hearts, he regards this as a peculiarity of the Enemy's mode of perception—he doesn't really think (though he would say he did) that things as the Enemy sees them are things as they are! If you tried to explain to him that men's prayers today are one of the innumerable coordinates with which the Enemy harmonises the weather of tomorrow, he would reply that then the Enemy always knew men were going to make those prayers and, if so, they did not pray freely but were predestined to do so. And he would add that the weather on a given day can be traced back through its causes to the original creation of matter itself—so that the whole thing, both on the human and on the

material side, is given "from the word go". What he ought to say, of course, is obvious to us; that the problem of adapting the particular weather to the particular prayers is merely the appearance, at two points in his temporal mode of perception, of the total problem of adapting the whole spiritual universe to the whole corporeal universe; that creation in its entirety operates at every point of space and time, or rather that their kind of consciousness forces them to encounter the whole, self-consistent creative act as a series of successive events. Why that creative act leaves room for their free will is the problem of problems, the secret behind the Enemy's nonsense about "Love". How it does so is no problem at all; for the Enemy does not foresee the humans making their free contributions in a future, but sees them doing so in His unbounded Now. And obviously to watch a man doing something is not to make him do it.

It may be replied that some meddling human writers, notably Boethius, have let this secret out. But in the intellectual climate which we have at last succeeded in producing throughout Western Europe, you needn't bother about that. Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating The Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer's development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man's own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the "present state of the question". To regard the ancient writer as a possible source of knowledge—to anticipate that what he said could possibly modify your thoughts or your behaviour—this would be rejected as unutterably simple-minded. And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. But thanks be to our Father and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that "history is bunk",

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXVIII

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

When I told you not to fill your letters with rubbish about the war, I meant, of course, that I did not want to have your rather infantile rhapsodies about the death of men and the destruction of cities. In so far as the war really concerns the spiritual state of the patient, I naturally want full reports. And on this aspect you seem singularly obtuse. Thus you tell me !with glee that there is reason to expect heavy air raids on the town where the creature lives. This is a crying example of something I have complained about already—your readiness to forget the main point in your immediate enjoyment of human suffering. Do you not know that bombs kill men? Or do you not realise that the patient's death, at this moment, is precisely what we want to avoid? He has escaped the worldly friends with whom you tried to entangle him; he has "fallen in love" with a very Christian woman and is temporarily immune from your attacks on his chastity; and the various methods of corrupting his spiritual life which we have been trying are so far unsuccessful. At the present moment, as the full impact of the war draws nearer and his worldly hopes take a proportionately lower place in his mind, full of his defence work, full of the girl, forced to attend to his neighbours more than he has ever done before and liking it more than he expected, "taken out of himself" as the humans say, and daily increasing in conscious dependence on the Enemy, he will almost certainly be lost to us if he is killed tonight. This is so obvious that I am ashamed to write it. I sometimes wonder if you young fiends are not kept out on temptation-duty too long at a time—if you are not in some danger of becoming infected by the sentiments and values of the humans among whom you work. They, of course, do tend to regard death as the prime evil and survival as the greatest good. But that is because we have taught them to do so. Do not let us be infected by our own propaganda. I know it seems strange that your chief aim at the moment should be the very same thing for which the patient's lover and his mother are praying—namely his bodily safety. But so it is; you should be guarding him like the apple of your eye. If he dies now, you lose him. If he survives the war, there is always hope. The Enemy has guarded him from you through the first great wave of temptations. But, if only he can be kept alive, you have time itself for your ally. The long, dull monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it—all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition. If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is "finding his place in it", while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth which is just what we want. You will notice that the young are generally less unwilling to die than the middle-aged and the old.

The truth is that the Enemy, having oddly destined these mere animals to life in His own eternal world, has guarded them pretty effectively from the danger of feeling at home anywhere else. That is why we must often wish long life to our patients; seventy years is not a day too much for the difficult task of unravelling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth. While they are young we find them always shooting off at a tangent. Even if we contrive to keep them ignorant of explicit religion, the incalculable winds of fantasy and music and poetry—the mere face of a girl, the song of a bird, or the sight of a horizon—are always blowing our whole structure away.

They will not apply themselves steadily to worldly advancement, prudent connections, and the policy of safety first. So inveterate is their appetite for Heaven that our best method, at this stage, of attaching them to earth is to make them believe that earth can be turned into Heaven at some future date by politics or eugenics or "science" or psychology, or what not. Real worldliness is a work of time—assisted, of course, by pride, for we teach them to describe the creeping death as good sense or Maturity or Experience. Experience, in the peculiar sense we teach them to give it, is, by the bye, a most useful word. A great human philosopher nearly let our secret out when he said that where Virtue is concerned "Experience is the mother of illusion"; but thanks to a change in Fashion, and also, of course, to the Historical Point of View, we have largely rendered his book innocuous.

How valuable time is to us may be gauged by the fact that the Enemy allows us so little of it. The majority of the human race dies in infancy; of the survivors, a good many die in youth. It is obvious that to Him human birth is important chiefly as the qualification for human death, and death solely as the gate to that other kind of life. We are allowed to work only on a selected minority of the race, for what humans call a "normal life" is the exception. Apparently He wants some—but only a very few—of the human animals with which He is peopling Heaven to have had the experience of resisting us through an earthly life of sixty or seventy years. Well, there is our opportunity. The smaller it is, the better we must use it. Whatever you do, keep your patient as safe as you possibly can,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXIX

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Now that it is certain the German humans will bombard your patient's town and that his duties will keep him in the thick of the danger, we must consider our policy. Are we to aim at cowardice—or at courage, with consequent pride—or at hatred of the Germans?

Well, I am afraid it is no good trying to make him brave. Our research department has not yet discovered (though success is hourly expected) how to produce any virtue. This is a serious handicap. To be greatly and effectively wicked a man needs some virtue. What would Attila have been without his courage, or Shylock without self-denial as regards the flesh? But as we cannot supply these qualities ourselves, we can only use them as supplied by the Enemy—and this means leaving Him a kind of foothold in those men whom, otherwise, we have made most securely our own. A very unsatisfactory arrangement, but, I trust, we shall one day learn to do better.

Hatred we can manage. The tension of human nerves during noise, danger, and fatigue, makes them prone to any violent emotion and it is only a question of guiding this susceptibility into the right channels. If conscience resists, muddle him. Let him say that he feels hatred not on his own behalf but on that of the women and children, and that a Christian is told to forgive his own, not other people's enemies. In other words let him consider himself sufficiently identified with the women and children to feel hatred on their behalf, but not sufficiently identified to regard their enemies as his own and therefore proper objects of forgiveness.

But hatred is best combined with Fear. Cowardice, alone of all the vices, is purely painful—horrible to anticipate, horrible to feel, horrible to remember; Hatred has its pleasures. It is therefore often the compensation by which a frightened man reimburses himself for the miseries of Fear. The more he fears, the more he will hate. And Hatred is also a great anodyne for shame. To make a deep wound in his charity, you should therefore first defeat his courage.

Now this is a ticklish business. We have made men proud of most vices, but not of cowardice. Whenever we have almost succeeded in doing so, the Enemy permits a war or an earthquake or some other calamity, and at once courage becomes so obviously lovely and important even in human eyes that all our work is undone, and there is still at least one vice of which they feel genuine shame. The danger of inducing cowardice in our patients, therefore, is lest we produce real self-knowledge and self-loathing with consequent repentance and humility. And in fact, in the last war, thousands of humans, by discovering their own cowardice, discovered the whole moral world for the first time. In peace we can make many of them ignore good and evil entirely; in danger, the issue is forced upon them in a guise to which even we cannot blind them. There is here a cruel dilemma before us. If we promoted justice and charity among men, we should be playing directly into the Enemy's hands; but if we guide them to the opposite behaviour, this sooner or later produces (for He permits it to produce) a war or a revolution, and the undisguisable issue of cowardice or courage awakes thousands of men from moral stupor.

This, indeed, is probably one of the Enemy's motives for creating a dangerous world—a world in which moral issues really come to the point. He sees as well as you do that courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky. It is therefore possible to lose as much as we gain by making your man a coward; he may learn too much about himself! There is, of course, always the chance, not of chloroforming the shame, but of aggravating it and producing Despair. This would be a great triumph. It would show that he had believed in, and accepted, the Enemy's forgiveness of his other sins only because he himself did not fully feel their sinfulness—that in respect of the one vice which he really understands in its full depth of dishonour he cannot seek, nor credit, the Mercy. But I fear you have already let him get too far in the Enemy's school, and he knows that Despair is a greater sin than any of the sins which provoke it.

As to the actual technique of temptations to cowardice, not much need be said. The main point is that precautions have a tendency to increase fear. The precautions publicly enjoined on your patient, however, soon become a matter of routine and this effect disappears. What you must do is to keep running in his mind (side by side with the conscious intention of doing his duty) the vague idea of all sorts of things he can do or not do, inside the framework of the duty, which seem to make him a little safer. Get his mind off the simple rule ("I've got to stay here and do so-and-so") into a series of imaginary life lines ("If A happened—though I very much hope it won't—I could do B—and if the worst came to the worst, I could always do C"). Superstitions, if not recognised as such, can be awakened. The point is to keep him feeling that he has something, other than the Enemy and courage the Enemy supplies, to fall back on, so that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations. By building up a series of imaginary expedients to prevent "the worst coming to the worst" you may produce, at that level of his will which he is not aware of, a determination that the worst shall not come to the worst. Then, at the moment of real terror, rush it out into his nerves and muscles and you may get the fatal act done before he knows what you're about. For remember, the act of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXX

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I sometimes wonder whether you think you have been sent into the world for your own amusement. I gather, not from your miserably inadequate report but from that of the Infernal Police, that the patient's behaviour during the first raid has been the worst possible. He has been very frightened and thinks himself a great coward and therefore feels no pride; but he has done everything his duty demanded and perhaps a bit more. Against this disaster all you can produce on the credit side is a burst of ill temper with a dog that tripped him up, some excessive cigarette smoking, and the forgetting of a prayer. What is the use of whining to me about your difficulties? If you are proceeding on the Enemy's idea of "justice" and suggesting that your opportunities and intentions should be taken into account, then I am not sure that a charge of heresy does not lie against you. At any rate, you will soon find that the justice of Hell is purely realistic, and concerned only with results. Bring us back food, or be food yourself.

The only constructive passage in your letter is where you say that you still expect good results from the patient's fatigue. That is well enough. But it won't fall into your hands. Fatigue can produce extreme gentleness, and quiet of mind, and even something like vision. If you have often seen men led by it into anger, malice and impatience, that is because those men have had efficient tempters. The paradoxical thing is that moderate fatigue is a better soil for peevishness than absolute exhaustion. This depends partly on physical causes, but partly on something else. It is not fatigue simply as such that produces the anger, but unexpected demands on a man already tired. Whatever men expect they soon come to think they have a right to: the sense of disappointment can, with very little skill on our part, be turned into a sense of injury. It is after men have given in to the irremediable, after they have despaired of relief and ceased to think even a half-hour ahead, that the dangers of humbled and gentle weariness begin. To produce the best results from the patient's fatigue, therefore, you must feed him with false hopes. Put into his mind plausible reasons for believing that the air-raid will not be repeated. Keep him comforting himself with the thought of how much he will enjoy his bed next night. Exaggerate the weariness by making him think it will soon be over; for men usually feel that a strain could have been endured no longer at the very moment when it is ending, or when they think it is ending. In this, as in the problem of cowardice, the thing to avoid is the total commitment. Whatever he says, let his inner resolution be not to bear whatever comes to him, but to bear it "for a reasonable period"—and let the reasonable period be shorter than the trial is likely to last. It need not be much shorter; in attacks on patience, chastity, and fortitude, the fun is to make the man yield just when (had he but known it) relief was almost in sight.

I do not know whether he is likely to meet the girl under conditions of strain or not. If he does, make full use of the fact that up to a certain point, fatigue makes women talk more and men talk less. Much secret resentment, even between lovers, can be raised from this.

Probably the scenes he is now witnessing will not provide material for an intellectual attack on his faith—your previous failures have put that out of your power. But there is a sort of attack on the emotions which can still be tried. It turns on making him feel, when first he sees human remains plastered on a wall,

that this is "what the world is really like" and that all his religion has been a fantasy. You will notice that we have got them completely fogged about the meaning of the word "real". They tell each other, of some great spiritual experience, "All that really happened was that you heard some music in a lighted building"; here "Real" means the bare physical facts, separated from the other elements in the experience they actually had. On the other hand, they will also say "It's all very well discussing that high dive as you sit here in an armchair, but wait till you get up there and see what it's really like": here "real" is being used in the opposite sense to mean, not the physical facts (which they know already while discussing the matter in armchairs) but the emotional effect those facts will have on a human consciousness. Either application of the word could be defended; but our business is to keep the two going at once so that the emotional value of the word "real" can be placed now on one side of the account, now on the other, as it happens to suit us. The general rule which we have now pretty well established among them is that in all experiences which can make them happier or better only the physical facts are "Real" while the spiritual elements are "subjective"; in all experiences which can discourage or corrupt them the spiritual elements are the main reality and to ignore them is to be an escapist. Thus in birth the blood and pain are "real", the rejoicing a mere subjective point of view; in death, the terror and ugliness reveal what death "really means". The hatefulness of a hated person is "real"—in hatred you see men as they are, you are disillusioned; but the loveliness of a loved person is merely a subjective haze concealing a "real" core of sexual appetite or economic association. Wars and poverty are "really" horrible; peace and plenty are mere physical facts about which men happen to have certain sentiments. The creatures are always accusing one another of wanting "to eat the cake and have it"; but thanks to our labours they are more often in the predicament of paying for the cake and not eating it. Your patient, properly handled, will have no difficulty in regarding his emotion at the sight of human entrails as a revelation of Reality and his emotion at the sight of happy children or fair weather as mere sentiment,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

XXXI

MY DEAR, MY VERY DEAR, WORMWOOD, MY POPPET, MY PIGSNIE, How mistakenly now that all is lost you come whimpering to ask me whether the terms of affection in which I address you meant nothing from the beginning. Far from it! Rest assured, my love for you and your love for me are as like as two peas. I have always desired you, as you (pitiful fool) desired me. The difference is that I am the stronger. I think they will give you to me now; or a bit of you. Love you? Why, yes. As dainty a morsel as ever I grew fat on.

You have let a soul slip through your fingers. The howl of sharpened famine for that loss re-echoes at this moment through all the levels of the Kingdom of Noise down to the very Throne itself. It makes me mad to think of it. How well I know what happened at the instant when they snatched him from you! There was a sudden clearing of his eyes (was there not?) as he saw you for the first time, and recognised the part you had had in him and knew that you had it no longer.

Just think (and let it be the beginning of your agony) what he felt at that moment; as if a scab had fallen from an old sore, as if he were emerging from a hideous, shell-like tetter, as if he shuffled off for good and all a defiled, wet, clinging garment. By Hell, it is misery enough to see them in their mortal days taking off dirtied and uncomfortable clothes and splashing in hot water and giving little grunts of pleasure—stretching their eased limbs. What, then, of this final stripping, this complete cleansing?

The more one thinks about it, the worse it becomes. He got through so easily! No gradual misgivings, no doctor's sentence, no nursing home, no operating theatre, no false hopes of life; sheer, instantaneous liberation. One moment it seemed to be all our world; the scream of bombs, the fall of houses, the stink and taste of high explosive on the lips and in the lungs, the feet burning with weariness, the heart cold with horrors, the brain reeling, the legs aching; next moment all this was gone, gone like a bad dream, never again to be of any account. Defeated, out-manoeuvred fool! Did you mark how naturally—as if he'd been born for it—the earthborn vermin entered the new life? How all his doubts became, in the twinkling of an eye, ridiculous? I know what the creature was saying to itself! "Yes. Of course. It always was like this. All horrors have followed the same course, getting worse and worse and forcing you into a kind of bottle-neck till, at the very moment when you thought you must be crushed, behold! you were out of the narrows and all was suddenly well. The extraction hurt more and more and then the tooth was out. The dream became a nightmare and then you woke. You die and die and then you are beyond death. How could I ever have doubted it?

As he saw you, he also saw Them. I know how it was. You reeled back dizzy and blinded, more hurt by them than he had ever been by bombs. The degradation of it!—that this thing of earth and slime could stand upright and converse with spirits before whom you, a spirit, could only cower. Perhaps you had hoped that the awe and strangeness of it would dash his joy. But that is the cursed thing; the gods are strange to mortal eyes, and yet they are not strange. He had no faintest conception till that very hour of how they would look, and even doubted their existence. But when he saw them he knew that he had always known them and realised what part each one of them had played at many an hour in his life when he had supposed himself alone, so that now he could say to them, one by one, not "Who are you?" but "So it was you all the time". All that they were and said at this meeting woke memories. The dim consciousness of friends about him which had haunted his solitudes from infancy was now at last explained; that central music in every pure

experience which had always just evaded memory was now at last recovered. Recognition made him free of their company almost before the limbs of his corpse became quiet. Only you were left outside.

He saw not only Them; he saw Him. This animal, this thing begotten in a bed, could look on Him. What is blinding, suffocating fire to you, is now cool light to him, is clarity itself, and wears the form of a Man. You would like, if you could, to interpret the patient's prostration in the Presence, his self-abhorrence and utter knowledge of his sins (yes, Wormwood, a clearer knowledge even than yours) on the analogy of your own choking and paralyzing sensations when you encounter the deadly air that breathes from the heart of Heaven. But it's all nonsense. Pains he may still have to encounter, but they embrace those pains. They would not barter them for any earthly pleasure. All the delights of sense, or heart, or intellect, with which you could once have tempted him, even the delights of virtue itself, now seem to him in comparison but as the half nauseous attractions of a raddled harlot would seem to a man who hears that his true beloved whom he has loved all his life and whom he had believed to be dead is alive and even now at his door. He is caught up into that world where pain and pleasure take on transfinite values and all our arithmetic is dismayed. Once more, the inexplicable meets us. Next to the curse of useless tempters like yourself the greatest curse upon us is the failure of our Intelligence Department. If only we could find out what He is really up to!

Alas, alas, that knowledge, in itself so hateful and mawkish a thing, should yet be necessary for Power! Sometimes I am almost in despair. All that sustains me is the conviction that our Realism, our rejection (in the face of all temptations) of all silly nonsense and claptrap, must win in the end. Meanwhile, I have you to settle with. Most truly do I sign myself

Your increasingly and ravenously
affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“Dancing on the Devil’s Grave”

<http://witness.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=849&IssueID=48>

Dancing on the Devil’s Grave

by William Cwirla

Halloween has become a major commercial holiday in this country, second in potential profit making only to the Christmas season. The average American family now spends well over \$100 each year in tricks, treats, and scary decorations.

What do we Christians do with Halloween? Is it innocent fun or something to avoid?

History

Halloween is short for All Hallows Eve, that is, the evening before All Saints Day, a Christian holy day on which Christians honored the saints (the “hallowed” ones), the heroes and martyrs of the faith. For Lutherans, All Hallows Eve is also Reformation Day, the day Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses for debate on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.

In the Middle Ages, people had a profound sense of the demonic. Just think of Luther’s Reformation hymn, “A Mighty Fortress:” “Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us.” People believed that the demons were especially active on the eve of All Hallows. People carved gourds with ugly faces and set them out to guard their homes. This was similar to the practice of carving grotesque gargoyles on the drain spouts of cathedrals to ward off devils. People paraded in the streets dressed up in costumes and masks to confuse the demons and confound their schemes.

The holy day of All Saints has all but died out, especially in Protestant Christianity, which barely recognizes the saints let alone honors them. Popular culture has latched on to All Hallows Eve and turned it into another money-making gimmick. Much of the fun is innocent, albeit bad for the teeth. Children dress up as Power Rangers, ballerinas, and SpongeBob SquarePants and gorge themselves with candy begged from the neighbors under special dispensation from parents and dentists.

There is a darker, more sinister side to Halloween, however. Satanic and pagan groups have made Halloween their own special “high holy day.” Animal shelters warn owners of black cats to keep them indoors so they are not harmed. A night that was once a confrontation with the devil has become a celebration of all things devilish. The old nature always prefers the darkness to the Light.

Ought Christians participate? The easy answer would be a flat out, fundy “no.” But every road has two ditches, and Halloween is no exception.

On the One Side

There is the danger of taking death and the devil too lightly. Make no mistake: The devil is real. He isn’t some red guy with a pointy tail and a pitchfork. He is a liar, the father of lies, and a murderer. He masquerades as an angel of light, appearing to be very religious in order to deceive people and draw their focus away from Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:14).

A baptized believer belongs entirely to the Lord and has no fellowship with the devil and his demons. So when Christians take part in the darker side of Halloween, they may create the false impression that death and the devil are not serious business, or that it’s okay for Christians to dine with the devil once and a while, as long as their spoons are long enough. No faithful Christian who takes sin, death, and devil seriously would want anything to do with that.

On the Other Side

There is the danger of taking the devil too seriously. Contrary to what some impressionable types seem to believe, the devil is not all-powerful, all-knowing, almighty, or present everywhere. He is a fallen angel, a creature of God turned against his Creator. He stands chained and defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus. He is a liar and a loser, and his only hope with the short time that he has left is to convince the world that Jesus’ death on the cross isn’t enough to save us.

Jesus Christ has conquered death once for all people, once for all time. He has defeated the devil by His death on the cross. We can live in confidence, free from fear of death and the devil, knowing that God is at peace with us in the death of Jesus, that Jesus is risen from the dead and that we, too, will rise. Christ has conquered. The devil is defeated. “He’s judged, the deed is done.”

The Middle of the Road

Jesus didn’t hang on a cross so that His Christians could go around with a dour look on their faces judging everyone around them. When Christians become overly critical of Halloween, they may create the false impression that Jesus does not reign now over all things, including the devil, that He has not conquered death by His dying and rising, or that the devil is to be feared more than God.

Sour pietism on the part of Christians confirms the world’s mistaken notion that Christianity is nothing more than a religion of rules ruled by moral nannies who want to suck the fun out of everything. Martin Luther reminded us that we need to spite the devil every chance we get. Luther sure did, often in rather colorful ways. Halloween certainly affords the opportunity to sass the “old, evil foe.”

Having defined the ditches, let’s get back to the question that started this whole discussion. Ought Christians participate in Halloween? It all depends. Of course, I don’t expect baptized believers in Jesus Christ to be dancing in the woods around bonfires while chanting pagan prayers to the mother goddess or sacrificing black cats, ecumenical liberalism notwithstanding. On the other hand, the devil’s chief work is to draw us away from Christ’s death and resurrection and have us focus on our works, prayers, and piety. He seems to be doing a pretty decent job of that in mega-Christianity. Generally speaking, the cultural silliness associated with Halloween has about as much to do with the devil as Christmas has to do with the incarnation of the Son of God.

How Do We Decide?

Love of neighbor and concern for his or her salvation will give us pause for a few questions. What will your neighbor, your family, your children, your brother or sister in Christ think of your Halloween celebration? Will it help or hinder their faith in Jesus? Does your Halloween fun witness to the victory and freedom of Jesus' death and resurrection, or does it lift up the powers of darkness and death? Does it draw undue attention to the dark and demonic, or does it poke fun at those things that already stand defeated? Are you able to talk frankly about the reality of death and the devil with your children and tell them of the victory of Jesus?

Freedom in Christ is always tempered by love for your neighbor. You are completely free in Jesus to serve your neighbor in love (Rom. 14:1-23).

In the end, you must decide for yourself how and to what extent you and your family will participate in Halloween festivities. Context is important. Local mileage may vary. The best advice I can give is to spite the devil, honor Christ, and wipe that sour look off your face. Remember who you are in Holy Baptism: a baptized priest in Christ's holy priesthood "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

About the Author: Rev. William M. Cwirla is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Hacienda Heights, Calif.

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William Cwirla

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“Exorcism as Mercy”

<http://witness.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=1058&IssueID=57>

Exorcism as Mercy

by GEOFF BOYLE

Heads spinning, Latin flowing from the tongue, elevation, violent shaking, the strength of 10 men, visions: These are among the so-called signs of demonic possession according to Hollywood movies. In these frightful depictions, the emphasis is placed upon the work of the devil—what *he* does and how *he* does it. But we often forget about the demon-possessed person: his fear, helplessness and suffering.



*A Malagasy woman suffering from demon possession awaits the start of the Divine Service.
Photo courtesy Geoff Boyle*

In 2009, LCMS World Relief and Human Care sponsored a Mercy Mission Expedition to Madagascar. Along with Prof. John Pless and several other seminary students, I was invited to witness firsthand how exorcism—something I knew little about—is a part of the Malagasy Lutheran Church’s *regular* expression of Christ’s mercy.

While in Madagascar, we learned that demon possession is usually the result of satanic cults or practices, which are quite common among the traditional tribal religions. To encounter demon-possession in Madagascar isn’t nearly as rare as in America.

That’s why exorcism functions as part of the regular ministry of the church there. Casting out demons is simply the natural response of Christianity in a pagan context. The Gospel cannot but help to cast out the very demons seeking to enslave men in their sin.

In Madagascar, the rites of exorcism are incorporated into Sunday worship at least once a month. While attending a church service, we saw the rite performed firsthand. No, there weren’t any spinning heads. Rather, everything seemed like a normal worship service. Set together with readings from Scripture, hymns, prayers and even a short sermon, the exorcism certainly was a sight to remember!

The exorcism itself had two parts: casting the demon out and speaking Christ back in. And while it sounds easy enough, the dynamic of the service was astounding. As I observed the ritual, the contrast between the loud shouting, fists waving, scowls and cursing at the devil on the one hand, and the soft whispers of comfort and peace on the other was startling.

The shepherds (*mpiandry*, as they call them) who were commissioned to perform the exorcism believe that once the demon is gone, the Gospel, with all of its healing and consolation, must be the diet of the exorcised, the salve for a wounded soul.

The shepherds would touch the faces of the exorcised, whisper in their ears and read passages from Holy Scripture of our Lord’s love and mercy for His own. The whole experience was utterly pastoral. It’s this work of mercy that frees those who are literally bound by their sin, flesh and the devil.

Upon returning from our visit to Madagascar, this experience flooded my mind. *Why don’t we have this? Where does it come from? What does the Word of God say about all this?*

I discovered that the perfect case study is St. Mark’s Gospel, often known for its accent upon the demonic (Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–20). In Scripture, as in Madagascar today, the exorcism of demons has everything to do with the mercy of Christ. For Jesus, exorcism is not a battle of opposites; it isn’t a struggle between good and evil, between God and demi-god. Exorcism is a work of Christ’s mercy—a gift of healing and release where God alone frees the victim from the devil’s grasp.

Exorcism is a prescription of Christ’s mercy for the ailing demon-possessed. Jesus applied to sinners is precisely the Gospel’s work of mercy that’s needed for all times and all places, especially for those on the island nation of Madagascar. While there’s much to learn here about how this relates to our situation in America, we can nevertheless take great comfort in the impact of the Gospel in all its expressions, exorcism included!

About the Author: *Rev. Geoff Boyle is pastor of Trinity and Grace Lutheran Churches, Wichita, Kan.*

August 2011

Geoff Boyle

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Rest and Recovery after Exercise

<http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/sampleworkouts/a/RestandRecovery.htm>

Rest and Recovery After Exercise - Improve Sports Performance

Most athletes know that getting enough rest after exercise is essential to high-level performance, but many still over train and feel guilty when they take a day off. The body repairs and strengthens itself in the time between workouts, and continuous training can actually weaken the strongest athletes.

Rest days are critical to sports performance for a variety of reasons. Some are physiological and some are psychological. Rest is physically necessary so that the muscles can repair, rebuild and strengthen. For recreational athletes, building in rest days can help maintain a better balance between home, work and fitness goals.

In the worst-case scenario, too few rest and recovery days can lead to overtraining syndrome - a difficult condition to recover from.

What Happens During Recovery?

Building recovery time into any training program is important because this is the time that the body adapts to the stress of exercise and the real training effect takes place. Recovery also allows the body to replenish energy stores and repair damaged tissues. Exercise or any other physical work causes changes in the body such as muscle tissue breakdown and the depletion of energy stores (muscle glycogen) as well as fluid loss.

Recovery time allows these stores to be replenished and allows tissue repair to occur. Without sufficient time to repair and replenish, the body will continue to breakdown from intensive exercise. Symptoms of overtraining often occur from a lack of recovery time. Signs of overtraining include a feeling of general malaise, staleness, depression, decreased sports performance and increased risk of injury, among others.

Short and Long-Term Recovery

Keep in mind that there are two categories of recovery. There is immediate (short-term) recovery from a particularly intense training session or event, and there is the long-term recovery that needs to be built into a year-round training schedule. Both are important for optimal sports performance.

Short-term recovery, sometimes called active recovery occurs in the hours immediately after intense exercise. Active recovery refers to engaging in low-intensity exercise after workouts during both the cool-down phase immediately after a hard effort or workout as well as during the days following the workout. Both types of active recovery are linked to performance benefits. Another major focus of recovery immediately following exercise has to do with replenishing energy stores and fluids lost during exercise and optimizing protein synthesis (the process of increasing the protein content of muscle cells, preventing muscle breakdown and increasing muscle size) by eating the right foods in the post-exercise meal.

This is also the time for soft tissue (muscles, tendons, ligaments) repair and the removal of chemicals that build up as a result of cell activity during exercise.

Getting quality sleep is also an important part of short-term recovery. Make should to get plenty of sleep, especially if you are doing hard training. **Long-term recovery** techniques refer to those that are built in to a seasonal training program. Most well-designed training schedules will include recovery days and or weeks that are built into an annual training schedule. This is also the reason athletes and coaches change their training program throughout the year, add crosstraining, modify workouts types, and make changes in intensity, time, distance and all the other training variables.

Adaptation to Exercise

The Principle of Adaptation states that when we undergo the stress of physical exercise, our body adapts and becomes more efficient. It's just like learning any new skill; at first it's difficult, but over time it becomes second-nature. Once you adapt to a given stress, you require additional stress to continue to make progress.

There are limits to how much stress the body can tolerate before it breaks down and risks injury. Doing too much work too quickly will result in injury or muscle damage, but doing too little, too slowly will not result in any improvement. This is why personal trainers set up specific training programs that increase time and intensity at a planned rate and allow rest days throughout the program.

Sleep Deprivation Can Hinder Sports Performance

In general, one or two nights of poor or little sleep won't have much impact on performance, but consistently getting inadequate sleep can result in subtle changes in hormone levels, particularly those related to stress, muscle recovery and mood. While no one completely understands the complexities of sleep, some research indicates that sleep deprivation can lead to increased levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), decreased activity of human growth hormone (which is active during tissue repair), and decreased glycogen synthesis.

Other studies link sleep deprivation with decreased aerobic endurance and increased ratings of perceived exertion.

Balance Exercise with Rest and Recovery.

It is this alternation of adaptation and recovery that takes the athlete to a higher level of fitness. High-level athletes need to realize that the greater the training intensity and effort, the greater the need for planned recovery. Monitoring your workouts with a training log, and paying attention to how your body feels and how motivated you are is extremely helpful in determining your recovery needs and modifying your training program accordingly.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

With Angels and Archangels: Worship in the Book of Revelation.

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/GieschenWithAngelsandArchangels.pdf>

With Angels and Archangels: Worship in the Book of Revelation.

By the Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen
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Heaven is understood too often as a faraway place with which Christians have no contact until after death. The Book of Revelation, however, helps us to see that heaven is not an "up there" and purely "future" reality, but an accessible and present reality that we participate in through the Divine Service. For where the Holy Trinity comes through His means of grace and is present, there we are brought into the reality of heaven. It is no accident that we often use the scriptural songs of angels in our liturgy (e.g., "This Is the Feast," the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Sanctus*) and also acknowledge that we sing *with them*: "Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying..." (Conclusion of the Proper Preface). The Book of Revelation, because of its recurrent scenes of heavenly worship that are regularly punctuated by hymns of praise, is one of the church's richest resources for understanding her worship.

The accessibility of heaven is emphasized in the Book of Revelation with the imagery of the "open door" (3:8, 20; 4:1). After the Risen Christ appears on the island of Patmos and speaks to John, thereby demonstrating He is the living Lord of His Church who is not absent nor confined to a heavenly sphere (chapters 1-3), then John sees an open door: "After these things I looked, and, behold, *a door* that has been opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard as a trumpet was speaking to me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you what will necessarily happen after these things'" (4:1). John is brought by the Spirit through this open door and beholds the divine throne room. There he sees and hears what is normally not perceived with our five senses: the brilliant mystery of God (the Father) enthroned, angels gathered around Him singing "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God" (4:8; cf., Is. 6:3), and saints casting their crowns before Him as they sing, "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power" (4:11).

This amazing open-door-to-heaven scene climaxes with the revelation of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" who can open the sealed scroll in the right hand of the Father (5:5). One expects to see the spectacular "one like a Son of Man" who appeared earlier to John (1:12-18), but instead he sees in the midst of the throne: "a Lamb who is standing, [bloodied] as though it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes" (5:6). This portrait, without doubt, is the most memorable and powerful among the ever-changing scenes of this book. The entirety of the person and work of Christ is flashed before the eyes of the faithful in order that they see and believe: His almighty divinity (seven horns and eyes), His true humanity (a lamb who died), and His sacrifice for sin on Calvary's cross (slaughtered) that resulted in the resurrection victory (standing and enthroned). Because the Lamb is understood to be of the mystery of the one enthroned God, He is worshipped with words and actions that parallel the earlier worship of the Father: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (5:12). The oneness of this Lamb with the Father as the object of worship is further emphasized as the whole cosmos joins in praise: "To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever" (5:13). Although Revelation overtly confesses the trinitarian nature of God (1:4-5), the Lamb remains the visible focus of the worship of this one true God.

In light of this open-door-to-heaven scene, some of us may say, "Oh, how I wish I could be John and see what he saw!" We, however, should not feel this way. John was commanded to write down what he saw in order that, through this book, others would truly "see" what John saw (1:11). By means of reading or hearing this holy revelation (1:3), we, too, pass through the "open door" and behold the mystery of God.

Furthermore, this experience of heaven does not result solely--or even primarily--from reading the Book of Revelation. It is not insignificant that John had this experience on the Lord's Day (Sunday), the typical day for Christians to gather for worship that includes the Lord's Supper (1:10). The understanding that other faithful

Christians can pass through the "open door" of heaven in the context of Lord's Day worship is the basis for the two invitations of Christ concerning this "door" given to the congregations in Philadelphia and Laodicea (3:8, 20). The Book of Revelation calls those who have been washed and clothed in white through the sealing with the Divine Name in Holy Baptism "a kingdom and *priests* to our God *who reign on earth*" (5:10; cf., Ex. 29:4-9). Christians on earth, therefore, are "priests" who have an "open door" to the heavenly sanctuary!

There is a fairly widespread misunderstanding that the various scenes of the Book of Revelation describe *future* realities. The worship in chapters 4-5 and elsewhere, therefore, is sometimes understood to be depicting only what it will be like when the saints are brought into heaven, and not present reality. Jesus clears the fog on this issue when He states: "Write down what you see, (namely) *what is* and *what is to come*" (1:19). John sees scenes that depict present reality ("what is") as well as those that portray future reality ("what is to come"). These worship scenes depict a present and eternal reality: the God "who is, was, and is to come" and the Lamb who has already been sacrificed for our sin, raised in victory, and enthroned in glory. These scenes are not merely what heaven will be like some day; while they are certainly that, they also depict what heaven is *now* as God brings us into His presence through the Divine Service. They serve as a vivid commentary on what is happening in the Divine Service, especially in the Lord's Supper, where the Paschal Lamb who shed His blood and gave His body is present sharing His victory. This bloodied and standing Lamb depicted in Revelation is the same one in whose real presence we stand as we sing, "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us" and then partake of His life-giving flesh and blood.

There are those who view Christian worship as an escape from reality, almost like taking a weekly fantasy trip to Disney World in order to enjoy a reprieve from the "real world" of work. The Book of Revelation helps us to see that such an assessment could not be further from the truth! Rather than escaping reality, worship leads us to experience reality in its fullness. Revelation helps us to "see" that the reality of God and angels, the Lamb and His victory, is as real as--and more determinative for the future than--Satan and this world's powerful rulers. "Seeing" this reality helps us to recognize, face, and conquer the chaos of this sinful world. Richard Bauckham, in his fine book *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, states:

Worship, which is so prominent in the theocentric vision of Revelation, has nothing to do with pietistic retreat from the public world. It is the source of resistance to the idolatries of the public world. It points representatively to the acknowledgment of the true God by all the nations, in the universal worship for which the whole creation is destined (pp. 160-161).

There is evidence in Jewish literature written in the centuries immediately before the Christian era of a significant debate concerning how time should be reckoned, either by a lunar calendar (354 days) or a solar calendar (364 days). Why was this an important debate for particular Jews? Because they were very concerned that their worship be in synch with the worship of heaven; they did not want to be observing Sabbath or a festival on earth out of step with the heavenly observance. Such a concern for the congruence between worship in heaven and on earth hardly characterizes much of the church today. Rather than worship reflecting the ever-changing cultures of this earth and whims of men, it should reflect that which has been revealed by God as eternal and of heaven, such as we find in the Book of Revelation. The *description* of worship in heaven in Holy Scripture is *prescriptive* for the church on earth, even as we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." One day the congruence between worship on earth and in heaven will be complete: "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (7:17)

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Afraid to Preach? Good.

<http://www.ctsfw.edu/page.aspx?pid=447>

Afraid to Preach? Good.

by Rev. Jim Winsor

On the ancient stone steps to a pulpit there is a Latin inscription, which translates, "He who goes up with fear comes down with honor."

A man certainly dare not consider preaching if the thought of it doesn't send a chill of fright down his spine. We must, like Isaiah, begin by saying, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips." And only after God has once again singed our lips with the hot pardon from His altar can we dare to say, "Here am I. Send me. Send me" (Isaiah 6).

The sermon must be simple but not simplistic, artful but not artsy, picturesque but not flowery, concrete but not trivial, cosmic but not spacy, familiar but not cliché, timely but not transitory, confrontational but with no love of controversy, helpful yet without being a self-help talk, compelling yet with no scent of compulsion, comforting yet with no invitation to complacency, stimulating but not caffeinated, classic but not dusty, joyful but not jocular, full of grandeur but void of any grand-standing, humble and honest but finding no communion with impenitence, intimate but not mushy, direct but, as much as faithfully possible, winsome, courageous but not insensitive, sensitive but not compromising, meek but not cowering.

Above all this it must be natural but also supernatural, just like Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Supernatural made natural.

The really difficult thing about all this is that for this to happen, the preacher's heart must be all these things. And, of course, the preacher's heart is by nature none of these things. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34b). He also said, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19). So for the preacher to get good stuff into his mouth, he'll have to get good stuff into his heart.

He does this by getting good stuff into his head, that is, by studying and praying. There is no substitute for faithful, frequent and fearless studying. To be able to give anything, the preacher must risk everything, all his assumptions and assertions, as he places himself beneath an open Bible seen through the faith of the Church.

In the pulpit he cannot stand firmly as he must, if in his study he has not first knelt quivering before God as one starved and empty and waiting to be filled. He has no friend like the vacuous empty lost longing within him, the longing to know God and be accepted by Him, the longing to commune with Him, unite with Him, and no longer be at odds with Him. He studies to discover the Gospel anew. As he kneels, as his head lowers to where his heart was, that good stuff is in just the right place so that when he stands up again, it's in his heart. That is, as the preacher goes to God with the stuff God has given to him, as the text studied with the mind is prayed with the mouth, God's good stuff trickles down to the preacher's heart.

And this is how it must be. The Word we preach must never become merely a set of words. The Word we preach points to the sacramental life and it points to Christian vocation. The Word is enfleshed in the preacher who points to the Word enfleshed in water and bread and wine and Holy Absolution. He stands on the shore to walk men down to Jordan's waters. He goes out to the highways to bring men to the banquet table. His words, the Word speaking through him, are not an end in themselves. The service is not over when he is done talking; rather, things are ready to begin, ready to move from the pulpit to the altar. The Word is enfleshed in the preacher so as to bring men to the Word enfleshed elsewhere also.

The preacher's purpose is also to help the Church see herself as an enfleshment of the Word in the world.

Reality, life, is Sunday morning, where Christ's body and blood are, where "angels and archangels and all the company of heaven" gather. This is eternal reality. Sunday morning is not to be judged by how well it helps us throughout the rest of the week. The rest of the week is to be judged by how well it helps us really be there on Sunday morning. The purpose of heaven is not to prepare us for earth. The purpose of earth is to prepare us for heaven. Monday through Saturday—earth. Sunday morning—heaven. The week is now all about getting ready for next Sunday and the eternal Sunday. It's all about the life of daily repentance, of daily baptismal renewal, of daily longing for the bread of God, the life of God. After six days of toil on earth, we long for a visit to our eternal Sabbath.

God has set foot on earth to walk us to heaven, to the Father. The sermon points to His footprints and to the tangible Gospel gifts that place our feet into those footprints. We step into the Jordan – "I am baptized." We feel the desert sand hot between our toes – "Deliver me from evil." We climb the stairs to the Upper Room and stoop to wash other feet – "With this ring, I thee wed." We feel the nail in our ankles – "I a poor miserable sinner confess. . ." We awaken alive in a tomb open to the morning sun – "In the stead and by the command . . . I forgive you." Mary Magdalene is in the Garden outside the tomb clinging to those ankles – "Behold, how they love one another."

We tell her we are yet to ascend – to the apostles' ankles she should go – "He who hears you hears Me." And we ascend to commune at God's right hand with the life of His Son in our veins – "Take, eat. . . Take, drink..." The Father is well pleased with us – "The Lord bless you and keep you . . ."

And the cycle begins anew and will keep beginning and spinning anew until the centrifugal force of its spinning through time punctures eternity where all the church's moments at the table and all her members at the table merge into one grand unending

feast.

The sermon is a set of words by which God's Word moves people beyond mere words into these events, these realities. Because preaching does this, it is itself more than a set of words. It is an event. Something is happening. Heaven is opening. History is made present. God is taking action. The preacher is like the person in a Star Trek episode who sets the transporter coordinates. By his preaching people are taken apart and put back together again in another place, the ark, the altar, the cross, the throne.

The sermon is there so that during the week the believers come to see all of life anew. The bathtub now points to the font that points both to the Flood and to the River of Life. The kitchen table points to the communion table that points both to the Upper Room and to the Banquet Table in heaven. The Christian life is lived, from the most menial point upward, in an anticipatory remembrance, in remembering anticipation. The sacraments are God's love applied to us, and we, as we work and serve all week, are God's love applied to our neighbors.

Good Friday, next Tuesday, our eternal Sunday – all these widely distant time zones meet together at the north pole of the pulpit. It's Santa's Workshop. It's always Christmas. God prepares His gifts for us, or rather prepares us for His gifts. And "never again" and "now" and "not yet" all get mixed up in the God who is love, who changes not, who from eternity has chosen us in Christ.

But it happens on Sunday morning at 10 a.m. It is an event. **God is doing something.** God is not merely telling us about something that has happened or will happen. No. **God is doing something right now.** And silently in the pew there are results. David is saying, "I have sinned." He is hearing Nathan say, "You will not die. Your sin is forgiven." And Abraham sees Melchizedek preparing the feast of bread and wine to celebrate victory over Lot's captors. And the temple veil is torn and the dead rise and walk about the city. And people know God is talking to them, softening them or hardening them, slaying them or reviving them, injuring them or binding up their wounds. There is conflict in the room – conflict of cosmic proportions. And Satan is there, pouting, cowering, conniving. And angels are there, rejoicing over one sinner who repents.

It is not just that information is being transmitted. It is that God, the God who spoke the world into being out of nothing, is speaking and is bringing something out of nothing, faith out of unbelief, light out of darkness, hope out of despair, life out of death, heaven out of hell, Easter out of Good Friday, friendship out of enmity, community out of alienation, and sometimes, division out of a false and feeble concord made of merely human affections.

All of these momentous events are blowing off the preacher's lips and into eternity. Who cannot view such a task without fear? And who cannot perform such a task without honor? "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7).

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Worship—The Activity of the Trinity

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/JamesBushurWorshipTheActivityoftheTrinity.pdf>

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CONTENTS

AUG 31, 1994

<i>Worship: The Activity of the Trinity</i> By Jim Bushur	3
<i>Let Us Pray: A Historical Examination of the Collect of the Day</i> By David P. Saar	13
<i>What Is Ministry?</i> By Bruce Bitter	23
<i>A Call for Manuscripts</i>	37
<i>Cybernetics in the Church: The Spiritual Gift of Church Government and Administration</i> By Hans-Lutz Poetsch.....	38
<i>Lutherans and Rome on Justification: "Fundamental Consensus"?</i> By Burnell F. Eckardt Jr	43
<i>"Inklings" by Jim Wilson</i>	52
REVIEWS	53
Review Essay: <i>No Other Gospel! Christianity among the World's Religions.</i> By Carl Braaten <i>Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology.</i> By Gordon W. Lathrop <i>Is There a Synoptic Problem?</i> By Eta Linnemann <i>Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor.</i> By Carter Lindberg <i>Dietrich Bonhoeffer-His Significance for North Americans.</i> By Larry Rasmussen <i>The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keek.</i> Edited by Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks <i>The Apostles' Creed: A Faith to Live By.</i> By C. E. B. Cranfield <i>Ministry in the New Testament.</i> By David L. Bardett <i>Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature.</i> By Robert M. Grant	
BRIEFLY NOTED	
LOGIA FORUM.....	71
In the Name of the Father· The Freedom of Pigs· When the Gospel Isn't Working Augustinians Anonymous· Herman's Gnosticism· The Priestly Rule of Discipline· Luther on Vocation Taps Bugled for Church Management· Mothers as Fathers on Mothering Sunday 1994 Death as a Mother· As Go the Schools, So Goes the Synod· It's All Russian to Me St. Michael and All Angels· What Does It All Mean? Casting a Vision· On Silencing the Lord's Song	

Worship: The Activity of the Trinity

JIM BUSHUR

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PROLOGUE

THE TRINITARIAN NAME IS THE HEART OF WORSHIP. IT PERMEATES the divine service from invocation to benediction. It is the essence of baptism and the object of praise in the Gloria in Excelsis. Gloria Patri, and the Sanctus. Instead of being glorified in worship of saints, however, the doctrine of the Trinity suffers in the classroom. It has been reduced to an academic subject for Holy Trinity Sunday, catechism class, and when Jehovah's Witnesses come to the door. Eastern Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, "God is not so much the object of our knowledge the cause of our wonder?"¹ For Bishop Ware and the Christian the Trinity is more than a dogmatic proposition. He is the God who created and redeemed us. He is the mystery whose revelation gives life to the worship and liturgy of the catholic church.

When we speak of the relationship between the Trinity and worship, we are speaking of the relationship between theology and liturgy. Since theology is the language of Christ and liturgy is language of the church, their relationship reflects the marital union between Christ and the church. In other words, theology is to liturgy as husband is to wife. This defines theology as the source and life of the liturgy, and liturgy as the expression and glory of theology. Yet this glorious one-flesh union has suffered a divorce at the hands of its children. Instead of drawing her language from our heavenly Father, the liturgy is forced into an adulterous affair with earthly men. Likewise, instead of being the proclamation of God and the confession of saints, theology has been seduced by academia and has become an abstract discussion between academic theologians.

Why are churches divorcing the liturgy from theology? The answer lies in catechesis and, more specifically, in our application of the Scriptures. American Evangelicalism, with its Reformed roots, applies the Scriptures primarily to the individual's life and experience. In his book *Sanctification: Christ in Action* the Reverend Harold Senkbeil writes, "The reader gets the definite impression that the central purpose of the Bible [for Evangelicals] is not to bring us to the cross but to provide us with a set of principles to guide our lives."² This Reformed emphasis has influenced our application of the Scriptures. Instead of focusing on the common life of the church (namely, liturgy and doxology), we have emphasized the lives and experiences of individuals. This neglect threatens to sever the union between theology and liturgy.

Today, the doctrine of the Trinity suffers severely from this neglect. When its application is divorced from the church's liturgical life, it becomes only an abstract concept with little relevance for laymen. Because the Triune mystery is vital for the church, pastors and teachers must again unite the Trinity and worship in their catechesis. I will summarize the relationship between the Trinity and worship under the headings Worship as Revelation and Worship as Movement. However, first I will define the anti-trinitarian dangers that threaten the church as a result of our catechetical crisis.

¹ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), p. 16.

² Harold L. Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989), p. 90.

ANTI-TRINITARIAN WORSHIP

When the one-flesh union of theology and liturgy is put asunder' both suffer. This leads to three anti-trinitarian dangers, one danger with respect to theology and two with respect to liturgy. First, theology is fulfilled and expressed in the liturgy, as the wife is the glory of her husband (1 Cor. 11:7). When they are separated, however, theology loses its true expression and becomes an academic enterprise. This in turn reduces God to an object of study and to a sedentary being. This is Unitarianism. The Triune God is transformed from the omnipotent Father (who reveals himself by sending his Son and Spirit) into the impersonal object of man's investigation. Thus, when theology is separated from liturgy, it teeters on the edge of idolatry. Second, liturgy draws her life and language from theology, as Adam is the source of Eve (Gen. 2). When divorced from theology, however, liturgy is forced into an illegitimate union with sociology. In this context the liturgy becomes the expression of man and primarily his activity. This again reduces God to the passive object of man's liturgy and replaces the activity of the Trinity with the activity of man. For example, some churches replace the invocation with a "call to worship."³ Here addressing the Triune God to fill worship with his activity is replaced with a call to man to fill worship with his activity. This practice again flirts with Unitarianism. Third, when man is the focus of the liturgy, he becomes the goal of the liturgy. In other words, man-centered liturgies seek to create an emotional experience in the individual to hold his interest. One example of this enthusiasm is found in a hymnal that is being promoted in our church. In the introduction this statement is quoted favorably:

Music prepares the heart for worship and commitment. Music is the greatest mood alternator of all, and unlocks the ministry of God in the untrodden soil of a person's soul. People love singing. They love being moved even when there is not a song in their hearts.⁴

In this view, the purpose of music and song is to influence the inner mood of the people. Such enthusiasm tears God from the external word and seeks him in the inner experiences of the heart. Luther warns against this when he writes,

To cast aside the external Word and Baptism is surely the true mark and sign of all false and heterodox spirits. ... They disdain to hear from Him how they are to find Him; but they presume to teach and prescribe to Him how He should deal with them.⁵

And Gregory of Nyssa writes,

We are not to think of the Father as ever parted from the Son, nor look for the Son as separate from the Holy Spirit. As it is impossible to mount to the Father, unless our

³ *Creative Worship for the Lutheran Parish*, Series B, Part 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), p.174.

⁴ Dave Anderson, ed., *The Other Songbook* (Edina, MN: The Fellowship Publications, 1987), p. i.

⁵ AE24:69.

thoughts are exalted thither through the Son, so it is impossible also to say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.⁶

For Martin Luther and Gregory of Nyssa, the Father, Son, and Spirit can never be separated. This means that all enthusiasm is tritheism, since it seeks God apart from the incarnate Son (that is, apart from the means of grace).

Yet the question remains: how do we unite theology and liturgy in our catechesis? It is my hope that what follows will demonstrate the glorious one-flesh union that exists between the Trinity and worship. I also hope it will illustrate how crucial it is to unite theology and liturgy in our catechesis.

WORSHIP AS REVELATION

Most of us have been raised in an academic atmosphere. We are sent to school at the age of five or six and remain in school until we are at least eighteen. Depending on our career choice, we will very likely attend college for four more years. In other words, our most formative years are spent as students trying to get the right information in order to pass tests and get jobs. The danger in this is that we often run our churches like schools. We turn our congregations into student bodies who seek the right information concerning God so that they can pass the test and enter heaven. Yet, what does this approach do to God? He is reduced to an academic subject. He becomes like a tree, and we, the biologists, dissect him to learn the correct information. In this context, the Bible is our textbook for extracting the correct spiritual theories and postulates. Likewise, worship is a lecture that imparts knowledge about God to those with the rational ability to comprehend it. What is lost in this is the true worship, which is not an imparting of knowledge about God but the revelation of God himself. We do not enter worship as the actors who investigate and discover facts about God. Rather, God is the actor who reveals himself to us. Worship as revelation becomes more clear when we understand three points: God as mystery, God's name as proclamation, and God's name as confession.

God as Mystery

In this day there is very little left in the realm of mystery. Everything is analyzed to the point that nothing happens without someone giving his opinion about it. This is apparent in the media's coverage of the presidential candidates. This critical attitude has also infiltrated the church. God is often treated like a political candidate. He is analyzed and forced into a neat system that has all the right answers to life's toughest questions. In such a milieu the doctrine of the Trinity is not a popular topic because it is incomprehensible and, therefore, impossible to analyze. It remains an obscure and sorely neglected doctrine of the church.

However, the doctrine of the Trinity is vital for the church's well-being precisely because it is beyond our understanding. In the trinitarian name God reveals himself to us; he gives us a way of speaking about him so that we can stand in awe of the divine mystery. The hymnist writes, "Let all mortal flesh keep silence / And with fear and trembling stand" (LW241). Bishop Ware writes,

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Holy Spirit," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 319.

It [the Trinity] is something revealed to us by God, not demonstrated to us by our own reason The Trinity is not a philosophical theory but the living God whom we worship; and so there comes a point in our approach to the Trinity when argumentation and analysis must give place to wordless prayer.⁷

For Bishop Ware, if the church's doctrine of the Trinity is to be orthodox, it must be spoken in worship not in academic analysis. Thus the Trinity is to be encountered and confessed but never figured out. According to Bishop Ware,

Faith in God, then, is not at all the same as the kind of logical certainty that we attain in Euclidian geometry. God is not the conclusion to a process of reasoning, the solution to a mathematical problem. To believe in God is not to accept the possibility of his existence because it has been "proved" to us by some theoretical argument, but it is to put our trust in One whom we know and love. Faith is not the supposition that something might be true, but the assurance that someone is there.⁸

In this view, faith is radically opposed to reason. While reason seeks to annihilate God's mysteries through scrutiny, faith requires God's mysteries for survival. The definition of "mystery" and its relation to worship will help us better understand God as mystery.

"Mystery" is rich with meaning in both the Old and New Testaments. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, and no one can interpret it. Nebuchadnezzar decrees that all the wise men of Babylon, including Daniel, will be killed. However, God reveals the dream and its meaning to Daniel. When the king asks Daniel whether he is able to interpret the dream, Daniel replies, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days" (Dan. 2:27-28). After Daniel explains the dream to King Nebuchadnezzar, the king makes a significant statement about the God of Daniel. He says, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery" (Dan. 2:47). The point of this story is that God alone is the revealer of mysteries; God alone reveals what is hidden from men.

For the Old Testament, "mystery" entails two aspects: hiddenness and disclosure. It refers to that which is incomprehensible to man but revealed by God. This definition continues in the New Testament. The gospel is referred to as the mystery of God. Paul writes, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages" (Rom 16:25). The sacraments and indeed the entire Christian faith are mysteries to men yet revealed by God (1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 5:32; 1 Tim. 3:16). However, the revealed mysteries are not disconnected truths. Rather, they are united in the greatest mystery, God himself. Paul writes to Timothy, "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He [God] was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). For Paul the salvation of man is found in the mystery of God's self-revelation, a mystery that is revealed and hidden at the same time.

⁷ Ware, p. 39.

⁸ Ware, p. 19.

This concept of mystery has great implications for worship. Worship is not a time when like-minded people gather to analyze God and his work in their private lives, but a time when the bride of Christ stands in holy awe of the trinitarian mystery that is ever revealed, yet ever hidden. Bishop Ware writes,

These, then, are the two "poles" in man's experience of the Divine. God is both further from us, and nearer to us, than anything else. And we find paradoxically, that these two poles do not cancel one another out: on the contrary, the more we are attracted to the one "pole," the more vividly we become aware of the other at the same time. Advancing on the way, each finds that God grows ever more intimate and ever more distant, well-known and yet unknown-well known to the smallest child, incomprehensible to the most brilliant theologian.⁹

Worship, then, is an encounter with God where we stand in unapproachable light, blinded by its brightness yet seeing more dearly than ever before. What do we mean when we say that worship is an encounter with God? We mean that worship is the place where the Trinity becomes visible in the womb of the church to create life. That is to say, worship is the continuing incarnation of God. Consequently, the content of worship must be nothing other than Jesus Christ himself, who is God in the flesh. Hermann Sasse writes,

Therefore Jesus Christ, the Word (Logos) become flesh, is the revelation of God in this world. Only in Him, the eternal Word, does God step out of His hiddenness. He is the content of all the divine Word; His incarnation makes the Word visible. The man Jesus Christ is the visible Word (*verbum visibile*). Whoever sees Him sees God as much as God can be seen in this world.¹⁰

Just as God revealed himself by hiding in human flesh, in worship he reveals himself by hiding in human words, bread and wine, and water. As the hymnist writes,

Lord of lords in human vesture,
In the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food. (*LW241*)

And as we proclaim in the common responsory for Matins, "Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells:" Thus in worship--the sermon, the sung responses, the hymns, the readings, the Sanctus, and the sacrament--the Trinity is revealing himself in the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

God's Name and Worship

The most fundamental revelation that takes place in worship is the revelation of God's name. If his name is not known, worship is impossible. In order to understand the importance of

⁹ Ware, p. 14.

¹⁰ Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), p. 49.

God's name for worship, it is helpful to see the significance of his name in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the worship of the church. In the Old Testament God comes to his people through the revelation of his holy name to save them and to give them access to himself. In the New Testament this revelation of God's name continues in Jesus, who comes in the name of the Lord, and culminates in baptism with the revelation of the trinitarian name. Finally, in the worship of the Christian church the trinitarian name is revealed in baptism, absolution, and the word that in turn forms our confession in the Nicene, Apostles, and Athanasian Creeds.

In the Old Testament the revelation of God's name is especially significant in light of Israel's thoroughly idolatrous, pagan environment. As John Kleinig has pointed out, for the pagan an idol meant more than just having a god; it meant having access to a god.¹¹ Yet, while all the pagan nations had idols, the first commandment of the Decalogue forbade idols of any kind for Israel. For this reason the Israelites were often taunted with the question, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3, 10). This was a difficult question for the Israelites, since they had no idol. The Israelites often committed the sin of idolatry not because they were so primitive, but because in their culture the possession of an idol was crucial for worship. One could certainly argue that access to God is still the crucial issue of worship in our day.

What did the Israelites have instead of an idol? They had the pillar of fire and smoke, and the ark of the covenant, which had the mercy seat (namely, the throne of God, but, significantly, no idol sitting on it). Most importantly, however, the Israelites had the name of God. This meant that they could call on him and he would listen. Dr. Kleinig suggests that this is the point behind Moses' question in Exodus 3:13.¹² Moses asks God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you; and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?' Moses asks for God's name not because it will fulfill his idle curiosity, but because it will give the people access to him.

In the Old Testament God reveals his name so that his people can worship him. This is first mentioned in Genesis 4:26: '~t that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord:' This is mentioned in connection with the birth of Seth to Eve and with the birth of Enosh to Seth. In verse 25 the child is given the name Seth because "God has appointed ... another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him:' Here Moses points out that God reveals his name to men at a time when the effects of sin are growing ever greater. David Scaer makes this connection when he writes, "God reveals his name to men at the time of Seth so that instead of venting their hatred on one another, they might know God through the revelation of his name and call upon it."¹³ Thus, as God reveals his name, the church is founded and worship is possible.

This revelation of his name continues as he reveals himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty" and to Moses as YHWH, "I AM:' In these two instances God gives access to himself at crucial points in Israel's history. Hence the name of God is the basis for worship in the Old Testament. God commands the Israelites, "But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there; thither you shall go, and thither you shall bring your burnt offerings" (Deut. 12:5-6). Where the name of God is, he is present, because there access is possible.

¹¹ John W. Kleinig, *Worship in the Old Testament* (Lectures delivered at Westfield House, Cambridge, England, June 20-23, 1989. Transcribed by Steven Mueller and Lawrence R. Rast, May 1991 from audio tapes in Concordia Theological Seminary Library, Fort Wayne, 1991), pp. 8-9.

¹² Kleinig, p. 8.

¹³ Dr. David Scaer, *Life, New Life, and Baptism* (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press), p. 2.

The revelations of God's name find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the exact representation of God's nature; he is God's name made visible for all to see. He comes in the name of the Lord in order to make the Father known as he says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7). And John writes, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known (John 1:18)." In the New Testament, access to God is given in the incarnate Son.

This access to God does not end with the ascension of Jesus into heaven; it is made greater. Through the word and the sacraments, all people at all times and places can enter his presence. In other words, the incarnation of Jesus Christ continues today in the worship of the Christian church. This is what we mean when we say that worship is revelation, for it is the place where God's name dwells. It is the place where the Son continues to proclaim the name of God so that man can confess that name and be saved. Hence in worship the divine name is proclaimed by God and confessed by man.

God's Name as Proclamation

The proclamation of God's name properly begins in baptism. Jesus instituted baptism as his last act on earth. This indicates that baptism is God's highest and most intimate revelation of himself to the individual. Dr. Scaer writes,

To understand what baptism is and what the power of baptism is, more careful attention must be given to the word "name" in the phrase "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost:" Baptism is the highest revelatory act of God's grace to the individual because through it God reveals his essence or what he is through a revelation of his name as Father, Son, and Spirit.¹⁴

For Dr. Scaer, the series of revelations beginning with Seth and continuing with Abraham and Moses reaches its apex in baptism, where God reveals his very essence in the trinitarian name.¹⁵ Baptism signifies two very important privileges for us. First, as a son receives the name of his father, in baptism we receive the trinitarian name to mark us as his children. Second, because we are given his name, baptism also signifies that we have access to him in prayer.

However, baptism is not limited to a past event. It continues daily in the life of the believer as he repents and trusts Christ for forgiveness. Luther indicates this when he writes about the significance of baptism,

It signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.¹⁶

For Luther, confession and absolution is simply an extension of baptism in the life of the church. This is evident in the divine service. The pastor begins with the invocation so that God

¹⁴ Scaer, p. 8.

¹⁵ Scaer, p. 5.

¹⁶ *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism*, ed. Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press, 1971), p. 9.

turns his face toward us. It is customary to make the sign of the cross to acknowledge that worship is possible only because God has given that privilege in baptism. Then, when his presence is invoked, we immediately confess our sins. The pastor, standing in the stead of Christ, forgives our sins "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This first proclamation of the trinitarian name in the absolution prepares the believer for the divine service.

The proclamation of the trinitarian name continues in the readings and the sermon. Here the gospel is proclaimed, which is nothing other than that the Father sent the Son to die for us and he in turn sent the Spirit to work faith in us through the word. We pray for the proclamation of God's name when we say, "Hallowed be Thy name." Luther comments, "God's name is indeed holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be holy among us also." How is this done? Luther continues, "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity."¹⁷ Therefore, the proclamation of the trinitarian name is the proclamation of the gospel. It permeates our worship beginning in the absolution, continuing in the service of the word, and ending in the benediction. Here we depart from God's presence under the trinitarian blessing, "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace."

God's Name as Confession

The proclamation of God's name forms our confession of his name. Only when God reveals his name can we use it to call on him in prayer. Only when he proclaims his name can we praise and confess his name and be saved. Norman Nagel writes,

Our Lord speaks and we listen Saying back to him what he has said to us, we repeat what is most true and sure. Most true and sure is his name, which he put upon us with the water of our baptism. We are his. This we acknowledge at the beginning of the divine service. Where his name is, there is he.¹⁸

Therefore, the proclamation of God's name in baptism, absolution, and the word forms our speaking and confessing. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "Thus, too, the Christian is marked by his belief in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in this consists the form of him who is fashioned in accordance with the mystery of truth."¹⁹ He connects this with 2 Timothy 1:13, where Paul exhorts Timothy, "Follow the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." The "pattern of sound words" is for Gregory of Nyssa the trinitarian name-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The trinitarian name molds our speaking into creed. We are to confess nothing that is not the name of God. In the Athanasian Creed we confess:

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian [catholic] faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity. This is the true Christian [catholic] faith, that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God.²⁰

¹⁷ *Explanation*, p. 6.

¹⁸ [Norman Nagel], Introduction to *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), p. 6.

¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 321.

²⁰ The Athanasian Creed, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 19.

For this historic creed, to confess the trinitarian name of God is to confess the whole Christian [catholic] faith. As a result, the trinitarian name permeates our liturgy as we sing, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end Amen."

As the trinitarian name forms our speaking, we recognize what worship truly is. It is the Father teaching his children how to speak. Fathers often spend hours with their children trying to get them to say "daddy;" The father will repeat it continually, hoping that his child will say it back to him. When he finally does utter "daddy;" the father is overwhelmed with joy. Worship is very much like this. Our heavenly Father comes to us in worship and continually speaks his name to us in the absolution and the word, hoping that we will repeat it back to him in the creed and hymns. When we do finally pray, "Abba, Father;" God is filled with joy and all the angels rejoice.

In conclusion, the Trinity relates to worship through the revelation of his name. By his name we have access to him and worship is possible. In addition, his name, revealed to us in baptism, permeates the divine service. God proclaims his name, which forms our speaking so that we are saved. "O Lord, open Thou my lips. And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise;" It is God who must open our lips and fill our mouths with his holy name. Thus we pray in the hymn "Thy Strong Word":

Give us lips to sing thy glory,
Tongues thy mercy to proclaim,
Throats that shout the hope that fills us,
Mouths to speak thy holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia!
May the light which thou dost send
Fill our songs with alleluias,
Alleluias without end! (LW328)

WORSHIP AS DIVINE ACTIVITY

One of the reasons that the divine service is abused today is that the doctrine of the Trinity is misunderstood. To confess the Trinity is not to speak some correct words about the triune nature of God, but to share in his activity that animates worship. However, even though we consistently confess the doctrine of the Trinity, we often worship as if God were a sedentary object, and deny the Trinity in practice. This happens when our confession springs from the classroom rather than from worship. In the classroom God is the object of our action. However, in true worship (that is, divine service) God is the actor and we are the object. In fact, the divine service is nothing other than the activity of the Triune God who moves out from himself to make us participants in his activity. It is this saving movement of the living God that I will discuss under two points: the trinitarian activity and its relation to the divine service.

The Trinitarian Activity

The trinitarian activity is seen most clearly in creation. As a result, it is especially evident in Genesis 1-2. Moses writes, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light"

(Gen. 1:1-3). Here in the first three verses of Scripture we are introduced to the Triune God, who is at work creating. Throughout the Scriptures God is never a passive being, but always the acting subject, the great "I AM!" This fundamental work of creation reveals the trinitarian activity. In this regard Luther writes,

The Father creates heaven and earth out of nothing through the Son, whom Moses calls the Word. Over these the Holy Spirit broods so Scripture says that the Holy Spirit brooded, as it were, on the waters to bring to life those substances which were to be quickened and adorned. For it is the office of the Holy Spirit to make alive.²¹

Scripture also speaks about God's work of creation in this way. The psalmist writes, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath (Spirit) of his mouth" (Ps 33:6). And John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" John 1:1-3). Hence the work of creation establishes the way in which God moves and works, that is to say, God moves from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

We should be justified in calling all that nature which came into existence by creation a movement of Will, an impulse of Design, a transmission of Power, beginning from the Father, advancing through the Son, and completed in the Holy Spirit.²²

This structure, present in creation, is true for all of God's works, especially his work of redemption. John writes, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In this one verse the trinitarian activity is evident. The redemption of man originates from the Father, who sends the Son, proceeds through the Son, who descends in human flesh, and finishes in the Spirit, who reveals the Son to us by working faith. In this way, God's movement to us is inseparably connected to his activity of grace through which he comes to save us. In other words, this trinitarian activity is the gospel. The gospel is the power of God for salvation not because it simply originated with him, but because through it God gives himself.

Yet the Triune God does not come to us without purpose. He comes to us that we might approach him as our loving Father. Paul writes, "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:17-18). For Paul, there is a two way movement in God's saving activity. First, he reveals himself through the preached gospel. Second, through the gospel we are brought into communion with the Spirit so that we call God "Father." Bishop Ware writes, "The final end of the spiritual way is that we humans should also become a part of the trinitarian coinherence or *perichoresis*, being wholly taken up into the circle of love that exists within God."²³ Therefore, the purpose of God's saving activity is to transform us into a temple for the trinitarian life. Jesus teaches this when he tells his disciples, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" Un 14:23). Gregory of Nyssa summarizes this trinitarian activity when he writes,

²¹ AE 1: 9.

²² Gregory of Nyssa, p. 320.

²³ Ware, p. 34

You see the revolving circle of the glory moving from Like to Like. The Son is glorified by the Spirit; the Father is glorified by the Son; again the Son has his glory from the Father; and the Only-begotten thus becomes the glory of the Spirit In like manner, again, faith completes the circle, and glorifies the Son by means of the Spirit, and the Father by means of the Son.²⁴

For Gregory of Nyssa, God comes to create faith, which makes us a participator in the life of God, a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4).

The trinitarian activity begins and ends in the Father. He is the source and unity of the Godhead as well as the goal of the trinitarian activity. An Orthodox theologian writes, "God the Father is the 'fountain' of the Godhead, the source, cause, or principle of origin for the other two persons:"²⁵ And Gregory of Nazianzus writes, "And the union is the Father from Whom and to Whom the order of Persons runs its course!"²⁶ Yet we know God as Father not in the eternal begetting of the Son (*opera ad intra*), but in our free and gracious adoption as his children (*opera ad extra*). Paul writes, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. In him we cry, Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15). In this regard Cyril of Jerusalem writes,

For however high the privilege we have received of saying in our prayers, "Our Father which art in heaven;" yet the gift is of loving-kindness. For we call him Father, not as having been by nature begotten of our Father which is in heaven; but having been transferred from servitude to sonship by the grace of the Father, through the Son and Holy Spirit, we are permitted so to speak by ineffable loving-kindness.²⁷

For Cyril of Jerusalem, God's fatherhood is seen in his activity of grace by which he adopts us as his own children. William Weinrich makes this connection when he writes,

God's fatherhood is indicated independently of any cooperating participation by another. God literally *makes* Abraham and his descendants to be His sons. It is this prevenient, free, and willing making of a people that we term grace (See Deut 7:6-8). Precisely as the God of grace is God "Father."²⁸

Therefore, to say that God is Father makes two very important points. First, God is Father in that he is the beginning point, the fountain, from whom the trinitarian movement toward us begins. Second, God is our Father in our free and gracious adoption as his own sons so that we pray, "Our Father .. :"

The Second Person of the Trinity is the Son, the Logos or Word of the Father. To speak of the Son and the Father is at once to speak of a relationship, a movement of love beginning in

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, p. 324

²⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, p. 39.

²⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, "Oration XLII: The Last Farewell;" in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 390.

²⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, "Lecture VII: The Father;" in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 45.

²⁸ Dr. William Weinrich, *It is not Given to Women to Teach*, 1991, p. 26.

the Father and moving to the Son, through whom it is returned to the Father. However, this movement of love does not remain hidden in the inner essence of God (*ad intra*), but extends out to the world (*ad extra*). That is to say, the Father of the only begotten Son becomes the Father of mankind through the Son. John teaches this when he writes, "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Un 1a8). And again, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (On 1:12). Irenaeus agrees when he writes,

And through the Word Himself who had been made visible and palpable, was the Father shown forth, although all did not equally believe in him; but all saw the Father in the Son: for the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son the visible of the Father.²⁹

Here Irenaeus confesses that it is through the Son that the Father moves out of himself to the world and is made visible to the world.

However, as the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son is not only the means through which the Father comes to us but also the means through which we come to the Father. Jesus teaches this by proclaiming, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (On 14:6). Later he says, "so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you" (On 15:16). Here Jesus proclaims that he is the mediator, the representative of the Father to man and the representative of man to the Father. This implies that to approach the Father in any other way than through the Son is to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, to become an idolater. In a similar way, to confess that God comes to us in any other way than through the Son is a denial of the Trinity. Martin Luther writes,

Therefore be on your guard against ideas that disregard the Word and separate and tear Christ from God. For He did not bid you soar heavenward on your own and gape to see what God is doing in heaven with the angels. No, this is His command (Matt. 17:5): "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him. There I descend to you on earth, so that you can see, hear, and touch Me. There and nowhere else is the place for those to encounter and find Me who desire Me and who would like to be delivered from their sin and be saved."³⁰

The Third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, who comes from the Father through the Son. While the Son reveals the Father, the Spirit reveals the Son. He works in us to bring us to the Son and in him to the Father. In other words, the Spirit is the One in whom we participate by faith and share in the trinitarian life. Bishop Ware writes,

The third person is the Holy Spirit, the "wind" or "breath" of God. While appreciating the inadequacy of neat classifications, we may say that the Spirit is God within us, the Son is God with us, and the Father God above or beyond us.

²⁹ Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 469.

³⁰ AE 24: 65.

Just as the Son shows us the Father, so it is the Spirit who shows us the Son, making him present to us.³¹

According to Bishop Ware, the Spirit is tied to the Son, for it is only through him that the Spirit proceeds. Jesus teaches, "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (On 15:26). As a result, to attempt to have the Spirit apart from the Son is to deny the Trinity, for the Spirit must come through the incarnate Word. John of Damascus summarizes this trinitarian relationship when he writes,

"For if anyone hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9), saith the divine apostle. And we confess that he is manifested and imparted to us through the Son. "For he breathed upon his disciples," says he, "and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit.'" It is just the same as in the case of the sun from which come both the ray and the radiance (for the sun itself is the source of both the ray and the radiance), and it is through the ray that the radiance is imparted to us, and it is the radiance itself by which we are lightened and in which we participate.³²

Therefore, it is only in the Spirit who comes through the Son that we can call God "Father:" This we sing in Luther's hymn, "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord":

Come, holy Light, guide divine,
Now cause the Word of life to shine.
Teach us to know our God aright
And call him Father with delight.
From ev'ry error keep us free;
Let none but Christ our master be
That we in living faith abide,
In him, our Lord, with all our might confide.
Alleluia, alleluia! (LW154)

Implications for Worship

This trinitarian activity by which he comes to save us and make us participants in his life is by no means limited to the past or to the Son's earthly ministry. Luke writes in the first chapter of Acts, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up" (Acts 1:1-2). This implies that, for Luke, Jesus' ministry of revealing the Father and saving mankind continues beyond the ascension. As a result, in the book of Acts Luke centers on the continuing work of Jesus through the preaching of the word and the administration of baptism. This salvific work of Christ is the work of the Trinity in the life of the church.

Today, the trinitarian activity continues in the divine service as the gospel is preached and the sacraments are distributed. This means that the "real presence" in the divine service is the

³¹ Ware, p. 41.

³² John of Damascus, "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith:" in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 11.

trinitarian presence and, therefore, cannot be passive or reduced to the object of our action. The trinitarian presence acts on us; he cannot do otherwise. That is to say, the divine service is nothing other than the trinitarian movement to us from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. This activity creates faith so that we participate in his movement and approach our Father in the Spirit through the Son. In this way, worship that lives and breaths the means of grace is thoroughly trinitarian.

The invocation is very significant in light of the trinitarian presence. The pastor begins, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," not because he wants everyone to stop talking and sing a hymn. Rather, the invocation is an address to God so that he will look upon us with favor and fill our worship with himself. Luther Reed writes,

As used here at the beginning of the Service, however, it [the invocation] has the value of an "invocative blessing:" As the name indicates, it is addressed to God and not to the congregation. . . . We formally express our "awareness" of the presence of God.... We confess our faith in the Holy Trinity, for whose worship we are assembled.³³

Therefore, in the invocation we address the Trinity so that every act in the divine service is permeated with his action. In fact, our worship depends on it. Peter Brunner says it this way: "The human actions which fill the worship service from beginning to end are entirely dependent on the Triune God's filling them with his action."³⁴ This defines the holy ministry of preaching and distributing the sacraments as a trinitarian activity, as are the prayers and responses of the saints.

The pastoral office as a trinitarian ministry derives from the preaching of Jesus. Our Lord says, "For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me" (John 12:49--50). Here Jesus teaches that he comes to us not as an orphan but as the Son of the Father. His mission is to make the Father known, to stand as the Father's representative. This has great significance for the preaching office, for Jesus says, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16). Therefore, the pastor stands in the stead of Christ as he proclaims in the absolution: "and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins." The point is that the pastor, by standing in the stead of Christ, stands as the representative of the Father.

From the viewpoint of the holy ministry the trinitarian character of preaching becomes evident. The preacher stands as the icon of the Father; the word he speaks is nothing other than Jesus Christ, the Word who dwells among us. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:1-2). However, the word remains meaningless unless it is received in the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who enlightens the mind and bears witness to the Son. Paul continues, "and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

³³ Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), p. 252.

³⁴ Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. M. H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 124.

that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5). Therefore, proclaiming the word in the divine service is an act of the Trinity. The preacher stands as a representative of the Father; he preaches the word which is the Son; and it is received by the hearers in whom the Spirit creates faith.

The trinitarian character of the Mass is also evident from the perspective of the pastoral office. In the sacrament of the altar the gospel is made visible for the church. The Father gives the Son in the bread and the wine, which is received worthily by the saints through the Spirit who dwells within them. In this way, the church becomes a participant in the trinitarian life and is united with her Lord. One Orthodox theologian writes, "Through the sacraments corrupt man, sprung from the corrupt root of Adam, is united with the new root, that is, with Christ, and partakes of incorruptibility and divine life."³⁵ Thus the service of Holy Communion is thoroughly trinitarian. After the Preface, we sing to the thrice holy God, and then pray:

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, for you have had mercy on us children of men and given your only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. We give you thanks for the redemption you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Send your Holy Spirit into our hearts that he may establish in us a living faith and prepare us joyfully to remember our Redeemer and receive him who comes to us in his body and blood.³⁶

After this prayer the Lord's Prayer is said, which in the context of the mass leads one to interpret "daily bread" sacramentally, especially in light of the succeeding petition for the forgiveness of sins. Hence the eucharistic liturgy emphasizes that we are praying to the Father, thanking him for the banquet of his Son that he has spread for us, and asking him for the Spirit that we might receive it worthily.

The trinitarian activity, however, is a two-way movement. He comes to us to create faith so that even our responses are part of the trinitarian activity. God comes to us in the divine service from the Father through the Word in the Spirit to create life. Prompted by the Spirit, we respond to God through the Son. Peter Brunner writes,

The side of spiritual activity in worship immediately directed to God is based exclusively on that activity through which God addresses Himself to man and offers him and conveys to him His gift of salvation. The Word evokes the response, the gift of God evokes man's devotion to God.³⁷

For Peter Brunner, it is impossible to have faith and remain passive. We must actively respond; we cannot do otherwise. Faith does not turn us to ourselves but to the Trinity, where we "live and move and have our being."

The trinitarian character of our response is seen most clearly in prayer. Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you"

³⁵ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, trans. Laidain Sherrard (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 42.

³⁶ *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), p. 171. The service outlined is Divine Service II, First Setting.

³⁷ Brunner, p. 125.

On 15:16). And Paul writes, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. In him we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom 8:15). Here the Scriptures teach that our prayers are to proceed in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. In this way the Trinity forms our prayers. The source of our prayers is not the sinful heart (*ex corde*), but the trinitarian liturgy, which fills our mouths and makes us one flesh with Christ. When our prayers are embedded in the liturgy of the word, they proceed as participations in the trinitarian life. One Orthodox theologian writes, "Prayer is not a magical method of bringing compulsion to bear on God, but is the spiritual means whereby man is elevated towards him."³⁸ The point here is that the Trinity is not the passive object of our responses but the active subject who makes us sharers in his activity.

CONCLUSION

The pastors and teachers of the church must begin to understand theology liturgically and the liturgy theologically. If they remain separated in our preaching and teaching, untold harm will most certainly ensue. We must again discover that the application of our doctrine is not primarily found in the individual lives and experiences of people, but in the common life of the church, namely, its liturgy and doxology. If this is done, the application of doctrine in the lives of people will be profound, because it will unite them into the one life of the church, which is the one life of the Holy Trinity. The mystery of the Trinity is the source and power of the liturgical life of the church. First, he makes worship possible through the revelation of his name, which gives access to himself. Second, this revelation comes in the divine activity. This trinitarian activity is a two-way movement. He comes to us from the Father through the Son in the Spirit for the sole purpose of making us participants in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. Thus the Trinity permeates our worship so that every act and every word is and must be trinitarian. Therefore, it is my hope that by uniting theology and liturgy we may return to the true worship of God, which is to worship him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23)- that is to say, in the Holy Spirit and in him who is the Truth, Jesus, our Savior. Therefore we pray:

Triune God, oh, be our stay;
Oh let us perish never!
Cleanse us from our sins, we pray,
And grant us life forever.
Keep us from the evil one;
Uphold our faith most holy,
And let us trust you solely
With humble hearts and lowly.
Let us put God's armor on,
With all true Christians running
Our heav'nly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen, amen! This be done;
So sing we, "Alleluia!" (LW170)

³⁸ Mantzaridis, p. 89.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Thanksgiving in the Old Testament.

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/ThanksgivingintheOldTestamentBird.pdf>

For the **LIFE**

of the **WORLD**

April 2003. Volume Seven, Number Two

Thanksgiving in the Old Testament

By the Rev. Chad Bird, Asst. Professor of Exegetical Theology,
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We don't get very far into the Scriptures before God breaks the silence with a four-word speech: "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). After that, we continually encounter the God who speaks. He calls out to Adam, He instructs Noah, He makes promises to Abraham. Whatever the words, to whomever they are spoken, these nouns and verbs are evidence that God is not a mute deity. Rather, He is a heavenly Father who desires to reveal Himself to man in words.

Of all the words God speaks, however, there are two words that are never found on His lips—the words "thank you." It is not, mind you, as if God is unthankful or ungrateful. No, that would be to miss the point. What does it mean to thank someone? Is it not to acknowledge that you have *received* something from them? Is it not to say of yourself, "I have been *given to*." That, however, is something God cannot say, for God only gives. "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it." (Ps. 24:1) What can you really give to Him who owns everything? Nothing. So God is neither thankful nor unthankful. God is God. He doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving.

The words “thank you,” then, are reserved for someone else’s lips—the lips of the Church and her children, those who are *given to*. For believers to say “thank You” to their Father is for them to say “Amen” to His gifts, to confess that “it is He who has made us and not we ourselves” (Ps. 100:3). God makes, we are made. He gives, we receive. And having tasted and seen that the Lord is good, the tongue of faith responds, “Amen. Thanks be to God.”

But how *specifically* do the Church and her children thank God, especially in the Divine Service? Here, sadly, the waters are often muddied. For far too frequently one gets the impression—especially from certain types of so called “praise songs”—that God is thanked mainly by showering Him with flattery, going on and on about what a great, awesome, strong God He is. To be sure, such adjectives accurately describe God. But, biblically and historically, has the Church given thanks to God mainly or merely by applauding Him in this way?

The liturgy of Israel gives us the answer. For when Israel gave thanks to the Lord, she did so not by showering Him with flattery but by confessing *who God is* and *what God does for His people*. Indeed, the Hebrew word commonly translated “to thank” (*yadha*) frequently means something more akin to “confess” than “thank.” This way of confessing the truth about God is pervasive in the hymnal of Israel, the book of Psalms.

Psalms 136 is a premier example of how the church of old gave thanks to God, that is, confessed Him in her liturgy. This psalm begins with a verse that was frequently part of the hymns of Israel. Indeed, the words are still prayed after the meal of Holy Communion in the Church and after family meals in the home: “O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good and His mercy endureth forever” (136:1). *O give thanks unto the LORD*, the psalm begins. The Hebrew word “LORD” is Yahweh, the personal, covenant name of God. Thus Israel did not begin her praise with the words, “O give thanks *unto whom it may concern*.” They were not thanking a nameless deity but the true God who had revealed Himself to Israel as Yahweh and constantly placed His saving name upon His Church via His priests (Num. 6:22-27). So Israel began by thanking God by name *for who He is*.

They continued their thanks by describing *what He does for His people*: *He is good and His mercy endureth forever*. How is Yahweh good and His mercy everlasting? The rest of the psalm tells us by confessing, verse after verse, what Yahweh has done and still does for His Church. He created the heavens, the earth, the sun, moon, and stars (136:5-9); He redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt and destroyed all their enemies (136:10-20); He brought them into the holy land (136:21-22); He still remembers them and acts to save them from their adversaries (136:23-24); and He provides for all their physical needs (136:25). Following every verse, every confession of how the Lord creates and redeems, is the refrain: “for His loving kindness is everlasting.” Because Yahweh *is* good, He *does* good for His people. Because His loving kindness never stops, He never stops demonstrating that love toward the Church. In good times and bad, whether hungry or enslaved, Israel can count on Yahweh because He is who He is—a good and merciful Father.

Take note of this: In the very act of confessing who God is and what He does for His people, Israel is thanking God. There’s no need to multiply words: “we thank You . . . we appreciate You . . . we are grateful to You . . . we just wanna praise you for . . .” Their thanksgiving is therefore fundamentally *creedal*, that is, they confess that Yahweh is the Creator of heaven and earth (First Article), the One who redeemed them from servitude in Egypt (Second Article), and the same One who enables them to confess and believe this (Third Article). To sing this “creed” is to say “thanks be to God.”

Thanksgiving in Israel’s liturgy, however, was not just expressed in the pouring out of song. It was also expressed in the pouring out of blood. In fact, the two—singing and sacrificing—usually occurred simultaneously in the temple liturgy (2 Chron. 7:5-6). On unique occasions—such as at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:62-64)—as well as perpetually in the liturgical life of Israel, the nation and individuals gave thanks to God by the sacrifice of oxen, sheep, lambs, and other animals. This, no doubt, seems rather odd to many people today. How could slaughtering an animal equal “thanks be to God”?

King David directs us toward an answer to that question. After having gathered material for the temple which his son, Solomon, would build, David prayed, “[O Lord], all things come from You, and *from Your hand we have given to You*” (1 Chron. 29:14). So it was with sacrificial animals as well. Every bull, every lamb, every beast belonged to God. To confess this fact, and to confess that God in grace had given these animals (and all blessings) to His people, Israel would offer some of these animals back to God. Just as in her hymnody, Israel thanked God by confessing His gifts to the nation in creation and redemption, so in sacrifice the Church confessed, “This animal is Yours not ours. You have made it. From Your hand we have given it to You.”

But there was even more to these sacrifices of thanksgiving. For not only was God thanked by this confessional act of sacrifice; He also provided for His people the gifts of forgiveness and peace in the shedding of the animal's blood, for this blood pointed forward to the shedding of the Messiah's blood. The thanksgiving sacrifices were known as peace or *shalom* offerings (Lev. 7:11-15). What was unique about the peace offering was where the sacrificial meat was consumed—not on the flames of the altar but in the mouth of the worshiper. For example, if a lamb was offered “by way of thanksgiving” (Lev. 7:12) in a peace offering, the body of the lamb was cooked and eaten by the worshipers in a holy meal. What they had offered to God as a confession of thanksgiving, God gave back to them as a meal of forgiveness, peace, and blessings. They ate the flesh of the One who was sacrificed for them—the very price of their redemption!

The parallels in the Church today are remarkable. At the beginning of the liturgy of Holy Communion we sing, “Let us *give thanks* unto the Lord our God . . . It is meet and right so to do.” Here we offer up “a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15) by confessing who He is and what He has done for us (the Proper Preface). Our sacrifices of thanksgiving, however, are just words. What the Father gives us afterward is far from “just words”; He gives us *His justifying Word*, His Word made flesh (John 1:14), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He feeds us the flesh of that Lamb who offered up Himself as a crucifixion sacrifice. We eat the flesh of the One who was sacrificed for us—the very price of our redemption! And being thus filled with the peace, forgiveness, and blessing from our heavenly Father, we sing, “Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good and His mercy endureth forever.”

The Church, the new and better Israel, gives thanks to God by placing a pronoun before His name. He is not just “God” but *our* God, not just “Lord” by *our* Lord. He tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, that we might, in faith, always receive His gifts with thanksgiving. So the Church sings,

We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate'er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.
(*The Lutheran Hymnal* #441)

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[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Worship for the Weary.

This article reminds us how worship impacts us even when we may not feel it.

<http://witness.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=1197&IssueID=62>

Worship for the Weary (Web-exclusive Story)

by Tim Pauls

I'm all for hearty praise, good feelings and new insight in worship, but if these are lacking, it doesn't mean the service is a bust.

I offer the hypothetical of a parishioner who is fighting cancer. Given his illness and the withering effects of chemotherapy, he's low on energy of all kinds. He feels no joy and dozes during the sermon. But then he receives the Lord's Supper, and so he goes home confident that he remains a forgiven child of God. For one near death, there's no better assurance.

Replace that hypothetical with the grieving new widow or parents trying to teach small children to sit still in the pew. For all sorts of reasons, Christians are weary bunch. They're tempted or prevented from focusing in worship as they should, but because of the Lord's work in His Word and Sacraments, they can still be certain that He forgives them.

A recent article entitled "Survey: Half of churchgoer's lives not affected by time in pews" summarized a study in which 46 percent of churchgoing Americans reported that their lives have not changed due to their church attendance. Additionally, only 44 percent feel God's presence in church every week, and a full 60 percent could not remember a significant new insight from their last visit to church. The article describes this as "a finding sure to disappoint pastors."

Personally, I'm more concerned about the survey. Its methodology and specific questions aren't available, nor are its results particularly useful. Consider those who complain of little insight: It's quite possible they are hearing poor preaching. But it's equally possible that many don't consider good preaching to be insightful because they're looking for another message.

Or consider those who apparently don't feel God's presence every week. In many churches, a sense of God's presence is reduced to emotional feeling, as in, "I feel Jesus in my heart." But God isn't present because we feel Him. He's present because He says He's in His means of grace, whether we feel Him or not.

Remember the hypothetical cancer patient, widow and young parents I mentioned before. Because of their circumstances, all would likely say their lives hadn't changed because of worship; they didn't feel God's presence, and they derived little new insight. But all of them could also say that they were certain that God was present and that they were forgiven there. It is certain because God says so, not because they feel it. What comfort!

I remember a mother remarking, "With little kids, I don't hear much between the Invocation and the Benediction, but thanks to the Supper, I know I've received forgiveness." God grant to preachers sermons that are packed with insightful Law and Gospel, and God grant to churchgoers freedom from distractions and thirst for the pure Word. But where matters are less than ideal because of sin or circumstance, God grant faith that acknowledges His presence and grace anyway, according to His promises. There's no better comfort for the weary.

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January 2012
Tim Pauls

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Prayer: The Voice of Faith.

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/PrayertheVoiceofFaithPless.pdf>

For the **LIFE**

of the **WORLD**

April 1999. Volume Three, Number Two

Prayer:

The Voice of

Faith

Prayer does not begin in the human heart but in the hearing of God's gracious words of life and salvation spoken to us in the Gospel of His Son. Thus Luther explains the introductory words of the Our Father saying, "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father." Just as faith comes by the hearing of Christ's words so prayer is created and sustained by the Word of the Lord.

The confidence is not in the praying heart but in the promises of God. In his classic little study of prayer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart" (p. 15). The human heart, that cesspool of sin and unbelief, is hardly the fountain from which the aroma of sweet smelling prayer arises. Indeed the Prophet Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and is desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Christian prayer is not based on the instincts of the heart, instincts that by their very nature rob us of the fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Instead, our Lord invites us to pray in His name, that is, on the basis of good and gracious will and His sure promises.

Often times prayer is described as a conversation with God. This is a helpful image if we keep in mind that God always has the first word. We can speak to God in prayer only because God has first spoken to us in His Son. We are reminded of this blessed reality in the prayer offices of Matins and Vespers as the vesicle from Psalm 51:15, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise," is chanted. It is only as God opens lips locked by sin that mouths are free for the full-throated prayer that delights the ears of our Heavenly Father. When we sinners try to open our own lips in prayer, we know what happens. Instead of praise and thanksgiving, intercession and supplication, out come petitions of self-justification and attempts to bargain with God. Prayer then becomes a tool of unbelief that is used in a vain and self-serving attempt to pry from the hands of God the answer that we want rather than the gifts that our Father would give us. When prayer becomes unglued from the Word of God, it is transformed into a weapon that sinners would use against God in a foolish attempt to have their own will done on earth.

Prayer is not an instrument which we use to get something from God. To use the language of Lutheran theology, prayer is not a means of grace. God richly and lavishly bestows the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation on sinners for the sake of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Our Lord wills to give us these gifts in the concrete and earthly instruments that He has designed and established for His church. In baptism, God washes away our sin and gives us the gift of His name and Spirit. The words of absolution unchain us from the fetters of our sin by the power of Jesus' death. In the Lord's Supper we feast on the fruits of the new testament given in body and blood of the Lamb of God. This means that when we are troubled and tortured by our sin and the hellish attacks of Satan we do not take comfort in the strength or sincerity of our praying but in the rock-solid gifts won for us on Jesus' cross and delivered to us in the means of grace.

C.F.W. Walther noted the spiritual damage that is done when sinners are directed to their own prayers rather than the Gospel, "... the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to

the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace” (The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, p. 2). Our confidence is not to be found in our prayers but in God’s work in Word and Sacrament. Pietism, both in its classical and contemporary forms, directs troubled consciences to prayer and thus burdens them with the law. The fruit of faith rather than faith’s source becomes the focus and struggling sinners are set up either for despair or pride.

When Law and Gospel are properly divided, prayer will be seen as anchored in and fueled by the Gospel. To use the words of Eugene Peterson, “prayer is responding speech.” That is, the Christian speaks to God in prayer because he or she has first listened to the Holy Trinity in His Word. The Sacred Scriptures, the Catechism, and the liturgy tutor us in such praying.

Adolph Koeberle writes that, “Prayer escapes the danger of disorder and confusion only when it is enkindled by the words of Scripture. From the Word proceeds its inner justification, as well as its life-giving power and the clearness of its petitions. A prayer that does not stick to Scripture will soon become poor in ideas, poor in faith, poor in love, and will finally die” (The Quest for Holiness, pp. 176- 177). Martin Luther recognized how prayer is “responding speech” in the advice on prayer that he gave to his barber, Peter. Luther encouraged Peter to tie his prayers to the text of Scripture, taking a text like one of the commandments and turning the text into a prayer (see “A Simple Way to Pray” in Luther’s Works, Vol. 43, pp. 193-211). In this way prayer is anchored in the Word of God and not allowed to become the play pen of human emotion and imagination.

Thus the Catechism became the prayer book for Luther and the Lutheran Church. Not only did the Catechism provide splendid instruction in prayer shaped by the Gospel as we can see from Luther’s treatment of the “Our Father,” the Catechism also provided some very basic forms for prayer set within the rhythm of daily life (morning and evening prayer, prayer at meals). Moreover, the Catechism itself could be prayed!

The liturgy also becomes a tutor in Christian prayer as the liturgy not only gives us the words and gifts of the Triune God, but also gives us God’s own words so that we might faithfully confess His gifts, extol His saving name, and call upon Him in prayer and intercession. Prayer shaped by the liturgy draws us out of our inborn selfishness, freeing us to use prayer in faith toward Christ and in love for the neighbor. As the liturgy is first and foremost, “*Gottesdienst*” (divine service) or God’s service to us, liturgical prayer reminds us that prayer is always a response to what God says and does. Hearing God’s words, we use His words to speak to Him.

God has given His children a wonderful privilege in prayer. Prayer is abused if it is reduced to a spiritual technique for acquiring blessings from a stingy deity. The God who has given us His Son tenderly invites us to trust His Word and call upon His name with boldness and confidence.

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[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“Lord, Remember Us in Your Kingdom,
and Teach Us to Pray...”

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LordRememberUsinYourKingdomStuckwisch.pdf>

For the **LIFE** of the **WORLD**

April 1999. Volume Three, Number Two

“Lord, Remember Us in Your Kingdom, and Teach Us to Pray...”

Introduction — The *Our Father* Rooted in Our Baptism into Christ

We should not take it for granted, that we have been given the privilege of coming to God in prayer. Nor should we take it lightly, that He has given us the very words with which to approach Him. Certainly, we should not presume that such prayer is our own prerogative or a matter of personal choice. Rather, it is a gift of divine grace, that God is our dear Father, that we are His dear children, and that He has given us both the invitation and the means to come boldly before Him. All of this in and through Christ, and given to us in the waters of our Baptism.

From the earliest days of the Church, the *Our Father* — along with the *Apostles' Creed* — has had a special relationship to the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Catechumens in the early church would receive and learn these two Chief Parts of the Christian faith during Lent; then, at their Baptism during the Great Vigil of Easter, they would confess the Creed as they were immersed in the water, and afterwards (on the basis of their Baptism) they would pray the *Our Father* for the first time ... together with the Church.

To be sure, it is only by our Baptism into Christ, “the Son of God”, that we, too, are given the blessed privilege of approaching the Lord God Almighty as “Our Father” ... just as dear children ask their dear fathers here on earth (but thankfully, with even more confidence than we have in our human fathers).

I. The *Our Father* as the Prayer of the Church Catholic

Because we pray to our Father in virtue of our Baptism into Christ, the Lord's Prayer (like all Christian prayer, properly understood) is never "private" prayer; there is no such thing as a "private Christian" or "private Christianity." Even when we take it to the Lord in prayer in the solitude of our own homes, we do so as members of the Body of Christ, as members of His Church of all times and places. It is always our Father, and never simply my Father.

The use of the *Our Father*, in particular, along with other standard prayers (such as Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers), is an important confession of this catholicity of the Church and of our connection to it. Because the *Our Father* is part of our common language as Christians, this is a special language we all speak as fellow citizens of our Father's Kingdom. For the words we use—even before we begin to "understand" them (in part intellectually—the words God has spoken and given for us to repeat are words that every Christian has received and speaks, a confession of the one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all (Eph 4:4–5).

The catholicity of the *Our Father* is demonstrated in the special importance attached to the Fifth Petition ("forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"), which Jesus reiterates in His teaching of the *Our Father* (Matt. 6:14–15). Since we pray in communion with the entire Church—in the unity of Christ Jesus—our relationship with others (especially our fellow Christians) is an integral part of our prayer. And, as Christians, that relationship is defined by forgiveness.

We come before the Lord in prayer with repentance and a humble recognition of our own sins; for we know that of ourselves we are unworthy to stand in His presence, and that we do so only by His tender grace and mercy toward us. Each and every prayer that we bring to Him, therefore, presupposes and depends upon His forgiveness. And in this confession of our own sin, in our reliance upon the mercy and free forgiveness of our gracious Lord, we for our part must "heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us."

In much the same way, we pray the *Our Father* as a matter of discipline, because it lifts our hearts and minds above and beyond our own selfish cares and concerns to pray for the whole Church, for all who are the baptized children of God, our brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever they may be in His vast Kingdom. For all that we pray for in the Lord's Prayer, we pray not only for ourselves, but for all who call upon God as their Father (and for all whom He would call to be His children).

II. The *Our Father* as THE All-Encompassing Prayer

Along these same lines, the *Our Father* is an all-encompassing prayer. It includes (along with forgiveness) everything we need for this body and life, and for the life eternal; nothing is excluded. There is no situation or circumstance for which the *Our Father* is not most ideally suited; nothing we might face which is not addressed in these seven Petitions.

Whenever we find ourselves at a loss for words (and St. Paul tells us that we do not even know how to pray as we should [Rom 8:26]), we find our recourse and take refuge in this Prayer taught by our Lord Christ Himself. And even though our hearts and minds are never as pious or as focused as they should be, we can know for a certainty that our lips are here guided by the words of God Himself; and that the Holy Spirit is thus praying with us . . . and so also for us . . . in our sinful weakness.

When we pray and intercede for others, as well—for our family and friends, for the Church, for those who are sick, etc.—then again *the Lord's Prayer* is always most appropriate, a prayer for all seasons, as it were.

Certainly, we should never feel that we have nothing to say, nor worry that we aren't being "creative" or "clever" enough. "When you pray," says Jesus our Lord, "do so in this manner" (St. Matt 6:7, 9), "Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name... "

Accordingly, the Lutheran Church has always included the *Our Father* in every single one of her liturgies—great and small alike, both short and long. And Dr. Luther recommends in his Small Catechism that we include the *Our Father* in our daily prayers ... in the morning when we rise, and in the evening when we go to bed, and both before and after every meal ...

In short, as the children of God, we do as St. Paul writes, crying out, "Abba! Father!" to our Father in heaven (Rom8:15). "Abba," as some of you might know, was the Jewish equivalent of "Daddy," or the infant cooing of "Dadda." Thus, in following Luther's advice (praying the *Our Father* at least eight times a day), we might properly think of ourselves as tiny infants learning to speak, babbling, "Dadda, Dadda, Dadda," over and over throughout our day, with the grateful affection of children for the very dear Father who loves and cares for us.

In praying this dear prayer with our own children, in turn, and teaching them to pray in this way, we are passing on more than just a single prayer. We teach them how to speak the Word of God with the language of faith. And we teach them the most basic pattern of worship.

II. The *Our Father* as Divine Service and Worship

The fact of the matter is, that the *Our Father* embodies the entire scope of Divine Service and Christian worship in a nutshell. It is the gracious Word of Christ to us, His work and His gift. This precious thing is not of our own fabrication or design, nor is it anything that we could have thought or imagined. Like all Divine Service, it comes to us from God. And when we pray in this manner, it does not cease to be His Word and His work in us. Not that our praying is the Gospel or a means of grace; but the words themselves, with which the Lord has opened our lips to call upon His Name, these are indeed a gift of pure Gospel and grace.

Our praying of the *Our Father*, on the other hand, is a genuine good work of faith, a sacrifice of repentance and thanksgiving, and an act of worship in Spirit and Truth (that is to say, the worship of the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, by means of His Word of Truth).

How appropriate, therefore, and how richly multifaceted the *Our Father* is in its use within the Lutheran Liturgy. In Matins and Vespers, it is part of that daily (morning and evening) sacrifice of prayer that rises before the Lord as the holy incense of faith (Ps 141:2). In the Service of the Word, it is the summary and conclusion of any and all other prayers, encompassing all for which the Lord would have us pray. Prior to the Words of Institution in the Divine Service, it is a “Eucharistic” sacrifice (of thanksgiving), offered in grateful anticipation of the words and gifts of Christ Himself about to be received.

And where it is used, according to the most ancient practice of the Church Catholic, immediately prior to the distribution of the Holy Communion, the *Our Father* serves as our petition, that He would (by His Word and Spirit) lead us to recognize the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine, and that He would grant us to receive this Bread of Life and this Cup of Salvation with thanksgiving, in true faith, and to our abundant blessing. It is indeed, as well, a confession that He does all these things (and more).

Conclusion — Command, Promise, and Need

As Luther reminds us several times over in his *Small Catechism*, God answers our petitions “even without our prayer.” Just as He has promised, “Before you call, I will answer; and while you are yet speaking, I will act.” (Is 65:24) Thus, everything we pray for in the *Our Father* (which includes all that we need for our bodies and souls) is already granted freely and by grace alone in Christ Jesus.

Our prayer is not a button or a cord that we push or pull for service From the Lord, as though He were a household servant instead of our dear Father in heaven; as though He were not already (even without our prayer) daily and richly providing us with all good things ... solely out of Fatherly, Divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. Just as He gives daily bread to all people, even to the wicked, and causes His sun to shine and His rain to fall on both the evil and the good. But we pray that He would grant us grace to see His Fatherly hand in all things, and to cling by faith to Him alone, trusting not in ourselves but in Christ and His mercy.

But ultimately, we pray the *Our Father* — and we do so with confident faith in Christ — because He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way, and He has promised to hear us.

We come to Him in prayer, in this respect, in much the same way that we go to church and receive the Holy Sacrament: not because we “feel” like it (but especially when we do not); not because we thereby do some great “favor” for the Lord; and certainly not because we are somehow worthy of ourselves to stand before Him. But simply because He has commanded us to do so ... because He has promised to be with us and to bless us ... and because we need His gracious mercy and forgiveness every day of our lives.

Thanks be to God that we have it without measure in His Son— our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him alone be all honor and glory and praise, both now and forever. Amen.

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[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“A Simple Way to Pray”

http://www.ordinarypastor.com/files/A_Simple_Way_To_Pray-v1-Luther.pdf

A Simple Way To Pray

Martin Luther

*Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the 10 Commandments, and the Creed.
A Letter to His Barber, Master Peter Beskendorf, Spring 1535*

I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen.

First, when I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer because of other tasks or thoughts (for the flesh and the devil always impede and obstruct prayer), I take my little psalter, hurry to my room, or, if it be the day and hour for it, to the church where a congregation is assembled and, as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some psalms, just as a child might do.

It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night. Guard yourself carefully against those false, deluding ideas which tell you, "Wait a little while. I will pray in an hour; first I must attend to this or that." Such thoughts get you away from prayer into other affairs which so hold your attention and involve you that nothing comes of prayer for that day.

It may well be that you may have some tasks which are as good or better than prayer, especially in an emergency. There is a saying ascribed to St. Jerome that everything a believer does is prayer and a proverb, "He who works faithfully prays twice." This can be said because a believer fears and honors God in his work and remembers the commandment not to wrong anyone, or to try to steal, defraud, or cheat. Such thoughts and such faith undoubtedly transform his work into prayer and a sacrifice of praise.

On the other hand it is also true that the work of an unbeliever is outright cursing and so he who works faithlessly curses twice. While he does his work his thoughts are occupied with a neglect of God and violation of his law, how to take advantage of his neighbor, how to steal from him and defraud him. What else can such thoughts be but out and out curses against God and man, which makes one's work and effort a double curse by which a man curses himself. In the end they are beggars and bunglers. It is of such continual prayer that Christ says in Luke 11, "Pray without ceasing," because one must unceasingly guard against sin and wrong-doing, something one cannot do unless

one fears God and keeps his commandment in mind, as Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is he who meditates upon his law day and night."

Yet we must be careful not to break the habit of true prayer and imagine other works to be necessary which, after all, are nothing of the kind. Thus at the end we become lax and lazy, cool and listless toward prayer. The devil who besets us is not lazy or careless, and our flesh is too ready and eager to sin and is disinclined to the spirit of prayer.

When your heart has been warmed by such recitation to yourself and is intent upon the matter, kneel or stand with your hands folded and your eyes toward heaven and speak or think as briefly as you can:

O Heavenly Father, dear God, I am a poor unworthy sinner. I do not deserve to raise my eyes or hands toward thee or to pray. But because thou hast commanded us all to pray and hast promised to hear us and through thy dear Son Jesus Christ hast taught us both how and what to pray, I come to thee in obedience to thy word, trusting in thy gracious promise. I pray in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ together with all thy saints and Christians on earth as he has taught us: Our Father who art, etc., through the whole prayer, word for word.

Then repeat one part or as much as you wish, perhaps the first petition: "Hallowed be thy name," and say: "Yes, Lord God, dear Father, hallowed be thy name, both in us and throughout the whole world. Destroy and root out the abominations, idolatry, and heresy of the Turk, the pope, and all false teachers and fanatics who wrongly use thy name and in scandalous ways take it in vain and horribly blaspheme it. They insistently boast that they teach thy word and the laws of the church, though they really use the devil's deceit and trickery in thy name to wretchedly seduce many poor souls throughout the world, even killing and shedding much innocent blood, and in such persecution they believe that they render thee a divine service.

Dear Lord God, convert and restrain. Convert those who are still to be converted that they with us and we with them may hallow and praise thy name, both with true and pure doctrine and with a good and holy life. Restrain those who are unwilling to be converted so that they be forced to cease from misusing, defiling, and dishonoring thy holy name and from misleading the poor people. Amen."

The second petition: "Thy kingdom come." Say: "O dear Lord, God and Father, thou seest how worldly wisdom and reason not only profane thy name and ascribe the honor due to thee to lies and to the devil, but how they also take the power, might, wealth and glory which thou hast given them on earth for ruling the world and thus serving thee, and use it in their own ambition to oppose thy kingdom. They are many and mighty; they plague and hinder the tiny flock of thy kingdom who are weak, despised, and few. They will not tolerate thy flock on earth and think that by plaguing them they render a great and godly service to thee. Dear Lord, God and Father, convert them and defend us. Convert those who are still to become children and members of thy kingdom so that they with us and we with them may serve thee in thy kingdom in

true faith and unfeigned love and that from thy kingdom which has begun, we may enter into thy eternal kingdom. Defend us against those who will not turn away their might and power from the destruction of thy kingdom so that when they are east down from their thrones and humbled, they will have to cease from their efforts. Amen."

The third petition. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Say: "O dear Lord, God and Father, thou knowest that the world, if it cannot destroy thy name or root out thy kingdom, is busy day and night with wicked tricks and schemes, strange conspiracies and intrigue, huddling together in secret counsel, giving mutual encouragement and support, raging and threatening and going about with every evil intention to destroy thy name, word, kingdom, and children. Therefore, dear Lord, God and Father, convert them and defend us. Convert those who have yet to acknowledge thy good will that they with us and we with them may obey thy will and for thy sake gladly, patiently, and joyously bear every evil, cross, and adversity, and thereby acknowledge, test, and experience thy benign, gracious, and perfect will. But defend us against those who in their rage, fury, hate, threats, and evil desires do not cease to do us harm. Make their wicked schemes, tricks, and devices to come to nothing so that these may be turned against them, as we sing in Psalm 7 ."

The fourth petition. "Give us this day our daily bread." Say: "Dear Lord, God and Father, grant us thy blessing also in this temporal and physical life. Graciously grant us blessed peace. Protect us against war and disorder. Grant to our dear emperor fortune and success against his enemies. Grant him wisdom and understanding to rule over his earthly kingdom in peace and prosperity. Grant to all kings, princes, and rulers good counsel and the will to preserve their domains and their subjects in tranquility and justice. Especially aid and guide our dear prince N., under whose protection and shelter thou dost maintain us, so that he may be protected against all harm and reign blessedly, secure from evil tongues and disloyal people. Grant to all his subjects grace to serve him loyally and obediently. Grant to every estate-townsman or farmer-to be diligent and to display charity and loyalty toward each other. Give us favorable weather and good harvest. I commend to thee my house and property, wife and child. Grant that I may manage them well, supporting and educating them as a Christian should. Defend us against the Destroyer and all his wicked angels who would do us harm and mischief in this life. Amen."

The fifth petition. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Say: "O dear Lord, God and Father, enter not into judgment against us because no man living is justified before thee. Do not count it against us as a sin that we are so unthankful for thine ineffable goodness, spiritual and physical, or that we stray into sin many times every day, more often than we can know or recognize, Psalm 19. Do not look upon how good or how wicked we have been but only upon the infinite compassion which thou hast bestowed upon us in Christ, thy dear Son. Grant forgiveness also to those who have harmed or wronged us, as we forgive them from our hearts. They inflict the greatest injury upon themselves by arousing thy anger in their actions toward us. We are not helped by their ruin; we would much rather that they be saved with us. Amen." (Anyone who feels unable to forgive, let him ask for grace so that he can forgive; but that belongs in a sermon.)

The sixth petition. "And lead us not into temptation." Say: "O dear Lord, Father and God, keep us fit and alert, eager and diligent in thy word and service, so that we do

not become complacent, lazy, and slothful as though we had already achieved everything. In that way the fearful devil cannot fall upon us, surprise us, and deprive us of thy precious word or stir up strife and factions among us and lead us into other sin and disgrace, both spiritually and physically. Rather grant us wisdom and strength through thy spirit that we may valiantly resist him and gain the victory. Amen."

The seventh petition. "But deliver us from evil." Say: "O dear Lord, God and Father, this wretched life is so full of misery and calamity, of danger and uncertainty, so full of malice and faithlessness (as St. Paul says, "The days are evil") that we might rightfully grow weary of life and long for death. But thou, dear Father, knowest our frailty; therefore help us to pass in safety through so much wickedness and villainy; and, when our last hour comes, in thy mercy grant us a blessed departure from this vale of sorrows so that in the face of death we do not become fearful or despondent but in firm faith commit our souls into thy hands. Amen."

Finally, mark this, that you must always speak the Amen firmly. Never doubt that God in his mercy will surely hear you and say "yes" to your prayers. Never think that you are kneeling or standing alone, rather think that the whole of Christendom, all devout Christians, are standing there beside you and you are standing among them in a common, united petition which God cannot disdain. Do not leave your prayer without having said or thought, "Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth." That is what Amen means.

You should also know that I do not want you to recite all these words in your prayer. That would make it nothing but idle chatter and prattle, read word for word out of a book as were the rosaries by the laity and the prayers of the priests and monks. Rather do I want your heart to be stirred and guided concerning the thoughts which ought to be comprehended in the Lord's Prayer. These thoughts may be expressed, if your heart is rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer, in many different ways and with more words or fewer. I do not bind myself to such words or syllables, but say my prayers in one fashion today, in another tomorrow, depending upon my mood and feeling. I stay however, as nearly as I can, with the same general thoughts and ideas. It may happen occasionally that I may get lost among so many ideas in one petition that I forego the other six. If such an abundance of good thoughts comes to us we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers. Many times I have learned more from one prayer than I might have learned from much reading and speculation.

It is of great importance that the heart be made ready and eager for prayer. As the Preacher says, "Prepare your heart for prayer, and do not tempt God". What else is it but tempting God when your mouth babbles and the mind wanders to other thoughts? Like the priest who prayed, "Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Farmhand, did you unhitch the horses? Domine ad adjuvandum me festina. Maid, go out and milk the cow. Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto. Hurry up, boy, I wish the ague would take you!" I have heard many such prayers in my experience under the papacy; most of their prayers are of this sort. This is blasphemy and it would be better if they played at it if they cannot or do not care to do better. In my day I have prayed many such canonical hours myself, regrettably, and in such a manner that the psalm or the allotted time came to an end before I even realized whether I was at the beginning or in the middle.

Though not all of them blurt out the words as did the above-mentioned cleric and mix business and prayer, they do it by the thoughts in their hearts. They jump from one thing to another in their thoughts and when it is all over they do not know what they have done or what they talked about. They start with Laudate and right away they are in a fool's paradise. It seems to me that if someone could see what arises as prayer from a cold and unattentive heart he would conclude that he had never seen a more ridiculous kind of buffoonery. But, praise God, it is now clear to me that a person who forgets what he has said has not prayed well. In a good prayer one fully remembers every word and thought from the beginning to the end of the prayer.

So, a good and attentive barber keeps his thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and hair and does not forget how far he has gotten with his shaving or cutting. If he wants to engage in too much conversation or let his mind wander or look somewhere else he is likely to cut his customer's mouth, nose, or even his throat. Thus if anything is to be done well, it requires the full attention of all one's senses and members, as the proverb says, "Pluribus intentus, minor est ad singula sensus"-"He who thinks of many things, thinks of nothing and does nothing right." How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer!

This in short is the way I use the Lord's Prayer when I pray it. To this day I suckle at the Lord's Prayer like a child, and as an old man eat and drink from it and never get my fill. It is the very best prayer, even better than the psalter, which is so very dear to me. It is surely evident that a real master composed and taught it. What a great pity that the prayer of such a master is prattled and chattered so irreverently all over the world! How many pray the Lord's Prayer several thousand times in the course of a year, and if they were to keep on doing so for a thousand years they would not have tasted nor prayed one iota, one dot, of it! In a word, the Lord's Prayer is the greatest martyr on earth (as are the name and word of God). Everybody tortures and abuses it; few take comfort and joy in its proper use.

The Ten Commandments

If I have had time and opportunity to go through the Lord's Prayer, I do the same with the Ten Commandments. I take one part after another and free myself as much as possible from distractions in order to pray. I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as, first, instruction, which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer. I do so in thoughts or words such as these:

"I am the Lord your God, etc. You shall have no other gods before me," etc. Here I earnestly consider that God expects and teaches me to trust him sincerely in all things and that it is his most earnest purpose to be my God. I must think of him in this way at the risk of losing eternal salvation. My heart must not build upon anything else or trust in any other thing, be it wealth, prestige, wisdom, might, piety, or anything else. Second, I give thanks for his infinite compassion by which he has come to me in such a fatherly way and, unasked, unbidden, and unmerited, has offered to be my God, to care for me, and to be my comfort, guardian, help, and strength in every time of need. We poor mortals have sought so many gods and would have to seek them still if he did not

enable us to hear him openly tell us in our own language that he intends to be our God. How could we ever-in all eternity-thank him enough! Third, I confess and acknowledge my great sin and ingratitude for having so shamefully despised such sublime teachings and such a precious gift throughout my whole life, and for having fearfully provoked his wrath by countless acts of idolatry. I repent of these and ask for his grace. Fourth, I pray and say: "O my God and Lord, help me by thy grace to learn and understand thy commandments more fully every day and to live by them in sincere confidence. Preserve my heart so that I shall never again become forgetful and ungrateful, that I may never seek after other gods or other consolation on earth or in any creature, but cling truly and solely to thee, my only God. Amen, dear Lord God and Father. Amen."

Afterward, if time and inclination permit, the Second Commandment likewise in four strands, like this: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain," etc. First, I learn that I must keep God's name in honor, holiness, and beauty; not to swear, curse, not to be boastful or seek honor and repute for myself, but humbly to invoke his name, to pray, praise, and extol it, and to let it be my only honor and glory that he is my God and that I am his lowly creature and unworthy servant. Second, I give thanks to him for these precious gifts, that he has revealed his name to me and bestowed it upon me, that I can glory in his name and be called God's servant and creature, etc., that his name is my refuge like a mighty fortress to which the righteous man can flee and find protection, as Solomon says. Third, I confess and acknowledge that I have grievously and shamefully sinned against this commandment all my life. I have not only failed to invoke, extol, and honor his holy name, but have also been ungrateful for such gifts and have, by swearing, lying, and betraying, misused them in the pursuit of shame and sin. This I bitterly regret and ask grace and forgiveness, etc. Fourth, I ask for help and strength henceforth to learn this commandment and to be preserved from such evil ingratitude, abuse, and sin against his name, and that I may be found grateful in revering and honoring his name.

I repeat here what I previously said in reference to the Lord's Prayer: if in the midst of such thoughts the Holy Spirit begins to preach in your heart with rich, enlightening thoughts, honor him by letting go of this written scheme; be still and listen to him who can do better than you can. Remember what he says and note it well and you will behold wondrous things in the law of God, as David says.

The Third Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." I learn from this, first of all, that the sabbath day has not been instituted for the sake of being idle or indulging in worldly pleasures, but in order that we may keep it holy. However, it is not sanctified by our works and actions our works are not holy-but by the word of God, which alone is wholly pure and sacred and which sanctifies everything that comes in contact with it, be it time, place, person, labor, rest, etc. According to St. Paul, who says that every creature is consecrated by word and prayer, I Timothy 4, our works are consecrated through the word. I realize therefore that on the sabbath I must, above all, hear and contemplate God's word. Thereafter I should give thanks in my own words, praise God for all his benefits, and pray for myself and for the whole world. He who so conducts himself on the sabbath day keeps it holy. He who fails to do so is worse than the person who works on the sabbath.

Second, I thank God in this commandment for his great and beautiful goodness and grace which he has given us in the preaching of his word. And he has instructed us

to make use of it, especially on the sabbath day, for the meditation of the human heart can never exhaust such a treasure. His word is the only light in the darkness of this life, a word of life, consolation, and supreme blessedness. Where this precious and saving word is absent, nothing remains but a fearsome and terrifying darkness, error and faction, death and every calamity, and the tyranny of the devil himself, as we can see with our own eyes every day.

Third, I confess and acknowledge great sin and wicked ingratitude on my part because all my life I have made disgraceful use of the sabbath and have thereby despised his precious and dear word in a wretched way. I have been too lazy, listless, and uninterested to listen to it, let alone to have desired it sincerely or to have been grateful for it. I have let my dear God proclaim his word to me in vain, have dismissed the noble treasure, and have trampled it underfoot. He has tolerated this in his great and divine mercy and has not ceased in his fatherly, divine love and faithfulness to keep on preaching to me and calling me to the salvation of my soul. For this I repent and ask for grace and forgiveness.

Fourth, I pray for myself and for the whole world that the gracious Father may preserve us in his holy word and not withdraw it from us because of our sin, ingratitude, and laziness. May he preserve us from factious spirits and false teachers, and may he send faithful and honest laborers into his harvest, that is, devout pastors and preachers. May he grant us grace humbly to hear, accept, and honor their words as his own words and to offer our sincere thanks and praise.

The Fourth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother." First, I learn to acknowledge God, my Greater; how wondrously he has created me, body and soul; and how he has given me life through my parents and has inspired in them the desire to care for me, the fruit of their bodies, with all their power. He has brought me into this world, has sustained and cared for me, nurtured and educated me with great diligence, carefulness, and concern, through danger, trouble, and hard work. To this moment he protects me, his creature, and helps me in countless dangers and troubles. It is as though he were creating me anew every moment. But the devil does not willingly concede us one single moment of life.

Second, I thank the rich and gracious Greater on behalf of myself and all the world that he has established and assured in the commandment the increase and preservation of the human race, that is, of households and of states. Without these two institutions or governments the world could not exist a single year, because without government there can be no peace, and where there is no peace there can be no family; without family, children cannot be begotten or raised, and fatherhood and motherhood would cease to be. It is the purpose of this commandment to guard and preserve both family and state, to admonish children and subjects to be obedient, and to enforce it, too, and to let no violation go unpunished-otherwise children would have disrupted the family long ago by their disobedience, and subjects would have disorganized the state and laid it to waste for they outnumber parents and rulers. There are no words to fully describe the benefit of this commandment.

Third, I confess and lament my wicked disobedience and sin; in defiance of God's commandment I have not honored or obeyed my parents; I have often provoked and offended them, have been impatient with their parental discipline, have been resentful and scornful of their loving admonition and have rather gone along with loose

company and evil companions. God himself condemns such disobedient children and withholds from them a long life; many of them succumb and perish in disgrace before they reach adulthood. Whoever does not obey father and mother must obey the executioner or otherwise come, through God's wrath, to an evil end, etc. Of all this I repent and ask for grace and forgiveness.

Fourth, I pray for myself and for all the world that God would bestow his grace and pour his blessing richly upon the family and the state. Grant that from this time on we may be devout, honor our parents, obey our superiors, and resist the devil when he entices us to be disobedient and rebellious, and so may we help improve home and nation by our actions and thus preserve the peace, all to the praise and glory of God for our own benefit and for the prosperity of all. Grant that we may acknowledge these his gifts and be thankful for them.

At this point we should add a prayer for our parents and superiors, that God may grant them understanding and wisdom to govern and rule us in peace and happiness. May he preserve them from tyranny, from riot and fury, and turn them to honor God's word and not oppress it, nor persecute anyone or do injustice. Such excellent gifts must be sought by prayer, as St. Paul teaches; otherwise the devil will reign in the palace and everything fall into chaos and confusion.

If you are a father or mother, you should at this point remember your children and the workers in your household. Pray earnestly to the dear Father, who has set you in an office of honor in his name and intends that you be honored by the name "father." Ask that he grant you grace and blessing to look after and support your wife, children, and servants in a godly and Christian manner. May he give you wisdom and strength to train them well in heart and will to follow your instruction with obedience. Both are God's gifts, your children and the way they flourish, that they turn out well and that they remain so. Otherwise the home is nothing but a pigsty and school for rascals, as one can see among the uncouth and godless.

The Fifth Commandment: "You shall not kill." Here I learn, first of all, that God desires me to love my neighbor, so that I do him no bodily harm, either by word or action, neither injure nor take revenge upon him in anger, vexation, envy, hatred, or for any evil reason, but realize that I am obliged to assist and counsel him in every bodily need. In this commandment God commands me to protect my neighbor's body and in turn commands my neighbor to protect my own. As Sirach says, "He has committed to each of us his neighbor".

Second, I give thanks for such ineffable love, providence, and faithfulness toward me by which he has placed this mighty shield and wall to protect my physical safety. All are obliged to care for me and protect me, and I, in turn, must behave likewise toward others. He upholds this command and, where it is not observed, he has established the sword as punishment for those who do not live up to it. Were it not for this excellent commandment and ordinance, the devil would instigate such a massacre among men that no one could live in safety for a single hour-as happens when God becomes angry and inflicts punishment upon a disobedient and ungrateful world.

Third, I confess and lament my own wickedness and that of the world, not only that we are so terribly ungrateful for such fatherly love and solicitude toward us-but what is especially scandalous, that we do not acknowledge this commandment and teaching, are unwilling to learn it, and neglect it as though it did not concern us or we had no part

in it. We amble along complacently, feel no remorse that in defiance of this commandment we neglect our neighbor, and, yes, we desert him, persecute, injure, or even kill him in our thoughts. We indulge in anger, rage, and villainy as though we were doing a fine and noble thing. Really, it is high time that we started to deplore and bewail how much we have acted like rogues and like unseeing, unruly, and unfeeling persons who kick, scratch, tear, and devour one another like furious beasts and pay no heed to this serious and divine command, etc.

Fourth, I pray the dear Father to lead us to an understanding of this his sacred commandment and to help us keep it and live in accordance with it. May he preserve us from the murderer who is the master of every form of murder and violence. May he grant us his grace that we and all others may treat each other in kindly, gentle, charitable ways, forgiving one another from the heart, bearing each other's faults and shortcomings in a Christian and brotherly manner, and thus living together in true peace and concord, as the commandment teaches and requires us to do.

The Sixth Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery." Here I learn once more what God intends and expects me to do, namely, to live chastely, decently, and temperately, both in thoughts and in words and actions, and not to disgrace any man's wife, daughter, or maidservant. More than this, I ought to assist, save, protect, and guard marriage and decency to the best of my ability; I should silence the idle thoughts of those who want to destroy and slander their reputation. All this I am obliged to do, and God expects me not only to leave my neighbor's wife and family unmolested, but I owe it to my neighbor to preserve and protect his good character and honor, just as I would want my neighbor to do for me and mine in keeping with this commandment.

Second, I thank my faithful and dear Father for his grace and benevolence by which he accepts my husband, son, servant, wife, daughter, maidservant into his care and protection and forbids so sternly and firmly anything that would bring them into disrepute. He protects and upholds this commandment and does not leave violations unpunished, even though he himself has to act if someone disregards and violates the commandment and precept. No one escapes him; he must either pay the penalty or eventually atone for such lust in the fires of hell. God desires chastity and will not tolerate adultery. That can be seen every day when the impenitent and profligate are overtaken by the wrath of God and perish miserably. Otherwise it would be impossible to guard one's wife, child, and servants against the devil's filthiness for a single hour or preserve them in honor and decency. What would happen would be unbridled immorality and beastliness, as happens when God in his wrath withdraws his hand and permits everything to go to wrack and ruin.

Third, I confess and acknowledge my sin, my own and that of all the world, how I have sinned against this commandment my whole life in thought, word, and action. Not only have I been ungrateful for these excellent teachings and gifts, but I have complained and rebelled against the divine requirement of such decency and chastity, that God has not permitted all sorts of fornication and rascality to go unchecked and unpunished. He will not allow marriage to be despised, ridiculed, or condemned, etc. Sins against this commandment are, above all others, the grossest and most conspicuous and cannot be covered up or whitewashed. For this I am sorry, etc.

Fourth, I pray for myself and all the world that God may grant us grace to keep this commandment gladly and cheerfully in order that we might ourselves live in chastity and also help and support others to do likewise.

Then I continue with the other commandments as I have time or opportunity or am in the mood for it. As I have said before, I do not want anyone to feel bound by my words or thoughts. I only want to offer an example for those who may wish to follow it; let anyone improve it who is able to do so and let him meditate either upon all commandments at one time or on as many as he may desire. For the mind, once it is seriously occupied with a matter, be it good or evil, can ponder more in one moment than the tongue can recite in ten hours or the pen write in ten days. There is something quick, subtle, and mighty about the mind and soul. It is able to review the Ten Commandments in their fourfold aspect very rapidly if it wants to do so and is in earnest.

The Seventh Commandment: "You shall not steal." First, I can learn here that I must not take my neighbor's property from him or possess it against his will, either in secret or openly. I must not be false or dishonest in business, service, or work, nor profit by fraud, but must support myself by the sweat of my brow and eat my bread in honor. Furthermore, I must see to it that in any of the above named ways my neighbor is not defrauded, just as I wish for myself. I also learn in this commandment that God, in his fatherly solicitude, sets a protective hedge around my goods and solemnly prohibits anyone to steal from me. Where that is ignored, he has imposed a penalty and has placed the gallows and the rope in the hands of Jack the hangman. Where that cannot be done, God himself metes out punishment and they become beggars in the end, as the proverb says, "Who steals in his youth, goes begging in old age," or, "Stolen gain goes down the drain."

In addition I give thanks for his steadfast goodness in that he has given such excellent teachings, assurance, and protection to me and to all the world. If it were not for his protection, not a penny or a crumb of bread would be left in the house.

Third, I confess my sins and ingratitude in such instances where I have wronged, deprived, or cheated anyone in my life.

Fourth, I ask that he grant to me and all the world grace to learn from this commandment, to ponder it, and to become better people, so that there may be less theft, robbery, usury, cheating, and injustice and that the Judgment Day, for which all saints and the whole creation pray, Romans 8, shall soon bring this to an end. Amen

The Eighth Commandment: "You shall not bear false witness." This teaches us, first of all, to be truthful to each other, to shun lies and calumnies, to be glad to speak well of each other, and to delight in hearing what is good about others. Thus a wall has been built around our good reputation and integrity to protect it against malicious gossip and deceitful tongues; God will not let that go unpunished, as he has said in the other commandments.

We owe him thanks both for the teachings and the protection which he has graciously provided for us.

Third, we confess and ask forgiveness that we have spent our lives in ingratitude and sin and have maligned our neighbor with false and wicked talk, though we owe him the same preservation of honor and integrity which we desire for ourselves.

Fourth, we ask for help from now on to keep the commandment and for a healing tongue, etc. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." Similarly, "his wife," etc.

This teaches us first that we shall not dispossess our neighbor of his goods under pretense of legal claims, or lure away, alienate, or extort what is his, but help him to keep what is his, just as we wish to be done for ourselves. It is also a protection against the subtleties and chicaneries of shrewd manipulators who will receive their punishment in the end. Second, we should render thanks to him. Third, we should repentantly and sorrowfully confess our sins. Fourth, we should ask for help and strength devoutly to keep such divine commandments.

These are the Ten Commandments in their fourfold aspect, namely, as a school text, song book, penitential book, and prayer book. They are intended to help the heart come to itself and grow zealous in prayer. Take care, however, not to undertake all of this or so much that one becomes weary in spirit. Likewise, a good prayer should not be lengthy or drawn out, but frequent and ardent. It is enough to consider one section or half a section which kindles a fire in the heart. This the Spirit will grant us and continually instruct us in when, by God's word, our hearts have been cleared and freed of outside thoughts and concerns.

Nothing can be said here about the part of faith and Holy Scriptures because there would be no end to what could be said. With practice one can take the Ten Commandments on one day, a psalm or chapter of Holy Scripture the next day, and use them as flint and steel to kindle a flame in the heart.

Praying The Creed

If you have more time, or the inclination, you may treat the Creed in the same manner and make it into a garland of four strands. The Creed, however, consists of three main parts or articles, corresponding to the three Persons of the Divine Majesty, as it has been so divided in the Catechism and elsewhere.

The First Article

Here, first of all, a great light shines into your heart if you permit it to and teaches you in a few words what all the languages of the world and a multitude of books cannot describe or fathom in words, namely, who you are, whence you came, whence came heaven and earth. You are God's creation, his handiwork, his workmanship. That is, of yourself and in yourself you are nothing, can do nothing, know nothing, are capable of nothing. What were you a thousand years ago? What were heaven and earth six thousand years ago? Nothing, just as that which will never be created is nothing. But what you are, know, can do, and can achieve is God's creation, as you confess by word of mouth. Therefore you have nothing to boast of before God except that you are nothing and he is your Creator who can annihilate you at any moment. Reason knows nothing of such a light. Many great people have sought to know what heaven and earth, man and creatures are and have found no answer. But here it is declared and faith affirms that God has created everything out of nothing. Here is the soul's garden of

pleasure, along whose paths we enjoy the works of God-but it would take too long to describe all that.

Furthermore, we should give thanks to God that in his kindness he has created us out of nothing and provides for our daily needs out of nothing-has made us to be such excellent beings with body and soul, intelligence, five senses, and has ordained us to be masters of earth, of fish, bird, and beast, etc. Here consider Genesis, chapters one to three.

Third, we should confess and lament our lack of faith and gratitude in failing to take this to heart, or to believe, ponder, and acknowledge it, and having been more stupid than unthinking beasts.

Fourth, we pray for a true and confident faith that sincerely esteems and trusts God to be our Creator, as this article declares.

The Second Article

Again a great light shines forth and teaches us how Christ, God's Son, has redeemed us from death which, after the creation, had become our lot through Adam's fall and in which we would have perished eternally. Now think: just as in the first article you were to consider yourself one of God's creatures and not doubt it, now you must think of yourself as one of the redeemed and never doubt that. Emphasize one word above all others, for instance, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Likewise, suffered for us, died for us, arose for us. All this is ours and pertains to us; that us includes yourself, as the word of God declares.

Second, you must be sincerely grateful for such grace and rejoice in your salvation.

Third, you must sorrowfully lament and confess your wicked unbelief and mistrust of such a gift. Oh, what thoughts will come to mind-the idolatry you have practiced repeatedly, how much you have made of praying to the saints and of innumerable good works of yours which have opposed such salvation.

Fourth, pray now that God will preserve you from this time forward to the end in true and pure faith in Christ our Lord.

The Third Article

This is the third great light which teaches us where such a Creator and Redeemer may be found and plainly encountered in this world, and what this will all come to in the end. Much could be said about this, but here is a summary: Where the holy Christian church exists, there we can find God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Holy Spirit, that is, him who daily sanctifies us through the forgiveness of sins, etc. The church exists where the word of God concerning such faith is rightly preached and confessed.

Again you have occasion here to ponder long about everything that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the church every day, etc. Therefore be thankful that you have been called and have come into such a church. Confess and lament your lack of faith and gratitude, that you have neglected all this, and pray for a true and steadfast faith

that will remain and endure until you come to that place where all endures forever, that is, beyond the resurrection from the dead, in life eternal. Amen.

Note: *This letter is widely reproduced, including J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Eds., Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 43. "Devotional Writings II" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968). According to scholars, the section on the Creed was not included in the original publication, but was added very soon after. Various forms of his devotional writings on the Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments and the Creed appeared as early as 1520, and in an adapted form was included in his Personal Prayer Book, which appeared as early as 1522. Other writings concerning prayer are included in a number of his other writings, including his commentaries on the Psalms.*

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Martin Luther's "Daily Prayers"

<http://www.cph.org/t-topic-catechism-dailyprayers.aspx>

Daily Prayers

How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening

Morning Prayer

In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.

Evening Prayer

In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.

How the head of the family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks.

Asking a Blessing

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, [O Lord,] and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. (Ps. 145:15–16).

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Returning Thanks

Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently and with folded hands say:

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. [He] gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the

strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love. (Ps. 136:1, 25; 147:9–11)

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Pressure Points (February 2012)

<http://blogs.lcms.org//2012/pressure-points-february-2012>

on January 26, 2012

With Dr. Bruce Hartung

Q: *Jeffrey Means in his book Trauma and Evil describes silence as a form of evil. Evil! Our silence in speaking out against evil can be considered a sin of omission when our voices need to be heard. When we do not need to be heard (gossip, breaking the Eighth Commandment, etc.), then silence is godly. In respect to spiritual warfare, Satan prefers our silence, but God calls us to be light in the darkness.*

In this past year alone I have learned of three brother pastors being caught in sexual misconduct of one form or another and subsequently (and appropriately) removed from [the] roster. In hearing about these brothers, I have become more aware of my own vulnerability. I realize there are not simply deep spiritual issues involved here, but in fact deep spiritual battles being waged against us by Satan himself. I can tell you that I have been Satan's target more during my ministry than in the years before. At least it seems that way. To retreat from speaking out against Satan and his minions would allow us to enjoy our proverbial ignorant bliss. To speak out against Satan puts us even more in the line of fire. I choose to speak and pray for God's kingdom to come. So, please pray for us as I write this and as we speak out and deal with this reality.

I remember one of our professors ... at seminary told our graduating class that "if any of you think you are impervious to sexual misconduct, then you do not understand the nature of spiritual warfare."

Could you please elaborate on the reality of this spiritual battle and other spiritual battles?

A: Your reference to my pastoral counselor colleague Jeff Mean's book, *Trauma and Evil*, is a valued reference. I hope that many visitors to this column will have an opportunity to read it.

Your raising the question and issue of spiritual warfare is extremely crucial and therefore very important. It suggests that we focus on issues of living as not just being at a horizontal level — issues relating to humankind. It also suggests that we see in our living and in our struggles a more spiritual and cosmic implication. In that way, I think you are on target.

You are also on target when you see this as part of spiritual warfare, a term that Lutherans have not traditionally used. I hope we learn to use it! There is a battle involved. St. Paul is quite clear on this point:

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, ESV).



Hartung

At the same time that the battle rages, we do have weaponry and support. Returning to Ephesians 6: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11, ESV).

Clothed with the righteousness of Christ and His truth, our feet ready for Christ's peace, shielded with faith bestowed by the Holy Spirit and holding the Word of God, we enter this warfare. I encourage you to read Eph. 6:10-20 in its entirety.

All this time we hold fast to the promise: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39, ESV).

Given the view pictured by St. Paul and your thoughts about it, I hope to devote the next column or two specifically to this topic. Readers are encouraged to contribute.

In the meantime, you and those close to you are indeed in my prayers. Thanks for your courage to speak about these things.

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Posted Jan. 26, 2012

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Pressure Points (March 2012)

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2012/pressure-points-march-2012>

on March 8, 2012

With Dr. Bruce Hartung

This column continues the discussion of the February 2012 "Pressure Points" concerning spiritual warfare, which is available at <http://reporter.lcms.org/?19589>.

Following are two responses to last month's column (both in italics), and my comments about each of them. The first is from a colleague who is a psychologist and Roman Catholic priest ministering in the area of addictions – especially among those in religious vocations.

"There is no question that evil forces, even satanic ones, are present and active in this world, even though we know the final victory is already won by Christ. At the same time, this language of spiritual warfare and the presence of Satan can be used in non-helpful ways by people who are struggling with addictive behavior. They will say, in effect, 'Satan made me do it.' There is a sense that this could be true. But it also is used, in this case, to keep away from assuming personal responsibility for the behavior involved. It is easy to say, 'Well, the devil got to me.' As true as that might in some instances be, we will not get anywhere until 'I am responsible' is said and meant. Satan can never be used as an excuse to keep from taking personal responsibility for one's behavior."

I think this is a very important point as the discussion about spiritual warfare continues.

Recognizing the presence of Satan's influence on others and on ourselves does not forfeit our personal responsibility and our culpability. It is for this that we flee to the cross of Christ (and, hopefully, utilize spiritual directors and/or confessors to specifically claim ownership of "our fault, our most grievous fault").



Hartung

From the early Genesis story of the fall of humankind, Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve.

"The Devil made me do it" or "the woman made me do it" are clear statements of people who simply are not accepting responsibility for their own actions. This kind of blaming others for our actions, rather than taking responsibility for them, is a universal defense mechanism that is employed much too much.

I can say that I withdrew in irritation with my wife and stopped talking to her for a while because she did not respond to me in as caring and empathic way as I needed and would have liked. That kind of language blames her for my behavior. It suggests not only that if she would respond differently I would also, but that she was actually responsible for what I did. In short, my behavior becomes her fault.

As my colleague points out, we can do the same kind of thing with Satan. And if we do, we follow the pattern of our first parents.

It is, thus, an important line to draw when we are putting on the lens of spiritual warfare. If we use Satan's presence to excuse our behavior, we are excusing our own bad behavior rather than confessing it. Also, we are rationalizing what we have done and its effects, rather than taking responsibility for the impact of our behavior.

"Somehow you have hit an important chord for me. I need to be thinking more about how the forces of the evil one get at me. I don't want to blame Satan for what I do. I do want to recognize its influence on me, though. Your raising this is sobering. I want to be more aware. As a pastor I believe I haven't put these things together (the evil one and myself) and have always thought of myself as above this as a pastor. Pretty naive, huh? I am looking forward to more of our talking about this."

As this topic has emerged for me over the years, one of the most sobering things that has been on my spiritual heart is the recognition that I always need to be on guard about being influenced by satanic spirits. I can no longer simply assume that I am immune. This recognition has driven me more to Christ, but the idea of my naiveté in this matter (shades of what you have shared) is humbling and a bit daunting.

I do hope our readers continue to chime in on this.

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Posted March 8, 2012

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Pressure Points (April 2012)

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2012/pressure-points-april-2012>

on March 29, 2012

With Dr. Bruce Hartung

The last two columns related to spiritual warfare elicited a number of different reflections on ways that readers have fought in this battle, as well as suggestions they offer as encouragement for others. To read February's "Pressure Points," go to <http://reporter.lcms.org/?19589>, and to <http://reporter.lcms.org/?19742> for the March column. Readers' comments that follow are in italic type and my response to each is in regular type. *Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis should be required reading to gain insight into spiritual warfare. It should be reread every few years, so you don't forget the tempter's powers. He knows your every weakness and is ready to take advantage.*

Agreed!



Hartung

What came to mind [in reading your column] is the usefulness of the examen process over time; i.e., at the end of each day, coming before God in the fullness of His love and inviting His light to shine on our day ... for what was I most grateful? Least grateful?

*Where did I extend love? Where did I not? There are a variety of pairings for the questions, but when I journal about them daily, it doesn't take long to see unhealthy patterns of thinking, feeling, doing that are at work and God provides the insight needed to truly repent and to live aware and responsibly as a Christ-follower. A very simple book that describes the process in the context of three people's experiences is *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* by Dennis Linn.*

Two things are central in this reader's response: 1) a time at the end of the day for reflection about the day in an organized and meditational way, and 2) a journaling process through which a person keeps a record of his or her reflections. The journal itself then promotes further reflection and, as the reader suggests, allows for the recognition of patterns and repetitive concerns and issues. Add to this a self-examination process and journaling meditation on a portion of Scripture, and I think you have a process with considerable power – Holy Spirit-driven to strengthen a person spiritually. I will take the reader's word on the book reference, since I am not familiar with it.

I have prayed in the Lectio Divina process for a number of years. This involves reading a scriptural text, focusing on a particular word or cluster in the text, meditating on the text, prayer in response to the text, and silent resting as the meaning of the text really impacts you. Following this is the development of how all this moves into my daily life. This is the classic lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio and, for some, operatio. Most important for me is that this is not so much reading the Scriptures to gain more factual knowledge about what is in them, but rather the use of the Scriptures in a way that forms and changes me.

This is a process dating back to the ancient church. Its focus is on a deeper reflection on the Scripture, with specific application to one's personal formation. If our readers wish to consider this method, one reading to seek is *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* by Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy Wynkoop (Paulist Press), for both theory and practical application. This is a venerable method of spiritual reflection, formation and support.

Having a spiritual director has been one of the more important things I have done to put on the "whole armor of God." To have someone walk with me who actually asks me how I am doing spiritually has become a very important thing for me. I encourage everyone to consider doing this. Living in this world is often pretty hard for me. I need one-on-one conversations to help me walk through my life in a way that is, I pray, more consistent with God's will for me. My pastor often is this person for me. He pays attention to the spiritual needs that I have and gives me opportunity to talk about my walk with Christ at my side.

You give me opportunity to reinforce the need for individual people to utilize others in the community of the followers of Christ. Gearing up for spiritual warfare is not just an individual process. It involves utilizing the whole community of the baptized.

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Posted March 29, 2012

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Pressure Points (July 2012)

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2012/pressure-points-july-2012>

on June 29, 2012

With Dr. Bruce Hartung

Q: *I was following some of your previous columns on "spiritual warfare." They got me wondering if some of what I am going through is that. When I have previously thought of "spiritual war-fare" I have thought of us doing battle against the principalities and powers of this world. But I believe you have opened another dimension to the battle. That dimension is what goes on within me. I want you to comment more on that, and here is why. I am a pastor. I am also driven by feelings of unworthiness. These come over me especially when I have done something that I think is wrong. Also, there are things in my life that I continue to do that I think are wrong, but I feel I don't have much control over them. These thoughts and feelings plague me. When I preach or teach I feel a little like a fraud (perhaps that is too strong, but it really is there for me). I speak God's forgiveness and love but I do not really experience it. This saps my energy and depresses me.*

I don't want you to tell me what to do about this. But I do want to know if you think this qualifies as spiritual warfare.

A: It does. While you indicate that you do not want me to tell you what to do about this, I am going to anyway, in the hope that my suggestions will be helpful and lead to action on your part. I offer three suggestions.

One is that you pick up Dr. John Kleinig's book, *Grace Upon Grace*, available from Concordia Publishing House. Dr. Kleinig's understanding of this is sound, insightful and helpful. When you read about spirituality as he understands it within the Lutheran tradition, you will begin to see that one place of focused spiritual warfare is indeed within us — what he calls "conscience." If Satan can get to any of us, so that we begin to question and doubt the forgiveness and love that actually comes to us as a gift of God, then Satan has a toehold. This will, of course, work on us to rob us of energized ministry. But reading the book should not be the end of what you do.

Second, talking this out with a pastoral counselor or sharing it with another pastor who is wise and mature is a very important step. Going to a father-confessor, spiritual director or pastoral counselor is critical. That is because it allows you to speak out loud to someone else (not just a private conversation in your closet) about that with which you struggle. You specifically name what it is that you lay at the foot of the cross. I have known many folks who have never spoken out loud about what they do or think or feel that vexes their conscience. Nor have they ever heard the forgiveness of Christ spoken directly to their struggle. This is spiritual warfare, because it is this inner conflict and vexation that Satan uses. In the body of Christ, we (including you) should be using this core resource.

Third, I want to share with you another reader response, which follows.



Hartung

Q: *Thanks so much for bringing to light the real challenge of ministry in our time. Too often pastors and [laypeople] alike assume that their chief problems are financial or psychological, when at the root of them is the church's old evil foe — who continually seeks to work his havoc, undermining Gospel proclamation at every opportunity.*

Likewise, there is a lot of misinformation circulating regarding the proper Christian response to demonic activity. Doxology: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel is hosting Dr. John Kleinig ... for an overnight pastors conference on spiritual warfare in two locations this October.

A: Check out more about this conference — being offered Oct. 9-10 in Waukesha, Wis., and Oct. 11-12 in Schuyler, Neb. — at www.doxology.us.

The following is from information about that conference:

“The outcome of [the] battle is not decided by the victories of the Church in its crusades for morality, justice and truth in the world but by the victory of Christ with His Word and by His Spirit in the conscience of every Christian.”

I think this speaks directly to your struggle.

The Rev. Bruce M. Hartung, Ph.D., is associate dean of Ministerial Formation and director of the M.Div. and Alternate Route programs at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He can be reached at hartungb@csl.edu.

Posted June 29, 2012

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Unlocking the Prison of Guilt.

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3169>

Unlocking THE Prison OF Guilt

by Tim Wesemann

Consider the following items:

- A pair of boots
- Thirty pounds of frozen meat
- Four ballpoint pens
- Blankets
- A few pennies
- A fund totaling more than \$3.5 million

The list contains an odd assortment of items. Yet they have something in common. Give up? The answer may surprise you. The common denominator is guilt.

In 1811 the United States government created “The Conscience Fund.” People had been sending in letters filled with money they believed they owed the government. Over the years, the fund has accumulated over \$3.5 million.

The government received \$50 one day from a man who had stolen frozen meat, a pair of cavalry boots, and a few other items from the army in the 1940s. A former IRS employee sent \$1 to cover the cost of four ballpoint pens she took home from the office. There was \$10 sent as payment for blankets an ex-GI stole during World War II. In the letter that accompanied the money, he said he couldn’t rest and wanted to be ready to meet God.

Then, there was the dollar bill sent in by a man who felt guilty about putting a few pennies on a railroad track to be flattened by a train. He also confessed he had used a dime or a quarter in a high-school silver-coating experiment. The writer heard there was a law against defacing money and he hoped to redeem himself as a law-abiding citizen.

If you started a conscience fund for your life, what would it hold? How much money would that fund accumulate as you try to free yourself from the guilt of mistakes you've made? What "borrowed" objects would you deposit there? What memories would be on display in your guilty conscience gallery?

Perhaps the reason you're holding this booklet is that you're dealing with guilt. Nearly all of us struggle with guilt feelings at times. "If you're like me," says Dr. Leo Buscaglia, "you may forget your own telephone number, but have an unfailing memory for past mistakes you've made." Oh, there are some people who seem to lack a conscience about anything and act like guilt is not part of their lives. But I'll let you in on a secret—feeling guilty and being guilty are not the same thing!

Some people seem to know how to properly deal with guilt and can move forward confidently in their lives. Have you figured out their secret to dealing with guilt? That's what we want to look at in the following pages.

Guilt can be disabling. It affects us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It changes the way we react to other people. Guilt attacks us, wounding our spirits and draining the joy from our lives.

If you can relate, hang on, because there is help and hope! There is good news if you feel like guilt is burying you alive. As you keep reading, I hope you will feel the guilt leave your mind and body like the pressure of air being released from a tire.

Consider another list. Think about all the different things people feel guilty about:

- Arriving late
- Living comfortably when so many people need so much
- Eating too much
- Spending too much
- Saying or doing something hurtful (recently or in the past)
- Parental guilt - Part I (not measuring up to be a good parent)
- Parental guilt - Part II (not living up to parents' expectations)
- Forgetting to thank someone who acted kindly
- An addiction
- A secret character flaw
- Someone else's death (thinking it was caused or could have been prevented)
- Not feeling guilty
- Not having paid for this free booklet.

There may be as many causes for guilt (right or wrong) as there are people who read this book. You can add your own guilt-trip itinerary to the list. As you look over this list and consider your own additions, do you notice that sometimes we feel guilty when we haven't done anything wrong? Why do we feel guilty about so many things?

While some people seem to be exceptions to the rule, most people seem to be hard-wired with the sense of right and wrong we call a “conscience.” People say they have a “clean conscience” or a “guilty conscience” or even “no conscience,” or that “my conscience is bothering me” or “my conscience is telling me....” We all have it. If your heart is beating, you have dealt with guilt.

There are many reasons you might be or feel guilty. Sure, guilt can serve a good purpose.

As the popular essayist Max Lucado writes, “Guilt is the nerve-ending of the heart. It yanks us back when we are too near the fire. Godly sorrow ‘makes people change their hearts and lives.’” (*A Gentle Thunder*, p. 173).

Therapist Dr. Susan Forward says that “guilt is an essential part of being a feeling, responsible person. It’s a tool of the conscience that, in its undistorted form, registers discomfort and self-reproach if we’ve done something to violate our personal or social code of ethics.” Guilt can motivate you to abide by your code of ethics.

But if, instead of inspiring growth, guilt burdens you and prevents you from growing and living your life, something is wrong. You need to know that there is hope.

Imprisoned by Guilt

You may never have been a prison inmate or inside the walls of a jail, but I suggest that you’ve been confined to a tiny, locked cell. You see, guilt can be a prison. You can put up emotional, mental, or spiritual walls between yourself and others or between yourself and God. Sometimes those walls create a fort from which you shoot angry arrows at others or bomb your self-image to pieces.

At times it can seem as if you’re like a criminal on trial and guilt plays the role of prosecuting attorney, judge, and jury. Guilt accuses, convicts, and condemns you to live behind the prison walls you’ve built.

Just as some criminals repeat their offenses and return to prison again and again, so you may be a repeat guilt offender. Maybe you’ve gone in and out of prison all your life. Maybe you’ve been sentenced to remain in prison for years. Or perhaps you’re a lucky one—you’ve served time, been released, and your life is changed as you live in freedom.

Even if right now you are an inmate in a guilt prison, I pray you will be released by the end of this booklet and find the freedom intended for you.

I’m just as guilty as anyone else, and the principles I’ll mention, which others explained to me, continue to help me deal with my own guilt.

Poisonous Guilt

Guilt not only confines you from the outside, it also condemns you from within. Like a poison flowing through your body, it affects every part of you. It attacks your mind, causing you to see yourself as inferior, worthless, or evil. It can make you think others are looking down on you or

judging you, even if they don't know your situation. Your mind tells you to react defensively in conversations with people who know nothing of your guilt.

Guilt also attacks your heart. You may be so paranoid you think everyone around you knows you feel guilty and is talking behind your back. Guilt can rob you of joy because it weighs you down. It can make an it-won't-matter-tomorrow problem feel like an earth-shattering, must-solve-right-now dilemma!

The poison of guilt also attacks your body. It can cause sleeplessness, nervous tension, or an upset stomach. Guilt is truly a sickening poison.

True or False?

In dealing with guilt, we must also discuss the difference between false guilt and true guilt. You may be plagued with unnecessary, false guilt, which means feeling guilty about things that don't call for it. If you are suffering from false guilt, you may run into the prison and lock yourself in the cell because you figure you must have done something wrong.

You may lack confidence in yourself since the poison of guilt can leave you feeling doubtful, fearful—even hopeless. Sometimes it's really hard to figure out whether your guilt is true guilt or false. Sometimes there are gray areas. Dr. Forward suggests asking yourself these questions: “Is what you did or want to do:

- malicious?
- cruel?
- abusive?
- insulting?
- belittling?
- demeaning?
- harmful to the other person's well-being?

“If you answer yes to any of the questions, the guilt you're feeling is appropriate as long as it creates feelings of remorse and not self-hatred ... But if you're doing something healthy for yourself and not trying to harm or diminish another person, then your guilt is undeserved and needs to be confronted.”

True guilt, on the other hand, takes some true grit. It takes true grit because you have to confess (that is, admit) you have really done something wrong. True guilt can result from knowing you have hurt someone. Maybe it was intentional, maybe not. Either way, you have violated your conscience by doing something that offends your sense of responsibility to the world around you. That means you have to show some true grit, confess your mistake, and be truly sorry for it.

A Story of Guilt

Dave had good reason to be completely overwhelmed by guilt. He received an invitation one day from Temptation, and he sent back an R.S.V.P. that he would be attending. So Temptation kept

sending more invitations and he continued to respond in the positive, which was truly a negative for his life.

Dave had an affair with a married woman and she became pregnant with his child. Finding out this news, Dave hoped the woman's husband would think it was his own child. But the timing was off because the husband had been out of town and couldn't have fathered the child.

When Dave realized this, he made plans to have the husband murdered. The plan succeeded. The woman moved in with Dave; the child was born, and Dave was locked up in prison. It wasn't a prison with physical walls. It was a prison of guilt. The deadly toxin running through his veins was not the usual venom that kills a man on death row, but the poison of guilt.

Dave was overcome with guilt. In fact, in all of the literature I have read, I have never come across words that describe the feelings more vividly than the way this man penned them. Visualize the picture he paints with his words:

“I know about my sins. Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long. Night and day Your hand (God) weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat.”

Have you ever seen this person staring back at you in the mirror? The pressure never lets up. The joy of life is nowhere to be found. Your strength is gone because all your thoughts are focused on the guilt of sin.

The man who wrote those words and who had the affair and planned the husband's death is better known as David, not Dave. He was a shepherd and a king. He was father to the wisest man the world has ever known: Solomon

He was a writer and a singer. He was disobedient to his God and hurtful to some of the people around him. He once lived in the prison of guilt over his mistakes. If you have a Bible, you can read the part of his story I told in condensed form here. It's in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12. I noted that David *once* lived in the prison of guilt over his mistakes. I emphasize once because of how David learned to deal with his guilt.

There are two poems, or psalms, that David wrote about this. They are also found in the Bible, in the book of Psalms, chapters 32 and 51. The words of David I quoted above convey how he was affected mentally, physically, and spiritually. His words come from these two psalms.

David wrote that at first he tried to keep quiet about his sins but discovered it was useless. His bones “felt limp.” His strength was gone. The poison of guilt consumed him and made his whole body ache. He was like a prisoner moaning the day away, alone in his cell. He felt God's hand weighing on him; clearly, God knew what he had done. Sounds like God used David's conscience to force him to deal with his guilt. I've been there, haven't you —living with a guilty conscience? There are several ways you might deal with guilt. Sometimes you might do everything you can to avoid admitting your guilt. It sounds like that's how David started. You can avoid taking responsibility by justifying or rationalizing your behavior. Maybe you blame someone else, or just come up with a good reason for doing what you did. These efforts could fall under the category of redirecting the guilt.

You might also try to bury the guilt, or stuff it down deep inside and try to forget it. Move on. Don't deal with it. Out of sight, out of mind. This may work for a while, but it will come back later—during an argument, a stressful situation, or something that jogs your memory in the right direction. The poison won't lay dormant forever. It may even attack you physically, affecting your nervous system, contributing to high blood pressure, or causing other physical difficulties.

Another way you might try to deal with guilt is to bargain or work the guilt away. Do enough good works to counter the wrong actions and the guilt should eventually be erased, right? Wrong! It doesn't work that way.

Recently, I heard a man speak about trying to deal with tremendous guilt in exactly this way. When he was a child, he accidentally shot and killed his best friend. Now, more than 20 years later, he is a rescuer with the United States Coast Guard and has saved many people's lives. He described how he has tried to make up for that childhood mistake by making his life useful—but he still feels guilty for causing his friend's death. He cannot save enough people or do enough good things to make up for that one tragedy over which he feels so much guilt.

A Story of Forgiveness

David found the prison's key and the antidote for the poison that was destroying his life. He confessed (admitted) his mistakes, expressed remorse (was truly sorry) for his wrongdoing, and then received freedom and healing from his guilt through God's mercy. God forgave David, and he was able to let go of the guilt of his mistakes.

The same key can unlock your prison. The same antidote will neutralize your poison. Confess your mistakes; be truly sorry for them, and God will have mercy and forgive you. Read that paragraph again. Let it sink in: first in your mind, then let God plant it in your heart.

Now I encourage you to read the prayer below. It was written by the forgiven offender, poet, and singer—King David. Then pray the words for yourself. That simply means to read them as though they are your words, with your heart open to God. Pray them silently or aloud—wherever you are, whomever you are with.

David uses three different words for sin in these psalms. Two of them, “iniquity” and “transgressions,” we don't use much these days. But their meanings, as David wrote them, are important.

“Sin” means missing the mark. David believed God had called him to live up to a certain standard. Perfection is the bull's-eye on the target. When he sinned, he missed the mark of God's expectation. “Transgressions” are sins done out of rebelliousness. David knew what was right (leaving other men's wives alone), yet did the wrong anyway.

“Iniquity” means sin along with its accompanying guilt. Sometimes I find it helpful in confessing and praying about the guilt in my life to use this word to specifically combine sin and guilt. Consider those definitions as you read and pray David's words.

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done

what is evil in Your sight, so that You are proved right when You speak and justified when You judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely You desire truth in the inner parts; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

“Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:1-12).

For me, that is a wonderfully freeing prayer of confession, along with a plea for forgiveness and the restoration of joy in David’s life and mine.

The psalms are not arranged chronologically in the Bible, so Psalm 32 was written after David’s confession of sin and guilt in Psalm 51.

Now read below David’s joyful words after his confession, written as he realizes God has forgiven all of his sins. Undeserving as he is, he has been rescued from the prison and cured of the poison of guilt. God forgave the guilt of his sin and made him joyful again.

“O God, You bless everyone whose sins You forgive and wipe away. You bless them by saying, “You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you.” Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long. Night and day Your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat. So I confessed my sins and told them all to You. I said, “I’ll tell the Lord each one of my sins.” Then You forgave me and took away my guilt” (Psalm 32:1-5, CEV).

God heard David’s prayer for forgiveness and release from the prison of guilt. God answered his prayer. When David confessed, “I have sinned against the lord,” he was assured that “the lord has taken away your sin” (2 Samuel 12:13-14). God would not count his sins against him! His guilt had been removed!

This freedom from guilt isn’t just for David but also for you and me.

Are You Sure?

I’ve told you how God forgave David’s sins, and that God also forgives you. I’ve said that with forgiveness comes freedom from guilt. But how do you know this applies to you? How can you be sure God will forgive you just as he forgave David?

Let me introduce you to the One who made this all possible and brings you the certainty of forgiveness. He already knows all about you, and loves you like no one else can love you. His name is Jesus Christ, and He’s the one who holds the key to release you from the prison of guilt and found the antidote to heal you from the deadly poison of your sin. You see, we’re all in the same situation: we do things we don’t want to do, and the good things we want to do, we often don’t. God knew we needed someone to save us from the hopelessness of our repeated failures. So He sent His Son, Jesus, to the world to live a perfect life, die to pay for our sins, and rise from the dead so we could be forgiven and have eternal life.

It is as though you were convicted of a crime and sentenced to death. But, instead of sending you to prison to await execution, the judge who has presided over your trial steps down from the bench and offers himself to be taken away in your place. He is executed to pay the penalty for your crime, and you are allowed to go free.

The fact that Jesus came to earth and did this on your behalf is your assurance that He will be merciful to you. He has already paid the penalty for everything you have done wrong. By believing in Him, you are freed from the prison of your guilt and cured of the poison of hopelessness.

Jesus steps between God and you, saying to God, "Judge this person, whom I love, on the basis of My perfect life, not his imperfect life." With that you are declared not guilty! You are free to go! The assurance that you're forgiven doesn't come from anything you have done, but comes only from God's love for you. He won't change His mind. You have His invincible word on it! You can make this real in your life right now by trusting Christ to forgive you. You can tell God what David did as I mentioned above. Or you may want to tell Him something like this:

God, I recognize I have fallen short of Your standards. Thanks for sending Jesus Christ to die and rise again for me. I trust His death for me as the only means of my forgiveness. Thank You for forgiving me. Please give me the complete life You said You would.

If you trust that Jesus came down from the judge's bench and paid the penalty for your sins, then you, too, can be certain God has forgiven all your sins and taken away the guilt that accompanies them. Not only does He give you the key to unlock the prison gates—but He opens the doors Himself. He personally escorts you out of the prison, past the thick walls you built, and then heals you of the guilt that had poisoned you. He walks with you and promises never to leave you.

Staying Out of Prison

You are forgiven! Now what? Are you going to walk right back into the prison of guilt? Do you feel the guilt continuing to flow through your veins? Perhaps you find it hard to really believe His words of forgiveness. Perhaps you find it impossible to forgive yourself. Sometimes I feel that way. I just feel too awful about what I've done and don't think I can ever forgive myself. I deserve to feel guilty! Then I realize that if God can forgive me, certainly I can forgive myself. I believe He gives me the power to stop punishing myself and move on.

When guilt just won't go away, often it's because you don't believe His forgiveness is real.

God's forgiveness does not depend on anything you say or do, or on how you feel or what you trust, but only on God's promise to do it. Focus on God's promise to forgive you. He will not go back on His Word.

Try re-reading this booklet, or praying David's prayers again. Write reminders to yourself and tape them on the bathroom mirror, over the kitchen sink, or on a bookmark in your favorite book. Sometimes I do this with promises from the Bible, but insert "I" or my name so I remember they are true for me:

"If we [I] confess our [my] sins, He [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our [me my] sins and purify us [me] from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

“When we were [Tim was] overwhelmed by sins [kept missing the mark], You forgave our [his] transgressions [rebelliousness]” (Psalm 65:3).

Live Confidently, Gracefully

Prolonged guilt can rob you of a confident, joyful life. As you have trusted Jesus to rescue you from sin and guilt, keep your focus on Him. Pray that God will burn this promise on your heart so you can live confidently and gracefully in His love: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). No condemnation. None. Nil. Zero. That’s one to post on the mirror and read every day!

Confidence comes through esteem found in Jesus and not in yourself. If you seek to find esteem within yourself, you’ll keep meeting disappointment. You know how it is when you try to buck up and do things right. Eventually, you will disappoint yourself because you’re not perfect. Try looking to Jesus instead. He’ll tell you that you are loved, beautiful, and worthwhile no matter what. Every day you can confess your mistakes, and He’ll remove your sins, transgressions, and iniquities through His endless forgiveness! When you take this road to freedom from the prison of guilt, you will find it ultimately leads to your eternal home in heaven—made possible by Jesus.

Another Look at The Conscience Fund

At the beginning of this book, I told you about “The Conscience Fund” set up by the government. I asked, “If you started a conscience fund for your life, what would it hold? How much money would that fund accumulate as you try to free yourself from the guilt of mistakes you’ve made? What “borrowed” objects would you deposit there? What memories would be on display in your guilty conscience gallery?”

How have your answers changed? Do you notice as you look around the gallery that the pieces are gone? It’s though someone stole them right from under your nose! That’s what happened the minute Jesus stole your heart.

Are you searching for cash in your conscience fund savings account? It disappeared the minute God created faith within you.

If you’re still searching for other items held captive in your conscience fund, you won’t find them. They’ve been set free, along with you.

You are free to go in peace! I look forward to seeing you in heaven, where guilt is not allowed!

Final Thoughts

You may be thinking—where do I go from here? First, thank Jesus for the freeing gifts He has brought you today through His Word and life. If you have a friend or family member who already believes in Jesus, share your guilt-free living good news with them. Then, look for a Bible-teaching

church to attend in your area. Maybe you have Christian friends nearby who can help you. You can also call Lutheran Hour Ministries at 1-800-876-9880, and they can help you find one.

If you don't have a Bible, put one on your shopping list! Then start reading. Some good starting points would be: The book of Psalms, the Gospel (Good News) of John, or Paul's letter to the Philippians. Pray that God will send you Christian friends, so you can encourage one another. And then go enjoy the wonderful life God has planned for you.

As you enjoy it, don't feel guilty about it! God wants you to have an abundant, forgiven, and eternal life through Jesus! You're free!

Life-Giving Words About Guilt

As you begin (or continue) your journey with Jesus, the guiltless Son of God, here are some words from the Bible about guilt, forgiveness, and hope.

“He [Jesus] Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that who ever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“Jesus said, ‘Are you tired? Worn out? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11: 28-30, The Message).

“When we were overwhelmed by sins, You forgave our transgressions” (Psalm 65:3).

“My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear ... I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin ... Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior” (Psalm 38:4, 18, 22).

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).¹⁰

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

“Lingering Guilt”

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7828PD.mp3>

Announcer: Now, our Speaker Emeritus, Pastor Ken Klaus answers a question about lingering guilt over sins that have already been forgiven. I'm Mark Eischer.

Klaus: Hello, Mark. Tell me about this listener.

Announcer: He's in his mid-forties and has been a church member for most of his life. Attends worship regularly, but he's just not sure that going to church is doing him much good.

Klaus: I'm sorry to hear that. Why does he feel that way?

Announcer: He goes to church and hears how Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And each week, he hears the pastor announce that his sins are forgiven.

Klaus: All well and good. Are we getting to the problem now?

Announcer: Yes. About ten years ago, he committed a particular sin which is a clear violation of one of God's Ten Commandments. He hasn't repeated that sin, but it continues to worry him. He knows that God wants us to obey those Commandments, including that one that he very deliberately broke so long ago.

Klaus: Now, I would hope our listener is not saying that he feels he's perfectly kept the other nine and it's just this one where he messed up. That would be a whole 'nother discussion. Does our listener ever say what that sin was?

Announcer: He does, but he also asked us not to mention the details on the air.

Klaus: Well, we certainly won't violate that. Another question: has he ever thought of confessing this particular troubling sin to his pastor?

Announcer: He has. He knows he could have private confession with his pastor, but he doesn't want to run the risk of having this sin be made public. He's afraid of having his family and business associates find out.

Klaus: Mark, I have to interrupt here. Obviously I don't know this man's pastor or priest. But I do know this: every pastor or priest that I do know takes private confession very seriously. What is said in the confessional booth stays there.

It's not something you tell others about. That would be, I think, the most grievous thing a clergyman could do. In one fell swoop, he would wipe out any trust he has with his congregation. Unless this minister has already proven himself to be untrustworthy, I would encourage our listener to make that private confession and hear his pastor pronounce the words of absolution regarding this sin that troubles him so much.

Announcer: Our listener is worried that this sin will keep him out of heaven.

Klaus: And Mark, our friend is asking the wrong question.

Announcer: I think this is the question on his heart.

Klaus: I agree, but even so it is the wrong question.

Announcer: The right question would be....?

Klaus: The right question is: "Is Jesus his Savior?"

Announcer: Because...

Klaus: Because, by trusting in Jesus as his Savior from sin, he's trusting that that sin of his was forgiven 2,000 years ago when Jesus died on Calvary's cross. Jesus forgave Peter for denying Him three times. He forgave the thief on the cross, He forgave the woman caught in adultery, He forgave Saul who had been involved in the murder of the first Christian martyr. Jesus forgives. Now, I don't know what our listener has done, but I do know what Jesus has done, and that was to atone for the sins of the whole world. That includes you, me, and our friend here.

Announcer: So what really is the problem?

Klaus: The problem is this: in contrast to those people whose consciences have become deadened by disuse--folks who think sin is no big deal-- this fellow's conscience has kicked into high gear.

Announcer: It keeps nagging at him.

Klaus: There are two dangers here: the first danger is to ignore your conscience when you have sinned.

Announcer: And the second danger?

Klaus: ...is letting your conscience continue to make you feel guilty even after God announces to you His forgiveness. They are opposite sides of the same coin... and both sides of the coin are not the will of God. God calls us to repent of our sin and He grants forgiveness on account of Christ. He delivers that forgiveness to us through His Word, through the absolution of the pastor, through the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He gives it to you and He doesn't snatch it back. Case closed, mission accomplished.

Announcer: It's as simple as that?

Klaus: It's as simple as that.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

“Prayer or Demand?”

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7906PD.mp3>

Mark: When does a prayer become more like an ultimatum? That's our discussion topic today with our Speaker Emeritus, Pastor Ken Klaus. I'm Mark Eischer.

Ken: And hello, Mark. It's good to be back with you... and the Lutheran Hour listeners' questions.

Mark: Today's question comes from a mom who wrote to us about her teenage daughter.

Ken: And what seems to be the nature of her concern?

Mark: It's her daughter's prayer life.

Ken: That sounds promising.

Mark: How so?

Ken: At least the daughter has a prayer life! What seems to be the problem?

Mark: Would you be surprised if I said it has something to do with boys?

Ken: It would surprise me more if it didn't revolve around boys. So, we're off to an interesting start here. A mother is concerned that her daughter's praying about boys?

Mark: Well, at least one in particular. She writes, "My daughter has been seeing a boy--and, no, it's not that I'm concerned that they're going too far. They have a good relationship, although I believe my daughter seems far more interested in him than he is in her.

Ken: So far, nothing all that unusual.

Mark: The mother goes on to say that she's talked to her daughter about this relationship and each time she was told, "It's OK, Mom, you don't have to worry--I'm praying about it." Mom accepted that answer for a while, but then she got to wondering what exactly the daughter was praying. Finally she asked.

Ken: Mom asked and the daughter said....

Mark: The daughter said, "Mom, I love him. I know we're meant to be together and I'm absolutely sure about it." That's why she's been praying. She wants God to make the boyfriend feel as strongly about her as she does about him. If God makes it happen, she will then believe in Him all the more and promises not to ask Him for anything else. So ... is that an appropriate prayer?

Ken: Let's start with the positive. First, it's good the girl is praying. There are a great many people who don't. Next she is praying out of a belief that the Lord actually has the power to do something in regard to her situation.

Mark: Any more positives you can think of?

Ken: I'm sure there are, but I can't think of what it might be.

Mark: OK, how about the negatives?

Ken: I have to say there is some of that. Now, I like the fact that she is talking to the Lord about her relationships. But she is hardly beginning from the proper place.

Mark: What do you mean?

Ken: Let me try to explain. If you were to come to me and ask me for ten dollars, how would you say it?

Mark: I would say, "Please." And I would treat you very respectfully.

Ken: And what would be your position?

Mark: OK, I get it. My position would be that of the person who's asking.

Ken: Right. And this girl is taking the position of an individual who is more or less making a demand. Indeed, her prayer is something like, "Lord, don't mess with me. I really like this guy, I want this guy, and You had better make it happen! Understand, I'm not threatening You, but let's just say You had better do what I say!"

Mark: Although that's an exaggeration, I agree, that pretty much is the sum and substance of her prayer. What then might she do differently?

Ken: Mark, this girl did what a lot of people do. She didn't come to God as a petitioner, she came as a demander. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, "Lord, if possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Your will be done."

And then Jesus listened to His Father... and the cup didn't pass from Him. He went to the cross and died so that all who believe in Him might be forgiven and saved.

Now, back to our young lady. Rather than praying, "Thy will be done", it seems she was praying, "My will be done."

Mark: And that's the problem.

Ken: Absolutely--unless, of course, she can see into the future and understands everything about this relationship more clearly than the Lord already does.

Mark: This has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

“Midsummer Day”

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/MidsummerDay.pdf>

HENRIC SCHARTAU

AND

THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hagglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schar tau

Translated by
S. G. HAGGLUND

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Midsummer Day

Introduction.

When a sinner has been awakened and the eyes of his understanding have been opened to see that he has been on an evil way, he also becomes aware that an innumerable multitude is found on that same way to perdition. When his heart has thereupon found peace, and when his soul has found assurance that he is on the way of life, then he looks about himself with a keen eye to find a few hidden Christians, and he listens attentively for the speech that might betray a secret disciple of Jesus, whom he get as his companion. He finds, however, that the multitude is

concerned about earthly gains and worldly pleasures, that a great number of those who appear to be somewhat different are in error, merely having the appearance of godliness, while only a very inconsiderable number "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

His experience, then, agrees with the words of the Saviour, that they are few that find the way of life. Indeed, he sees that the number of those who rush to perdition is even larger than he had at first supposed. His heart is moved with amazement, mortification, and pity, and he wonders why so many people are thus unfortunate. Has not the Son of God made a sufficient payment, and are not His merits valid for all? Has not God in His Word shown Himself concerned about the salvation of all men, and has not His Word wrought mightily in those who have been moved thereby? The real reason for the deplorable state of affairs is none other than that which Jesus charged against Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not!" Nevertheless, this contrariness appears in so many ways and in so many different conditions that we have reason to say that there are many obstacles that would hinder people from entering upon the way of salvation. I have thought of mentioning seven of the most important of them, since it is impossible to count them all, not to say, describe them all. If someone, then, has in mind to get saved, though he has not yet begun to seek salvation in earnest, it is, indeed, very important to know the obstacles which would hinder him from accomplishing his purpose. It may be that you will recognize in some of the obstacles which I am going to mention the reason why all the grace of God shown you has hitherto been fruitless. It is very necessary for you to learn to know this, in order that you may with all your heart endeavor to have this obstacle removed, lest you lose your inheritance of eternal joy.

Prayer.

O God of infinite love, it is Thy will that all men should be saved; Thou hast not laid any obstacles in the way; Thou canst and Thou wilt remove the obstacles which originate from ourselves and our spiritual foes. Teach us by Thy Word to know that which still restrains us, and make us deeply concerned, by Thy gracious help, to have removed the obstacle which would hinder our entrance and progress on the way of salvation. "Our Father," etc.

Exegesis.

God commands His servants to comfort His people, which He had chosen and redeemed. First, He gives the assurance that the time of deliverance was approaching from the Babylonian captivity and from sins by the fulfillment of the redemption in Jesus Christ. Secondly, He testifies that they already had the forgiveness of sins and a blessing twice as great as the curse which they had brought over themselves by their sins. Thirdly, John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, was to instruct the people of the New Covenant how to accept the Saviour of the world upon His coming in human flesh. To this end, the obstacles in His way must be removed, in order that Jesus might find free entrance into the hearts of sinners. Whereas it is necessary in the very first instance to know the obstacles which are to be removed, I shall present the following.

Proposition.

A FEW OF THE WORST OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF A TRUE CONVERSION

1. Gross ignorance is as great an obstacle in the way of a true conversion as a great mountain is where a new road is to be made.

Ignorance is very great among some people. They do not know the basis of their salvation, nor how they shall be and still less how they are to rightly use the means of grace. The matter of salvation is quite foreign to them. They are not used to the Word of God. It is, then, not strange that they do not understand what is being preached, nor that they remain quite as unmoved as if they could not hear. Hence, these people live and die with the most pitiable and unreasonable conceptions of the fear of God. They depart as if by chance. They suppose that, since they do no more evil than they feel constrained to for their livelihood, and since they go to church occasionally and even participate in the Lord's Supper twice a year, they surely can go nowhere else than to heaven. But it is quite as impossible to have faith in God before one knows Him as it is to drive across steep mountains before a road is made. It is impossible to come to heaven before one knows the way thither, and to escape from hell if one has never been concerned about it.

2. Another obstacle, quite as great, arises, when a person gives way to his natural antipathy. A feeling of repugnance to religious matters is found among all people. It is subdued by the first movements of grace, but Satan is a past master in the art of quickening it anew. It could be conquered, if you carefully guarded the grace received and made room for it in your heart, if you used the power thus received to fight against yourself. Unless you do so, you will soon grow weary of the Word; its representations become repugnant and later unbearable. You will not accept them, and, for no other reason than this, that you do not wish to, that it is repugnant to you. In this way your condition will not improve, for God does not force His grace upon anyone, and no one will be converted against his will.

3. Some who have been visited by grace are immediately overcome by their sinful habits and by the power of evil desires. This obstacle is in comparison with the two former like a hill over against a mountain, but a hill can be a very ugly hindrance in the way. While sinners are being moved by the Word, their lusts are subdued and, as it were, removed, but the forces of grace are not always equally active. After a time of great activity they frequently subside, leaving a person to himself. Then new incentives and opportunities to sin make their appearance. The lusts are again awakened and rise to their former intensity. The perceptions of grace, tears, longings, and determinations disappear as though they had been mere dreams. The sinner is overcome and laid prostrate in sin, leaving not the slightest trace of the grace which had wrought so mightily in his heart, and he cannot conceive the possibility of any other condition.

4. Some are so entangled in the world that they cannot extricate themselves. Their condition is like that of one traveling over a region filled with rolling hills. There are constant ups and downs, and ere one such experience ends another begins. Sometimes they are possessed with the advantages of earthly prosperity, and then again they are busy endeavoring to overcome the difficulties of adversity. They scarcely catch sight of anything better in the Word, nor become convinced of its necessity ere something turns up, hindering them from pressing onwards. Shortly after their return home from church and, indeed, frequently before they have time to close the book they are reading at home, something happens that must be attended to, something invites their attention from the heavenly and invisible verities back down to things visible, something occupies the room in their heart, where the Word of God was about to take root. Sometimes it is their friends and comrades in vanity who attract them back to their evil ways. The sinner finds it quite impossible to refuse to follow and in their company he soon gets far away from the narrow gate of repentance and from the true way of life which he had so nearly approached. Here is verified not only the word of Jesus concerning the rich, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," but also the of Paul concerning those who

indeed are not rich but would love to be wealthy, "They that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

5. Some are hindered by cowardly weakness. They fear the pangs of contrition, which they imagine to be very grievous. This obstacle may be compared with the valleys mentioned in our text. Those who are in this way hindered from conversion experience a sense of dizziness like those who are about to descend into a deep valley. They see only the depths, and it appears as though they were about to fall therein, though, if they proceeded, step by step, they would soon, without any harm, arrive at the bottom. This hindrance often comes from a too lenient bringing up in the home. Their parents may have spoiled them from early childhood carefully shielding them from everything which might have caused them grief. Some look upon sorrow as the greatest calamity which can happen to them and, hence, studiously avoid everything which might make them sad. The unconverted often entertain the preconceived notion that conversion begins with despair and is followed by unceasing anxiety. This prejudice easily finds entrance into weak souls. If they experience any sorrow over their sins, they look upon it as the precursor of something worse. They therefore make haste to get rid of it and are very much concerned, lest they again come into such a condition. Yes, even though they know by their own experience or by information that the discipline of grace is very moderate, it nevertheless seems too grievous for them. The present is everything to them, and the future seems to them as non-existing. To escape "godly sorrow," they proceed along the way that leads to eternal "weeping and gnashing of teeth." They choose to taste the bitterness of eternal death, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" rather than to endure the feeling of sinful depravity for a season.

6. Some have gotten into the habit of considering everything frivolously. They cannot entertain the first impression of grace long enough to attain stability. Their mind and behavior resemble the crooked roads in our text, which slant from one side to the other and often cause the traveler to fall. Some people do not adhere long to one thing, but grasp for something else, and they never take anything in earnest. They consider it all as trivial. Such minds are easily touched by the Word, but their emotions quite as easily vanish away. If everything pertaining to conversation could be finished during the brief moment while their emotions last, they would be converted, but they cannot bear to take the matter under more serious and prolonged consideration. They scarcely have time to wipe their tears away, ere their minds take flight to something quite different and their thoughts wander far away from the kingdom of God. While they thus dance about the brink of eternity, they unexpectedly fall into its depths, pass unprepared out of time, and proceed with laughter and jesting to the place of torment.

7. Some are hindered by their egotism, false timidity and fearfulness of men. They are like men journeying along a stony road full of jutting unevenness. They constantly become hurt and wounded and eventually grow tired and weary. When the Word is preached aright it happens even today, as it did when Jesus himself taught, as we read in John 12. 42, "Even of the rulers many believed on Him, but they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." They wish to be Christians, but in such a way as cannot long endure. They do not wish to confess their Saviour's name before the world, but desire to be disciples in secret. The sneer of the world for the confessors of Jesus hurts their ambition. Hence, they wish to have their Christianity concealed in their hearts to their own satisfaction, but they do not wish to have it revealed in their outward behavior to the glory of the Saviour. They take care lest anyone might see them reading the Word of God or find them engaging in prayer. They are thus frequently hindered from Scripture reading and prayer, because they do not wish to let anyone see it. They are often tempted to feel ashamed of Jesus, and so they make themselves deserving of the punishment

which will be their lot; for Jesus says, "The Son of man also shall be ashamed of them, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy "Occasionally they come into quite as dangerous a position as that of when, like him, they wish to be in the palace of the high priest without being known as belonging to Jesus of Nazareth. It may then happen that, upon being addressed by the men of the world, and in order to escape from their taunts, they blush and stammer something like Peter, "I know not the man." Alas, before the secret work of grace in them can grow in power, as in the case of Nicodemus and, Joseph of Arimathea, finally breaking forth in action, it may be choked to death, like an infant covered too well. At any rate, they continually become hurt and wounded on so uneven a way, and some grow weary with it all. Like Pilate they consider it quite impossible to set Jesus at liberty if they cannot do this with the consent of the worldly-minded. They excuse themselves, wash their hands in and blame others whose behavior they imagine relieves themselves of all responsibility.

Application.

Have you among all these obstacles described recognized that which has hindered you from a true conversion, and can you nevertheless allow this hindrance to remain in your way? If so, how are you going to reach the gate of heaven? If you wish to be hindered from the kingdom of God, does not this imply that you wish to be lost? "No," you say, "I wish to be saved." Yes, but you wish to retain such matters as of necessity must hinder you from coming to heaven. You are quite willing to escape from hell, but you persist in proceeding on the way that surely leads thither. You entertain the very largest and most difficult of all obstacles, namely intentional obstinacy and a persistent and willful opposition.

Are you grieved at heart in perceiving what has hindered you from repentance, and do you fear that it might continue to hinder you, then you may know that God's quickening and calling grace can overcome all obstacles. Be careful to retain this grace which is working in you. Make haste to take refuge in prayer and in the use of the Word, and consider further with yourself that you have received grace to understand your spiritual condition. As the Lord has removed the obstacles which lay in the way of your awakening, so He will also help you through all the difficulties which always meet awakened souls and keep them for some time from faith and the forgiveness of sins.

If you have passed beyond all these obstacles also, you must consider that there are many obstacles even on the way of salvation, which would hinder your progress thereon and prevent your growth in grace. You must not, then, be careless and negligent, if you are to attain to stability in grace and remain steadfast in the faith. See to it "that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction." Let nothing hinder you from hearing Him speak to you in His Word, nor let anything prevent you from speaking with Him in prayer. Let nothing exclude you from appropriating Him in Holy Communion. Then you shall, in spite of all obstacles which meet you, "in all these things be more than conqueror through Him that loved you." Amen.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Christian Soldiers.

<http://witness.lcms.org/pages/wPage.asp?ContentID=27&IssueID=5>

Christian Soldiers



Whether you know it or not, you, dear Christian, are at war!

We need to man our battle stations because we are in a life-and-death struggle against enemies determined to overcome us for time and eternity. The war began in Eden's garden when our first parents, Adam and Eve, brought sin into the world when they disobeyed God's clear command as accounted in Gen. 2:16 "17 and 3:1 "7.

How can we win our daily war? Here is God's battle plan: Through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He has made it possible for us to know and believe with certainty that the *eternal* war against sin, death, and the devil has already been won. And we can win the daily battles we confront in our lives against our three greatest spiritual enemies: the devil, the sinful world, and our own sinful nature.

The eternal war is over! None of us could have won this war through our own strength and power. It is only because of what Christ has done for us that we are - "more than conquerors through Him Who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

How has Christ won the eternal war?

SIN:

He has saved us from the guilt and punishment we all deserve for our sins. Take time right now to read 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13, 1 Peter 2:24, and John 1:29.

DEATH:

We need never fear temporal death since eternal death has no power over us. Now read 1 Cor 15:55 "57, 2 Tim. 1:10, Heb. 2:14 "15.

DEVIL:

Christ overcame the devil and conquered him for us. Gen. 3:15, 1 John 3:8, and Rev. 12:10.

Even though the war has been won for us, the battles still rage in our daily life. St. Paul gives us a battle plan to win these. Prayerfully read Eph. 6:10 "20 and ask God to help you - "put on the whole armor of God" (verse 11).

God encourages us to put on all of the armor He provides for our daily use. Even as U.S. soldiers in Iraq put on their full armor to protect themselves in the war against the enemies, so the Christian warrior needs to use the full spiritual armor.

- "Stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." A vital part of our spiritual armor is our personal moral purity in our daily lives. We are to be Christians not only in name, but also in word and deed. Others should see that Christ lives in us (Matt. 5:16; John 8:31 "32).

- "The breastplate of righteousness in place." This is the righteousness Jesus earned for us through His suffering, death, and resurrection. He made us right with God through what He did for us as our Substitute, just as explained in Is. 59:17 and Rom. 4:13.

- "Your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (verse 15). We can live with heads uplifted and hearts unburdened because Jesus has given us His peace. The road of life is bumpy with many detours and Satan's deadly road-side bombs. So read John 14: 27 and Heb. 13:20-21 and know that you have been equipped to win.

- "Take up the shield of faith" (verse 16). We trust in Jesus and only in Jesus to shield us from the power of our three greatest spiritual enemies. Read Rom.5:1 "2 and Eph. 2:8.

- "Take the helmet of salvation" (verse 17). By God's grace we have the certain hope of salvation for eternity, as St. John tells us in his Gospel in 3:36 and 11:25-26.

- "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." As Christian soldiers, we need to know and believe all of it- the Old and New Testaments, all 66 books, Law and Gospel- and then put it into practice in our daily lives. Ps. 25:5 and 2 Tim. 3:16 "17 give us clear direction on this.

Onward, Christian soldier! Engage the enemy with full confidence of victory in Christ!

Rev. Andrew Simcak Jr.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutherans and Hell.

<http://media.ctsfw.edu/1059>

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:

David: Well, we better ask one of the hard questions—and this one has been asked by some of my parishioners. Why do we Lutherans still talk about hell? Isn't it cruel to teach that there is a hell?

PROFESSOR ROLAND ZIEGLER: Well, it truly sounds cruel and it truly is unpleasant to talk about hell, David. It seems that preaching about hell has kind of receded in the background. Sort of like the good old times where you had these fire and brimstone teachers who would really tell you so that at the souls of your feet you feel the flames of hell already tickling you.

We are much nicer nowadays. And non-judgmental is one of the buzzwords. Talking about hell I think is always difficult because it is so utterly dark and depressing. And that's why in much of Christianity the talk about hell and the doctrine of hell has been given up completely.

In the '50s there was a big controversy in Norway if hell should be still a part of the teaching of the Lutheran state church there. There is an emotional appeal of the belief that all in the end will be saved. What is also called universalism.

Hell is simply horrible. The prospect of eternal damnation, of an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth is just frightening. Especially if you consider that this hell is not only for human monsters and mass murderers like Hitler or Stalin or Pinochet. But for all of those who did not believe in God.

After the attacks of 9/11, some relatives reacted quite irate when Evangelical preachers said: Well, you know, all those who died in that attack and did not believe in Christ are going to hell. Whereas if Osama bin Laden in his cave in Afghanistan would repent and believe in Christ five minutes before the American missile hits him, he would go to heaven.

They thought: How can you say that? How can you say that about somebody who is a loving father, a faithful husband? And then this monster bin Laden would just escape without punishment? This guy deserves more.

It's a doctrine which is extremely unpopular with secular non-Christians or nominal Christians. Because the doctrine of hell is an extreme preaching of the law and drives home that sin is serious. And unbelief is serious. And that unbelief is taken dead serious by God. And that the worst behavior is not being a perilous or a mass murderer. But it is unbelief.

But there is also an emotional struggle with the concept of hell for a Christian when a close family member or friend dies who did not confess the faith. The thought that this person is in eternal darkness is quite hard to stomach. It's therefore, much more appealing to believe in universal salvation of all or in universalism.

This rejection of hell led in the United States in the 1790s to the universalist church which merged in 1961 with the Unitarian church to form the Unitarian Universalist Church, the most liberal group of anything that calls itself Christian. Well, they are not really calling themselves Christian anymore. But of organized religion maybe.

But there is also a theological appeal to the rejection of hell. And that lies in a perceived conflict between God's love and the existence of God. The question then is: How can God be all loving if there is hell, some kind of an eternal concentration camp?

Does that not cross out so to speak God's love? Cannot God save all people? Is this world thwarted by the unbeliever? Or does he not want to save all men? Didn't Christ die for all?

Isn't he the new Adam? And as in Adam all fell so in Christ all will be saved? Especially if you believe that faith is a gift from God, how does it come that God seems to pass by some people so that they remain in unbelief and end in hell?

For most of Christianity's history, this was not a real problem. Theologians and Christians alike did not embrace universalism. In the early church only Origen, whose opinion on this matter was condemned by the local Council of Constantinople in 543, taught universalism.

Only in the time of Rationalism beginning in the 18th Century the rejection of hell by those who called themselves Christians did grow. Until this was or has become an established feature of liberal Christianity and dominates much of mainline Christianity today. Many mainline or liberal Christian churches at least have a strong tendency towards universalism. And as I mentioned before, even some of the Evangelical revivalist preachers that don't belong to the fundamentalist camp no longer have these fire and brimstone services but stress rather that God is life and he accepts you as you are.

So, if there are emotional and it seems also theological reasons against hell, why haven't we scrapped it from our teaching? The witness of Christian history should make us cautious to simply disregard the concept of hell. We do not believe that we are so much smarter than 2,000 years of Christian history. But of course the argument from tradition cannot be the final or decisive argument. The question is: Does Scripture teach the existence of hell?

Well, when we look at how Christ started his ministry out, it is that he called to repentance like John the Baptist did. John the Baptist, you have it directly spoken out. And he talks about the coming wrath of God. And in the New Testament, the eschaton is also depicted as God's judgment. God will judge and there will be a final separation. The great story of the judgment of all men in Matthew 25 ends in the sentence: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous enter life eternal.

It is actually Jesus who talks quite often about hell. Not only the apostles. Therefore the liberal trick to avoid statements one does not like by ascribing them to the apostles or later editions does not work. It is Jesus who talks about hell, about separation of those who believe and who don't. If you want Jesus you have to accept him as the preacher of the final judgment and the existence of hell.

In the great prophetic book in the New Testament Revelation speaks about judgment and damnation. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

That Scripture teaches the existence of hell and answers the question: Is it not cruel to believe in hell? No, it is not. Because it is true. To believe that people can die of cancer is not cruel. And to tell somebody that he is suffering with cancer and

that he is diagnosed and life expectancy is not good is not cruel. Because it is true. Because the cancer is a reality.

Because hell is real, it is not up to us to believe it exists or not. Because to deny hell is to refuse to accept reality.

The problem remains, though, how to square God's love to the existence of hell. Ultimately this is linked to the question of predestination, one that is really close to us in this life. Luther at the end of "On the Bondage of the Will" makes the statement that in the light of glory, that is in the fulfillment, these questions will be resolved. But here on earth, we cannot resolve them.

Looking at Christ and remembering that God did not spare his only begotten son to save us from eternal damnation assures us that God is not cruel or uncaring. But that we can trust him to be loving and the friend of man. Even if we don't understand some things.

[Return to Index](#)

THE GREAT DECEIVER - - Discussion Guide

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers with Rev. Ken Klaus

Sadness in Heaven for Those Not There?

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA8025PD.mp3>

Mark: Will thoughts of hell dampen the happiness of heaven? Pastor Ken Klaus answers questions from listeners. I'm Mark Eischer.

Ken: Hi, Mark. Good to be back.

Mark: Pastor, today we have a question which may be on the minds of believers as well as unbelievers.

Ken: I'm interested. What does our listener want to know?

Mark: Heaven is supposed to be a happy place, but how can we be happy in heaven knowing others are suffering torment in hell? Many reject Christianity's teachings when they realize the implication that their friends, relatives, or ancestors aren't necessarily going to be in heaven.

Ken: Tough question. Truly, I don't know if I can give an answer people will find entirely satisfactory. But, I'll try. Let's begin at the beginning. Mark, how does a person get into heaven and how do they get into hell?

Mark: Hell is easy. We all deserve hell just by being our good old sinful selves. The Bible teaches that hell is the default destination of everyone who has broken God's laws or fallen short of the perfection He demands. Apart from Christ, we would all naturally end up there, no matter how good or bad we've been.

Ken: The "default destination," that's right. And heaven?

Mark: No one deserves heaven, but they can receive it as God's gracious gift, through faith in Christ. God declares sinners righteous on account of Christ and that allows them to enter heaven.

Ken: Wonderful, wonderful. Now, which sinners does God want to save? For

whom did Jesus die? Did Jesus save only a select few?

Mark: No, Jesus came to carry the sins of everyone and to offer salvation to everyone.

Ken: So, let me put it this way. There was no way we could save ourselves. We were doomed. The Lord, motivated by grace and mercy, decides to effect a rescue. To mount this rescue effort, it is necessary that His Son die—to pay the price God's justice demands for sin. Which brings us to the right here and now. Picture this: We were all drowning in sin. God is here, throwing out life preservers, an unlimited supply. There's one for everybody, if they want it. Those life preservers are faith in His Son. What's more, God even puts the Holy Spirit in the water with us to drag us over to those life preservers... to put us into those life preservers and buckle us up. Is that accurate so far?

Mark: It sounds like "Coast Guard Alaska!"

Ken: But... some people say, "No, thanks. I'm going to try to save myself." They refuse the life preserver. Others think there must be other life preservers--just as good--that they can trust, so they also turn down what God is offering. Again and again, God offers help and salvation and forgiveness and heaven. But people turn down Him down and refuse His offer.

Mark: And then comes judgment day. Those who are found clinging to Jesus, their Savior, are saved... and those who refused Christ, remain condemned.

Ken: That's the story. Now, let me ask. When those souls in heaven find themselves safe and saved, how would they react?

Mark: They would be overjoyed that they were saved.

Ken: I agree. God didn't have to save them, but He chose to. He didn't have to sacrifice His Son, but He did. It was a tremendous act of love. But how should those folks feel about those who aren't saved? Should they be angry at God for not having done more?

Mark: I don't think so. He did all He could, but many didn't want what He offered.

Ken: Right. Those who thought they were good enough swimmers on their own, who thought there were other ways they could get into heaven, who refused to admit they were drowning—God ultimately gave them what they wanted.

Mark: And explain that one more time.

Ken: As one of my seminary professors said, "Hell is God's last act of love for those who didn't want Him around." Remember, God wants everyone to be saved... He made it so they could be saved. In a strange and sad way, these folks in hell got what they wanted, but not what God wanted to give them. And I don't think people in heaven, who understand and are thankful for all God has done, I don't think they'll be traumatized when God allows the folks in hell what they wanted. On the contrary, since they will be in perfect harmony with the Lord, they will agree with Him that it is only right.

Mark: Thank you, Pastor Klaus. this has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

[Return to Index](#)