

## Foreword

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* which was originally named the *Clergy Bulletin*. The first issue of the *Clergy Bulletin* is dated August 21, 1941. In celebration of this anniversary an excellent essay from our history is being presented. It first appeared in the *Clergy Bulletin* in 1956. (*Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 1 & 2 [September & October] pp. 1-6 and 9-12) This essay is entitled, *Does Endorsement of the Book of Concord Involve Endorsement of Every Statement in the Confessions?* It points out the importance of confessional subscription for Evangelical Lutherans. The author of this essay is Dr. Sigurd C. Ylvisaker, who was the president of Bethany Lutheran College for many years.

Questions concerning the issue of tradition and church usages have caused difficulties throughout the history of the church. One must steer the course between those who demand that rules must be obeyed and those who demand complete freedom to experiment with church rites. The essay, *Augsburg Confession Article XV: Of Church Usages*, speaks to this issue. This essay is written by Rev. Theodore Gullixson, pastor of Forest Lutheran, Forest City, and Zion Lutheran, Thompson, Iowa. Rev. Gullixson is the editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*, which is the official publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

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

The third article of this issue of the *Quarterly* is entitled, *Citizen Soldiers: Heirs of Heaven Besieged by Powers of Darkness – Exegesis of Ephesians 6:10-20*. Here the author explains St. Paul's picture of the well-armed Christian warrior who is to put on the whole armor of God. The author of this article is Rev. Steven Sparley, pastor of the Clearwater Lutheran Parish.

In the second chapter of Joshua we find the account of the two spies sent to Jericho. In the city they were protected and hidden by the prostitute Rahab. Through God's providence this heathen

woman was rescued and brought into the family of believers. God chose her to be an ancestor of our Lord. Professor Harstad provides a commentary on this portion of Scripture in his *Notes and Commentary*

# Contents

Does Endorsement of the Book of Concord Involve  
Endorsement of Every Statement in the Confessions? . . . . .  
186

*Sigurd C. Ylvisaker*

Augsburg Confession Article XV: Of Church Usages . . . . .  
202

*Theodore G. Gullixson*

Citizen Soldiers: Heirs of Heaven Besieged by  
Powers of Darkness – Exegesis of Ephesians 6:10-20 . . . . .  
215

*Steven R. Sparley*

Notes:

Notes and Commentary on Joshua 2:1-7 . . . . . 259

*Adolph L. Harstad*

# **Does Endorsement of the Book of Concord Involve Endorsement of Every Statement in the Confessions?**

*by Sigurd C. Ylvisaker*

A church without a confession is like an orchestra with no music. A church with an unclear confession is like a ship in fog. A church with an otherwise good confession but including but one error is like a symphony where all is harmonious but one part is out of tune. One false note or one singer out of pitch may mar the most beautiful chorus, just as one single glass in a window may change the effect of a most gorgeous work of art. When the Master Director, our Saviour, asks for a song of praise, thanksgiving, prayer, confession, from His Church, who are we to deny Him the harmony of Christian faith which He has planted in the hearts of His children, the clear notes of which He has recorded for us in Scripture?

We need to review the significance of our Confessions briefly in order that we may study the question before us in the proper perspective. Too many have begun to look upon them as a dead letter and as a more or less useless burden which the church carries around to slow its progress. And yet, each time we say, "I believe," in confessing the Apostolic Creed, we might well consider our Christian prerogative. In the face of all the world, we hurl that "I believe" as expressing the very victory of faith, and that, of my personal faith. We tremble with the responsibility of it; we are grateful for the privilege of it; we rejoice in the victory of it; we rise up ready to do battle for it – this God-given conviction that One, namely Christ, has redeemed my soul. This confession has become a very part of me, it is a personal thing, it characterizes me more than any description of my physical self or any enumeration of my natural attributes or characteristics.

Thus also in the case of a church. We do not, can not, must not, remove from the term Confession, the personal element and now of a sudden begin to think in terms of theology, dogmatics, theses and antitheses. No matter how many are along in the act of confessing,

the central fact remains that a confession is a personal matter and a personal concern. But the content remains the same in the case of the one or the many, just as the content of the many voices and of the one voice in Scripture is one, namely Christ. About that sacred name all voices blend of those who are members of the Christian Church from the beginning to the end of time, nay, into all eternity. That name above every name unites the voices of all the saints of God into one grand harmony, and that name thus becomes the distinguishing mark of every confession that is called Christian.

A confession, then, becomes a very simple thing. Its content is Christ. And whether this name is spoken in the babble of an infant or by the trembling mouth of the aged, by the learned or the unlearned, by the outcast or the respected, by the theologian or the layman, it is the earmark of a true Christian who owns the full riches of God's grace and holds in the hand of faith the inheritance of the saints. If it is as simple as that, there is no excuse for any Christian to fail in this self-evident activity of a believer. He will make known the name of Christ by his spoken word, by his Christian life – and there is that which unfailingly distinguishes a Christian in this – by his membership in a Christian church, by his aims and purposes and goals. Nay, we may say in deep earnestness that a Christian's whole being breathes a confession of Him who redeemed him by His blood.

When the question is asked, which Christ shall I confess, or how much of Christ shall I confess, we may look up in surprise, as if the question is absurd and quite out of order. Yet it is Scripture which warns us that the time will come when men shall say, "Lo, here is Christ, or there," to deceive the hearts of many. So we ask deliberately, Which Christ? And the time has long been here when men are quite willing to confess the Man, Christ, though not the God-man, as if He can be divided and rent asunder.

When we ask the question, Which Christ?, we find that this very question is anticipated in the Scriptures themselves. That the believers in the Old Testament period might not be confused, the Holy Spirit has, by prophecy, by types, even in the whole sacrificial system described Him so clearly and definitely that He would be known in advance as if He were already there, and that He at His coming would be recognized and accepted for what He was. In the

New Testament again He is carefully described, negatively and positively, so that no one in future or in the present would be led astray or eventually have the excuse that they could not know. We would do well to study this more earnestly than we do, and to note that it is to a great extent concern for the enemies of the Church that has made this necessary. For faith is the opposite of doubt, and God does not want His Christians to be in doubt when the question is raised, Which Christ? When Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," we note at once the added description. Similarly Stephen in his confession, Peter in his sermon on Pentecost, Paul in his address before Festus and Agrippa, the Epistles, the Book of Revelation, the introduction to the Gospel of John. The early Christians in their baptismal formula included a description of this Christ which defined Him and identified Him apart from any other Christ or false description of Him. And from the Apostolic Creed down to the present this has, after all, been a chief concern of the individual Christian and of the Christian Church, to define and describe the Christ in Whom they had put their faith, that there would be no question of identification, no mistake, no doubt, as if the Church with one voice declared: Here, in this Christ and none other, is the Rock of my salvation, my hope of salvation, my life and light and crown. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Similarly, then, also in the case of that other question, How much of Christ shall we confess? The answer is given again in Scripture; the whole Christ, His whole person, His whole work, His whole Word. Here, too, we may say that it is a matter of identification. But the question concerns our missionary activity also, so that when the Church goes out to declare this Christ, it is ready to tell the world, This is what He has done, This is what He has said, that your hope and confidence may be sure. Let us note well, we can not separate Christ from His work or His word. He is identified with both, as He is identified by both. One may say, I believe that Christ died; but if he does not believe in the Christ who died for us, in our behalf, he simply does not have the true Christ, and his faith is vain. Another says, I believe that Christ said, "For God so loved the world;" but if he can not with the same confidence continue the quotation to the

end, he in plain words has a wrong Christ and not the true. In this way the confession of the individual Christian and the confession of the Church can not be satisfied with a half-Christ or a quarter-Christ, as if there were such a thing. Souls are at stake. The glory of Christ is at stake. We must be able to tell the world Which Christ and How much of Christ.

A salesman stepped into my office the other day. He had taught advanced work at two large universities. For some reason or another he let the conversation drift into the religious field, and soon let it become clear that his opinion was that of so many others that religion and religions were all the same. Let each believe what he saw fit, be sincere in this belief, and all would be well. I urged him as kindly as I could to consider that there was, after all, the matter of identification to consider and that the question of Which Christ? Would have to be answered. Was it the Christ who taught, let us say, infant baptism? The Christ who is true God or only true man? The Christ who rose again from the dead? And we may go on from there to more pertinent questions that may trouble us: Is it the Christ who permits Himself to be identified with the Christ of the lodge? Who condones unionistic services with errorists? Who teaches prayer-fellowship with those of another faith or who cling persistently to certain errors against that Bible with which the true Christ has identified Himself? My salesman friend was quick to see the significance of all this, appearing even grateful for the suggestion that he think this over – and his assurance that he wanted to think this over and talk to me again seemed sincere.

Studying our confessions in this light we will soon learn that the Church down through the centuries has been conscious of its responsibility in this very thing. Confronted by the continual attacks against the person, work and word of Christ, and the repeated questionings Which Christ? How much of Christ? the Church has found it necessary to study the Scriptures ever more thoroughly and intensely to find the answer and to be able to ward off the errors which would point the way to another Christ. In all of this confessional activity, as we may call it, the Church has but one aim, to identify itself with the one, holy, Christian Church of all ages and of all climes apart from which there is no salvation and no hope. It has ever been

busy making sure, as it were, that the true Christ dwelt in her midst for the comfort of the believers. It is true, words have been added to words, definitions to definitions; there are theses and antitheses, and a whole, to some involved, system of doctrine has arisen about the person and work and word of Christ which seems utterly confusing and even unnecessary – for are we not urged to let our faith be as simple as that of a mere child, where a single-minded trust is the chief characteristic?

And yet, if we should analyze the simple faith of a child, say in the relation of this child to its mother, it has by that one act of trust cut through a rather intricate process, after all. It has chosen positively this mother and in the face of many an obstacle and danger thrown itself into its mother's arms. Negatively it rejected every other and singled out this one woman unerringly, though many arms may be raised to tempt him. In the case of a sheep the process seems even simpler but, given to analyzing as we are, we might make the whole very intricate by describing the temptations of a sheep to choose another voice than that of the true shepherd, particularly if these voices become many and deceitful. The fact that an adult Christian has been endowed by God with a reason and a will and an emotional life which the enemy of our soul can approach from innumerable different angles to cause him to stray, as is proved by the history of the Church also in doctrinal matter, this fact will help us to realize how the Church has been obliged to define its Christ more and more definitely and, if you will, more discriminatingly with a wealth of detail regarding person, work and word that seems to leave many a humble Christian at least wondering if not confused and disturbed. And yet, in the end, in its confessions the true Church has succeeded in doing that one all-important thing of keeping the eyes of the souls committed to her care directed on the one Christ to the exclusion of every other, of defending these souls against the deceits of satan, of giving voice to the deep conviction of the believer in the face of friend and foe, the happy response to the gracious invitation of Jesus Himself: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10: 32) In this confession the believer joins in the song of heaven, as it is written: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that

do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.” (Psalm 103:20-22) And finally, by its confessions the Church is at work fulfilling the command of her Lord: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20) That word, “all things,” is there to remind us that our confession has the responsibility of stating definitely and clearly Who Christ is, and bringing to men the whole Christ.

Would it then not be wiser and better for the Church to point to the Bible as God’s own revelation and statement to men and as a perfect reply to both questions? That would do away with much strife, bickering about words, even doubt as to whether or not our confession is correct in every way. To this we must answer that such a course would undoubtedly be the best, for that Word is clear and authoritative. And still God wants our confession; He wants my personal reply to the question, Who is Christ? It is only natural that human speech serve in this: the babbling of the infant or the more mature phraseology of the enlightened Christian. But what is more important: consider what men make of the Bible, its meaning and in particular its testimony regarding Christ, His person, work and word. What a confusion we see because of the insistence on putting reason above the Word (as in the case of the Reformed and Modernistic churches) or the tradition and authority of the church as a human institution above that same Word, as in the Catholic Church. And the spirit of man so permeates the reading and interpretation of Scripture to the hurt of the true Church and its members, that it again has become necessary for the Church, because of the enemy, to state in its own words what the Scriptures actually say in reply to the questions above. And after these centuries of battle, of testing and proving, of examination and re-examination, of re-study in the light of the sacred Word, our Lutheran confessions still stand on the field of battle with the challenge of faith and holy assurance: “Only those who have despaired of finding the truth, only skeptics who are ever busy at learning and never reaching the knowledge of the truth can assert: this men have written, therefore it must contain error. If error could be proved in our symbols, then the rod would be broken over our symbols also; then

they would not be symbols of the true, pure, orthodox church, but of a false, impure, erroristic church, and no honest man could subscribe to them. But we challenge the whole world, and all unbelievers and errorists, to discover one single doctrinal error in our Concordia. All the enemies of our church have spent themselves in vain in this pursuit for 300 years; but they have been put to shame in their attempt. They have shown that our symbols contain that which opposes their blind reason, and that we gladly grant; but they have failed in proving that they contradict the holy Scriptures in the smallest letter. Any similar attempt will now prove just as vain and shameful on the part of those who nevertheless want to be considered as the most faithful sons of our church. In their attempt to show that the voice of their pretended spiritual mother in her public confessions in part is the voice of error, they will prove nothing else than that they are the bastards, who, because they do not believe the divine Word, deride that church as a liar, which confesses what she has found in the Scriptures as the faith of her heart.” (Walther, Syn. Ber.d.westl. Distr., 1858, p. 19) Our Lutheran confessions, going back to the ecumenical creeds and down to and including the Formula of Concord, one and all are torn in pain and anguish, even as the confession of a Job: they are singed with the flame of fire and sword, stained with the blood of martyrs, surrounded by the prayers of the believers, bedewed by their tears, and yet wafted on from one generation to the next, borne aloft as the standard of victory, of hope, of triumphant happiness, proclaiming His Name who rules among His saints, world without end. This is its noble content, this also its aim and goal.

It is to this confession you and I as pastors have added our signature, and by this act we stand before very God and in the company of a host of God’s own. Does our signature imply an unconditional acceptance or a conditional one? Do we subscribe to the whole confession or only a part of the same? Are we Lutherans (i.e. Christians, believers) in part, in name, or in deed and altogether? Or is this manner of putting the question before us unfair? DOES ENDORSEMENT OF THE BOOK OF CONCORD INVOLVE ENDORSEMENT OF EVERY STATEMENT IN THE CONFESSIONS? This is the wording of the question that has been submitted to me to answer. Much that pertains to this answer is contained in the foregoing, and on this

background any further discussion may become quite brief. We shall try to make the answer as clear and definite as we can, without seeming to avoid such difficulties as the question presents.

If by the expression EVERY STATEMENT IN THE CONFESSIONS is meant every word, every phrase, every historical reference or statement, even every interpretation of Scripture, then we answer with a definite NO. (The following pages lean heavily on Dr. Walther in Syn. Ber.d.westl. Distr., 1858) The confessions are not there to teach grammar, language, history; nor do they pretend to do this. On this point we make a clear distinction between the Scriptures as the verbally inspired Word of God, where every statement is God's own, whether it be in matters that pertain to human affairs or the spiritual things of God. There that word stands and shall stand: "The scriptures can not be broken." The symbols are the confession of faith, i.e., a statement of what the church believes and holds. It is therefore a declaration pertaining to doctrine, the doctrine of the church. The symbols claim to be nothing else or more than this. Thus an endorsement of the symbols can mean nothing else, and at the same time nothing less, than an endorsement of the doctrinal content of the confessions. An unconditional endorsement means an endorsement of the whole doctrinal content without exception and with the whole heart. A conditional endorsement means an endorsement that either does not include the whole doctrinal content or is not sincere.

We may put it thus: where the writers of the confessions have been obliged to depend on their human knowledge of science, history, or things that do not pertain to doctrine, they may have erred. For this reason we may make an object of further investigation, and eventually reach another conclusion regarding, the quotations ascribed to Ambrose and Augustine in articles 6, 18 and 20 of the Augsburg Confession. We may doubt an historical reference here or there which is not founded on Scripture. We may even question the interpretation of this or that passage of Scripture, remembering that the rule Scripture itself lays down for such interpretation as a requirement for orthodoxy is this that it must be according to the analogy of faith – Romans 12:6. John Gerhard is quoted as follows: "Even though we may not always discover the real and special meaning of every passage, it is sufficient in the interpretation of these pas-

sages that we present nothing that is contrary to the analogy of faith (Aehnlichkeit des Glaubens).” Furthermore we may disagree with or try to improve upon the manner of presentation or the building-up of an argument, so long as we do not disagree with the doctrine itself which is being presented, either as the main concern in the presentation or as a minor, necessary or apparently unnecessary part of the presentation. In the matter of adiaphora, we may disagree in judgment with regard to their use or non-use, but not in the doctrine or the principles regarding adiaphora taken from the Scriptures. Not one or all of these considerations effect the question of unconditional or conditional acceptance of the symbols of the church.

It will be helpful to review the various forms in which this conditional acceptance of the confessions has appeared. In one case it would mean that I subscribe to the confessions in so far as they do not oppose the Scriptures or in so far as they agree with the same. Thus the Pietists made use of the formula: In so far as they do not militate against the Holy Scriptures, or: In so far as they agree with the Holy Scriptures. The Rationalists later adopted these formulas, though in a far wider sense. Another conditional subscription is found in the formula: In so far as I acknowledge the fundamental doctrines of the Bible are taught correctly or essentially correctly in the confessions. Thus the General Synod in its time. A third: I subscribe to the symbols as they are rightly interpreted or understood according to the Scriptures. Thus even the Reformed could subscribe. In this connection we remember the conditional acceptance of the symbols in their “historical meaning” by the Iowa Synod, which urged that the symbols should be understood as they referred to specific conditions existing at the time. A fourth would say that he accepts that, and only that, which is of a strictly confessional nature in the symbols. Thus Löhe said: “I distinguish between that which is stated confessionally and that which is not so stated – and I distinguish still more. I should never dream of clinging to the letter and becoming guilty of symbololatry ... I accept what is said confessionally in the confessions.” Thus a great part of the doctrinal content of the symbols would be lost. (Ad 4: Walther adds a footnote regarding the Iowa Synod: “The Iowa Synod says the same as Löhe, cf. above, in these words: ‘As a real confession, a norm of teaching that binds the consciences, only

the thetical and anti-thetical decisions can be considered which each article states and establishes against the lie and the error. Not every system of proof, every explanation, etc., which really is a side-issue (accidents) in a confessional writing, can be made a doctrinal statement which binds the conscience. What the symbols want to establish as symbolic, that has symbolic authority.”) A fifth would say: I subscribe to certain symbols both of the Lutheran and of the Reformed church, in so far as these agree with one another. Thus the church of the Prussian Union. A sixth: I subscribe to the symbols, but with the understanding that even such doctrines as are clearly stated and established in the symbols are to be considered open questions and treated as such as soon as a difference of opinion arises concerning them among the confessors. Thus the Buffalo Synod in the doctrines of the Church and the Office of the Keys. Finally a seventh conditional acceptance is that proposed by the rationalists of accepting the spirit, but not the letter, of the confessions.

All of this shows how dangerous a conditional subscription to the confessions is and can become. As for an unconditional acceptance let us consider again that this implies an endorsement of all doctrinal statements in the symbolical books of our church, whether these statements appear in the form of theses and antitheses, as side-remarks or as a part of the line of proof regarding other doctrines. Everything of doctrinal import is included and without any exception. Does the church have a right to demand this of its pastors?

Here it is well to bear in mind what the purpose of symbol is. In general this purpose is a) that the church by means of its symbols clearly and definitely confess its faith and teaching before the whole world; b) that she thereby separate herself from all erring communions and sects; c) that she possess one common, sure and unanimously accepted form and norm of doctrine for her teachers, out of and in accordance with which all other writings and doctrines may and must be judged and regulated when they are to be examined for acceptance. If the church demands only a conditional endorsement from her servants, then she has a) retracted before the whole world the claim that she really has the faith and the doctrine which she has laid down in the symbols; her confession is therefore not really a confession, and she may consequently be justly accused of being

double-tongued and of deceiving the world with her symbols. b) the church, by demanding only a conditional endorsement, does not by means of her symbols distinguish herself from the erring sects, but puts herself on a common level with them since by her own admission her symbols contain errors. As a result the church is c) without a unanimously accepted form and norm of doctrine according to which each individual may judge his own doctrine and at the same time judge all other writings and teachings.

The specific purpose of the symbols is this that the church may a) assure herself that those who desire to undertake the office of teaching in the church really have the orthodox understanding of the Holy Scriptures and the pure and unadulterated faith which she herself owns; b) that the church may bind these by a holy promise to preach this faith pure and unmixed (lauter). If they can not make this promise, it follows that the church must ask them to withdraw from the office of teaching in the church either by not accepting the office or by leaving the office if they are already there, and not disturb the church by false doctrine and deceive her members into these false teachings. This special purpose of a subscription to the symbols will be forfeited altogether, so far as the servants of the church are concerned, if they accept the symbols only conditionally. For as soon as the church herself has permitted her servants to adopt the opinion that doctrines may be contained in the symbols which are contrary to the Holy Scriptures, she has a) lost the assurance with regard to the faith of the subscriber which an unconditional subscription would give her; and b) she has thereby cancelled her own demand that her teachers teach the Word of God pure and unadulterated in accordance with the symbols as the doctrinal norm. And again, in the same moment as a congregation, through its pastor's subscription to the symbols, is seeking a guaranty of this that neither a teacher who is uncertain in his conscience nor a deliberate errorist may preach to her all sorts of errors as though she has a right to do this, this guaranty is lost to the congregation by his demand for a merely conditional subscription; nay, the congregation thereby puts into the hands of the false teacher a weapon against itself and robs itself of the right to depose from office the one who teaches contrary to her symbols. By her public confessions, adopted in so many cases after serious discord, the church

has finally brought to a close and settled, doctrinal controversies and established peace in the church. A conditional endorsement will in such cases only serve to lay a foundation for a renewal of strife and for continual unrest.

Let it be said in all earnestness that every conditional endorsement of the symbols is a backdoor by which dishonesty enters to deride the Church and bring to naught the whole purpose of the symbols and of subscription to the same. In the case of honest men who simply can not test the whole *Book of Concord* according to the Word of God and finally cannot say with certainty that the whole doctrinal content of the confessions agrees fully with the Scriptures, or who are in anxious doubt concerning certain points – such men most certainly, at least in the state in which they find themselves, are not capable of assuming the office of teaching in the church; for “a bishop must be ... apt to teach.” (1 Timothy 3:2) He must be one who holds “fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:9)

On this whole matter of subscription to the confessions Müller, in his classic introduction to the *Concordia* (Gütersloh, 1876) p. 30-32, says (translated by Y.): “We hold that the church is altogether within its rights when she demands of her servants that they recognize the authority of the church symbols and declare themselves unequivocally in their favor. In itself it is of no importance whether this is done through a formal oath or through a promise accompanied by the giving of the hand, through a written statement or by the simple promise by word of mouth; for the Church may surely presuppose on the part of those who desire to become her servants, i.e. heralds of the Truth, that she has to do with honest men. The form of this declaration may thus be irrelevant, but the content is not; for this must declare definitely and clearly that with which the Church is really concerned, namely the acknowledgement of the scripturalness of her symbols in all that concerns doctrine, and the promise – because of the scripturalness of the same, and therefore not *quatenus* but *quia* – to conform faithfully in doctrine to these symbols. It is self-evident that only he can make this declaration who in his heart is convinced that the symbols of the Church are the adequate expression of Scripture teaching, that this

teaching has spring up from the soil of the divine Word and agrees with this Word. If this conviction is there, then subscription to the symbols is not a bond for the spirit, nor a burden on a person's conscience; if this conviction is not there, then there can be no talk of a subscription, and therefore no talk of the acceptance of an office in the Church. For the Church not only has the right but also the obligation to inquire into the religious conviction of those who desire to be her servants; she must, in so far as this is possible, obtain the assurance that her servants are for her, not against her, that they gather with her and do not scatter. It is, in fact, more than naïve to seek an office in the Church and at the same time expect the liberty and convenience of not only preaching another doctrine than that of the Church, and that with the same power and authorization, but also – and that is the necessary consequence – to attack the doctrine of the Church, declare it to be false, and reject it. Whoever seeks an office, either in the State or in the Church, undertakes duties, the performance of which necessarily is associated with the forfeiting of a part of his personal liberty; he enters upon a relation of self-restriction; nay, an unrestricted personal (subjective) liberty is impossible even in living together with other people, even apart from the restraints imposed by the office itself.”

From the introduction of the *Book of Concord* as edited by special resolution of the Missouri Synod in the year 1917, I quote the following, p. 7ff.: “The position accorded the symbols in the Lutheran Church is clearly defined by the *Book of Concord* itself. According to it Holy Scripture alone is to be regarded as the sole rule and norm by which absolutely all doctrines and teachers are to be judged. The object of the Augustana, as stated in its Preface, was to show ‘what manner of doctrine has been set forth, in our lands and churches, from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God.’ And in its conclusion the Lutheran confessors declare: ‘Nothing has been received on our part against Scripture or the Church Catholic,’ and ‘we are ready, God willing, to present ampler information according to the Scriptures.’ ‘Iuxta Scripturam’ – such are the closing words of the Augsburg Confession. The Lutheran Church knows no other principle. The Lutheran symbols, therefore, are not intended to supplant the Scriptures, nor do they do so. They do, however, set

forth what has been at all times the unanimous understanding of the pure Christian doctrine adhered to by sincere and loyal Lutherans everywhere; and, at the same time, they show convincingly from the Scriptures that our forefathers did indeed manfully confess nothing but God's eternal truth, which every Christian is in duty bound to, and consistently always will, believe, teach and confess ... After its adoption by the Lutheran electors, princes, and estates, the Formula of Concord, and with it the entire *Book of Concord*, was, as stated, solemnly subscribed by about 8,000 theologians, pastors and teachers, the pledge reading as follows: 'Since now, in the sight of God and of all Christendom, we wish to testify to those now living and those who shall come after us that this declaration herewith presented concerning all the controverted articles aforementioned and explained, and no other, is our faith, doctrine, and confession, in which we are also willing, by God's grace, to appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, and give an account of it; and that we will neither privately nor publicly speak or write anything contrary to it, but, by the help of God's grace, intend to abide thereby: therefore, after mature deliberation, we have, in God's fear and with the invocation of His name, attached our signatures with our own hands.' ... They declare: 'This Confession also, by the help of God, we will retain to our last breath, when we shall go forth from this life to the heavenly fatherland, to appear with joyful and undaunted mind and with a pure conscience before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'Therefore we also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves or from the phrases which are found in them, but, the Spirit of the Lord aiding us, to persevere constantly, with the greatest harmony, in this godly agreement, and we intend to examine all controversies according to this true norm and declaration of the pure doctrine.'" The following section on "Pledging of Ministers to the Confessions" shows that the pastors and teachers were asked to pledge then as now.

Our Confessions belong to us personally in so far as we make them our own by a faith which conforms in all things to these Confessions. They are not our own, as if we can do with them as we please. They belong to the Church as the standard of this Church in war and in peace. These Confessions are based on the Word; they

proclaim that Word; and they shall abide because the doctrines they proclaim are God's own. He who subscribes to them, let him do it without any reservation, fear or doubting, for they are the voice of the bride, the Church, as she hails her head, acknowledges His grace and love, glories in His truth and wonders at the divine mystery of His presence. Though these Confessions list many teachings, they breathe the same spirit and point to but one object, the Christ of Calvary. Because they describe Him, it is not for us to change them on any point, for fear such change will point us to another Christ, even as two individuals may be exactly alike except in a single feature, the color of the eyes. Our Confessions are supported by two main pillars, the principles upon which our Lutheran Church is built, the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and the doctrine of justification by faith alone. By means of these two principles all teachings of the Confessions are knit together into one whole, they permeate every teaching, give meaning to them all. Those who deny wholehearted endorsement to one teaching, no matter how minor it may seem to be, in reality deny the very heart of our Lutheran faith, for no doctrine of Scripture can be separated from these two main principles. To deny endorsement to a single doctrine of the Confessions is to deny both the clearness and the authority of Scripture itself, which teaches these doctrines.

Let us look to ourselves in these perilous times when so many are wavering and even rebuke ourselves into a more earnest attitude over toward our Confessions, remembering

that it is an ignorant Christianity which does not see,  
 an indifferent Christianity which does not care,  
 a lazy Christianity which does not study and search the Scriptures  
 and the Confessions,  
 a proud Christianity which demands to know rather than to  
 believe,  
 a naïve Christianity which refuses to recognize its enemies,  
 an unthankful Christianity which does not recognize its trea-  
 sures,  
 a disloyal Christianity which will not confess that "all Scripture  
 is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for  
 preproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that  
 the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all  
 good works."

And though we, as the fathers of old, by confessing, may have to become confessors in the sense of martyrs, being misunderstood, derided, persecuted, pray God that He may grant us grace to remain faithful to that eternal Truth which He revealed to us in Christ and

# Augsburg Confession Article XV: Of Church Usages

by Theodore G. Gullixson

With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like. Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. Moreover it is taught that all ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ. Accordingly monastic vows and other traditions concerning distinctions of foods, days, etc., by which it is intended to earn grace and make satisfaction for sin, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.

Of all the issues over which the Reformers struggled, the issue of tradition and church usages may have produced the greatest contention and have become for the Confessors potentially the most troublesome. All the doctrines which the Reformers had to confess, church usages involved the most pages in the Augsburg Confession (counting Articles XXII-XXVIII on abuses). This subject was addressed in all of the major confessions in the *Book of Concord*. Of all the changes which the Reformers made, the ones that most directly affected the people in their worship were those involving church usages.

Church usages form the nexus between doctrine and Christian living. Here fits the oft repeated rule of Prosper of Aquitaine (5<sup>th</sup> Century) *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, “The rule of praying or worship is the rule of believing.” That is, as we worship, we will believe. As we believe, we will worship. <sup>1</sup> Because we live in an age when many pastors, congregations, and church bodies are doing “whatever is right in their own eyes” regarding worship and other practices in the church, this issue is a vital one for us to review. For we too must steer a course between those who demand that rules must be obeyed and those who demand complete freedom to experiment with church rites.

The issues about church usages are a constant part of our

ministry. For example, should we insist that our missions in Peru and Chile have the same order of service and hymns in order to be Lutheran? Are those who have “children’s sermons” too progressive, or are those who don’t unresponsive to young people? Must a church hold Sunday School and Vacation Bible School? Should our churches have free standing altars or altars against the wall? In order to be confirmed, must confirmation students be thirteen years of age, have memorized the whole Small Catechism, and have attended church three out of four Sundays? May young girls be acolytes and women be ushers? Shall the pastor make the sign of the cross over the elements or not?

Each of us will have opinions on these questions. We may feel strongly that our answers are scriptural. However, every question above deals with church usages of human origin. As such, Article XV of the Augsburg Confession shows us how to deal with them.

### ***Definition of “Church Usages” [Latin: Ecclesiastical Rites]***

Article XV (German) defines Church usages as those “that have been established by men.”<sup>2</sup> Church usages are essentially adiaphora, which the *Formula of Concord* defines as those “which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but which have been introduced into the church with good intentions for the sake of good order and decorum or else to preserve Christian discipline.”<sup>3</sup> In respect to worship, the *Formula* declares adiaphora “are in and of themselves no worship of God or even a part of it.”<sup>4</sup>

Because church usages are adiaphora, the Confessors were hard pressed to justify scripturally their course between the inconclasm of Zwingli and the works righteousness of the Papacy. Melancthon clearly recognized the difficulties the Lutherans faced in dealing with Church usages as they did: “This subject of traditions involves many difficult and controversial questions, and we know from actual experience that traditions are real snares for consciences. When they are regarded as necessary, they bring exquisite torture to a conscience that has omitted some observance. On the other hand, their abrogation involves its own difficulties and problems.”<sup>5</sup>

## *Church Usages and the Reformation*

Luther had to deal with church order early in the Reformation. First, it was Karlstadt, who resembled the Papists in crushing Christian freedom. Luther confronted him in 1524. Next, the Livonian Christians had to learn to add love to their freedom in externals and to be ready to give up such freedom for the sake of the common people. Finally, Luther dealt with Erasmus, who scoffed at an easy freedom of confession and penance. In April, 1530, Luther wrote that “ordered, seemly, external ceremonies and worship belong to the marks of Christ’s church, but they must all be tied in with proper instruction about Christian freedom and about how one may make godly use of external worship.”<sup>6</sup>

Another problem the Confessors faced was that church ordinances could not just be purged of any corruptions and restored to their original form. Ordinances needed a new theological basis that rested on the doctrine of justification. Even after the June 25, 1530 presentation of the Augsburg Confession, Melancthon struggled with his colleagues for consensus about church orders in their impending negotiations with the Catholics. Melancthon’s goal-orientated thinking lists three obligatory kinds of tradition: the sake of church order, training of the young, and signs of gratitude that arise out of faith. Thus, worship is not the exuberant expression of faith but a ritual introduction into the faith. The problem the Reformers had with this is power, whether in church order one is to recognize the authority of human powers that have been instituted by God or whether consciences are wounded by that authority.<sup>7</sup> For Luther this question is impossible, for both alternatives leave God out of the picture. He does not focus on the final cause of church order, but on the efficient cause. God is the highest efficient cause. Without God’s word of command no one has power to set up binding ordinances in the church. Such orders can only be established by the agreement of both parties. The pastor has the right to propose new ordinances and to recommend the amendment or abolition of surviving ones – but only with the concurrence of the congregation.<sup>8</sup>

Zwingli’s iconoclasm also caused harm to the Lutherans at

Augsburg. Zwingli discarded much traditional church usage, stating as a principle, “Nothing is to be received except what is expressly taught in Holy Scripture.” Dr. Eck quoted Zwingli as declaring that, “Unc-tions, tonsures, ceremonial vestments, benedictions of water, salt, palms, candles, herbs, consecrations of churches, altars, vases, men, and so forth, are human inventions (322).”<sup>9</sup> Concerning Zwingli’s principle, Allbeck then states, “Nothing but disorder is to be gained by sweeping out of the church all that Christian experience and devotion have developed. The attitude of ‘primitivism’ which would strip the church of everything not found in the New Testament would keep the church perpetually in an infantile state.”<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic *Confutation* completely condemned the second part of AC XV “where we say that human traditions instituted to appease God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sin are contrary to the Gospel.”<sup>11</sup>

For in the Roman Catholic Church, church orders were based on tradition. “By this was originally understood teaching and instruction in general, but in particular the doctrine of the Christian Church as it was contained in the Apostles’ Creed.... But later in the Romish Church [sic] was understood by tradition, all doctrines, ordi-nances and usages which are not indeed contained in the writings of the Apostles, but yet, as they say, are derived from them, propagated by oral tradition, and finally by degrees committed to writing by the Church Fathers, and therefore had just as much divine authority as the written Word of God itself, which without them is incomplete.... These traditions are divided into (a) Historical, concerning certain events in the Church, as for instance, the authority of the Pope; (b) Ritual, concerning the usages of the Church; (c) Doctrinal, concerning faith and morals, for example, purgatory, the sacrifice of the mass, fasting and the like: and everything which cannot be established by the Bible is proved by these as the teaching and institution of God.”<sup>12</sup>

Wilhelm Maurer adds another dimension to the difficulties that church orders held for the Reformers, “It is almost impossible to imagine the difficulty posed by the creation of new church orders for just a few territorial churches in Germany. Official Catholicism simply did not recognize novelty in this field. The legal claim of ordinances was based on their unaltered apostolicity.”<sup>13</sup>

On account of Zwingli's iconoclasm, the AC clearly states that the Lutheran Church did not follow his lead, "It is taught among us that those usages **are to be observed** which may be observed without sin" (AC XV:1, *emphasis mine*). In another place it adds, "We on our part also retain many ceremonies and traditions (such as the liturgy of the Mass and various canticles, festivals, and the like) which serve to preserve order in the church."<sup>14</sup> And again, "Nothing contributes so much to the maintenance of dignity in public worship and the cultivation of reverence and devotion among the people as the proper observance of ceremonies in the churches."<sup>15</sup>

### *The Positive Principle*

The aim of Article XV is to state the principles regarding ceremonies in the church that do not have divine command. Article XV first established a positive principle: Church usages are to be observed which do not lead to sin and which "contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like" (AC XV:1). Keeping good order and instruction of the people are both biblical injunctions. As far as good order, Allbeck states, "There are no conceivable circumstances in which disorder is advisable."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the chapter in which Paul enjoins order, as in "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40), speaks about the disorder which was caused by speaking in tongues.

In the Apology, Melancthon enumerates four benefits from Church usages. Speaking of the rites of the Church Fathers, he notes, "They observed these human rights because they were profitable for good order, because they gave the people a set time to assemble, because they provided an example of how all things should be done decently and in order in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:40), and finally because they helped instruct the common folk."<sup>17</sup> Allbeck describes four principles that the Confessors applied to liturgical usages. First, **liberty** requires that uniformity in rites is not necessary. Second, **orderliness** so that people have a common time to worship. Third, **historicity** which regards rites as good customs but which can also be abandoned. Fourth, **edification** for spiritual growth.<sup>18</sup>

Christian liberty is stated elsewhere in the AC: "It is not

necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places.”<sup>19</sup> Venerable Bede (5<sup>th</sup> century) and others in England excommunicated those Celts who did not worship on the Christmas and Easter dates set by the Pope. Such traditions were also a partial cause of the split between the East and West Churches. The Apology XV notes, “But the apostles insisted that Christian liberty remain in the church, lest the observances of the law or traditions be regarded as necessary.”<sup>20</sup> Luther identifies who has the right to change usages, “The congregation of God [*ecclesia dei*] has the power to establish ceremonies in connection with festivals, foods, fasts, prayers, vigils, etc., not for others but only for itself; it has never done otherwise and never will.” Thus church ordinances apply only to the area for which they were instituted, they cannot claim universal validity.<sup>21</sup> The Augsburg Confession, noting the differences in the dates for celebrating Easter between the eastern and western Churches quoted Irenaeus, “Disagreement in fasting does not destroy unity in faith.”<sup>22</sup>

However, the principle of liberty is especially difficult to hold on to. Allbeck summarizes Apology XV, “freedom has also been abused. There must be no uncontrolled liberty, but changes made in customary rites must be well justified.”<sup>23</sup>

Holding on to the historic traditions for the sake of order and instruction was important for Luther. Allbeck notes, “At the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church was overburdened with a multitude of holy days. In weariness of it all Luther once said, ‘Would to God that in Christendom there were no festivals other than Sunday.’ But the ‘Instruction of Visitors’ of 1528 authorized the retention of the festivals of the Annunciation, Purification, Visitation, John the Baptist, Michael, the Apostles, Magdalene, Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.”<sup>24</sup>

The Confessions also emphasized the role of instruction which church usages serve. Wilhelm Maurer states “This pedagogical argument was the Achilles’ heel of the early Reformation position on church order. It was connected not only to the pedagogical concerns of Christian humanism but also to the moral discipline that the rising patriarchal absolutist state had been developing as early as the end of the Middle Ages.” It blurred the boundary between “the coercive

power of the Christian state and the loving force of church order.”

<sup>25</sup>

Which usages did the Confessors accept? Melancthon wrote, “We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquillity.” <sup>26</sup> Article XXIV states, “Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns are interspersed here and there among people, for ceremonies are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught.” <sup>27</sup> Melancthon lists the following: the Mass, chanting Psalms, using the Lord’s Supper, catechization of children, sermons, and discipline of the flesh. <sup>28</sup> The Confessors did not restrict worship to religious services. Worship includes the whole cultus, or acts of worship, such as ceremonies, pilgrimages, fasts, prayer, vows, giving of alms, observance of traditions, and other spiritual exercises. <sup>29</sup> The instructions in the Small Catechism for private devotions are also worship and are a part of “church usages.”

### *The Negative Principle*

During the years, various voices in Reformed churches have characterized Lutherans as being semi-Catholic because of the liturgies and other orders they cling to. The simplest solution might be to sweep all usages out, but the main-stream Reformed churches have developed their own rules, ceremonies, and traditions based on how they worship. And Roman Catholics who visit Lutheran services find much similarity between the two orders of worship. However, Allbeck reminds us that though Lutheran and Roman Catholic usages may seem identical, “the purpose and spirit of each is quite distinct. In Catholicism everything is discolored with ideas of merit and obligation. Among Lutherans there is instead the freedom of the gospel and its assurance of God’s grace.” <sup>30</sup>

This distinction is made quite clear throughout the Augsburg Confession. In Article XV we read, “Moreover it is taught that all ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ.” <sup>31</sup> This definition indicates that “for Luther, even questions of order belong to the confession of faith; they are to be addressed from the point of view of justifying faith.” <sup>32</sup>

Whatever was instituted to earn forgiveness was either eliminated (monastic vows, fast days, celibacy) or changed (the Mass, Baptism, Confession) so that the Gospel would not be obscured. When the *Confutation* rejected the statements about human traditions in the AC XV, Melancthon declared, “they [the opponents] are Judaizing; they are openly replacing the Gospel with doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).<sup>33</sup>

In the Apology, Melancthon notes that while good order is necessary in the church, human reason naturally supposes that such works justify men and reconcile God. This is the very delusion by which the Israelites expanded ceremonies. The result is that God’s commandments are obscured. “For when men regard these works as perfect and spiritual, they will vastly prefer them to the works that God commands, like the tasks of one’s calling, the administration of public affairs, the administration of the household, married life, and the rearing of children. Compared with these ceremonies such tasks seem profane, so that many perform them with scruples of conscience.”<sup>34</sup>

Against the ideas that works justify, the Apology quotes Colossians 2:16, 17 [Let no one judge you in food...] and Acts 15:10 [putting on a yoke], and Galatians 5:1 [don’t submit again to slavery].<sup>35</sup> Again, “The Gospel clearly testifies that traditions should not be imposed on the church to merit forgiveness of sins or to be acts of worship that please God as righteousness or to burden consciences so that their omission is judged to be a sin.”<sup>36</sup> The Apology states, “It is madness to put a human tradition [monastic profession], which has neither a command of God nor a promise, on the same level with an ordinance of Christ [Baptism] which has both a command and a promise of God, which contains a covenant of grace and eternal life.”<sup>37</sup>

Article XV in the *Smalcald Articles*, Part III is also about Human Traditions, where Luther confesses: “The assertion of the papists that human traditions effect forgiveness of sins or merit salvation is unchristian and to be condemned. As Christ says, ‘In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men’ (Matthew 15:9), and it is written in Titus 1:14, ‘They are men who reject the truth.’ When the papists say it is a mortal sin to break such precepts

of men, this, too, is false.”<sup>38</sup>

What usages were rejected? One could list the articles in the abuses section of the *Augsburg Confession*. Art. XXI: The cult of saints, Art. XXII: Of both kinds, Art. XXIII: The marriage of priests [celibacy], Art. XXIV: The Mass [eucharistic prayers, transubstantiation, *ex opere operato*], Art. XXVI: The distinction of foods, Art. XXVII: Monastic vows, and Art. XXVIII: Ecclesiastical power [civil power in church].

Because certain rites destroy the Gospel in respect to the Mass, Luther lists idolatries which have been discarded by the Lutherans: 1) purgatory, 2) masses for the dead, 3) pilgrimages, 4) fraternities [monasteries, chapters, and vicars], 5) relics, and 6) indulgences.<sup>39</sup> Since the Papacy is declared to be a human invention, this also has been removed.

Luther identifies a further group of church rites in “the pope’s bag of tricks” which “contains silly and childish articles, such as the consecration of churches, the baptism of bells, the baptism of altar stones, the invitation to such ceremonies of sponsors who might make gifts, etc. . . . In addition, there are blessings of candles, palms, spices, oats, cakes, etc.”<sup>40</sup>

### ***Adiaphora in the Formula of Concord***

The *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology* grounded the issue of church usages in the principles of good order, instruction, and justification by faith alone. However, through the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims, the devil caused the issue of church usages to trouble the church again. However, the issue was not which usages should be retained, but can usages [rites, traditions], which are adiaphora, become part of our confession which requires that we reject them or insist on doing them?

Article X of the Formula of Concord resolved this issue again in relation to the Gospel. “At the time of confession, as when enemies of the Word of God desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire community of God...are obligated to confess openly...the true doctrine and all that pertains to it.”<sup>41</sup> Adiaphora cannot be used to hide a false fellowship: “Nor are such

rites matters of indifference when these ceremonies are intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or agreed to with that intention) that these two opposing religions have been brought into agreement and become one body....”<sup>42</sup>

In a bold statement for Christian liberty the Formula declares, “the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way....”<sup>43</sup> In reality, demands for common ceremonies constitute a reintroduction of the law and rob Christians of their liberty. However, yielding to ceremonies where doctrinal agreement has not been reached supports idolaters in their idolatry and scandalizes the true believers and weakens their faith.<sup>44</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The principles stated in the Confessions on the subject of Church Usages place certain demands on our practice. Such “adiaphora” as immersion for Baptism, breaking of the bread [the fraction was used in the Prussian Union as a symbol for unity within Lutheran/ Reformed church], elevation of the cup, and attendance at community ministerial meetings, are issues of our public confession. By refusing to do these, we testify against the false teachings of other church bodies.

However, these issues do not trouble our people as much today. As pastors we have to deal with a host of other church usages issues which trouble people. Should churches use only white lights and Chrismos on their Christmas trees? Should a pastor insist on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve services? Should cut flowers only be placed on the altar or can one use potted flowers? Shall the church have bazaars and bake sales? Shall the church use only one liturgy or can the pastor provide a new one every Sunday? What hymnal and Bible translation shall be used? Shall the *reliqua* of communion be consumed or not?

All such issues are adiaphora, not commanded nor forbidden by Scripture. Yet it is in this area that pastors and congregations get

themselves into trouble either by demanding to abide by certain rules (which corrupts Christian liberty and troubles consciences) or by promoting freedom — to the extent that things are not done decently and in order or are done for the wrong reasons.

While we rightly identify the agendas and the hymnals (whether TLH, ELH, or CW) we use as true confessions of our faith, we always must remember that all orders and hymns in them are of human origin, that none of it is divine worship (only an aid to true worship), and that we may not demand obedience to them for salvation. Nevertheless, the Augsburg Confession states, “nothing contributes so much to the maintenance of dignity in public worship and the cultivation of reverence and devotion among the people as the proper observance of ceremonies in the churches.”<sup>45</sup>

With the gale-force winds of change blowing so steadily against our church practices, both from the direction of the Evangelicals and from the traditionalist Episcopalian/Roman Catholics, we need to clearly know the Scriptures and the principles on which we make decisions so that we use our freedom in Christ tempered with love for people and order. The Augsburg Confession ends with this bold statement, “Nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic. For it is manifest that we have guarded diligently against the introduction into our churches of any new and ungodly doctrines.”<sup>46</sup>

## Endnotes

1 Pittelko, Robert, "Worship and the Community of Faith," p. 57 in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, Fred. L. Precht, ed. St. Louis: CPH, 1993.

2 AC XV:1, Tappert, p. 36.

3 FC SD X:1, Tappert, p. 610.

4 FC SD X:8, Tappert, p. 612.

5 Ap. XV:49, Tappert, pp. 221-222.

6 Maurer, Wilhelm, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, H. George Anderson, transl. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986 p. 219

7 Maurer, p. 224.

8 Maurer, pp. 226-228.

9 Allbeck, Willard Dow, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968, p. 99.

10 Allbeck, p. 100.

11 Apology XV:1, Tappert, p. 36.

12 (Whitaker, John E., *The Unaltered Augsburg Confession with Explanatory Notes*, Reading, Penn.: Pilger Publishing House, 1888, pp. 57-58).

13 Maurer, p. 215.

14 AC XXVI:40, Tappert, p. 69.

15 AC Abuses:6 (Latin); Tappert, p. 49.

16 Allbeck, p. 100

17 Apology XV:20, Tappert, p. 218.

18 Allbeck, p. 173.

19 AC VII:3, Tappert, p. 32.

20 Apology XV:32, Tappert, p. 220.

21 Maurer, p. 217, also cited WA 30.2:421ff.

22 AC XXVI:44, Tappert, p. 70.

23 Allbeck, p. 174.

24 Allbeck, p. 101.

25 Maurer, p. 218.

26 Apology XV:38, Tappert, p. 220.

27 Apology XXIV:2 [Latin], Tappert, p. 56.

28 Apology XV:38-44 pp. 220-221.

- 29 Pittelko, p. 51.
- 30 Allbeck, p. 102.
- 31 AC XV:3, Tappert, p. 36-37.
- 32 Maurer, p. 174.
- 33 Apology XV:4, Tappert, p. 215.
- 34 Apology XV:25-26, Tappert, pp. 218-219.
- 35 Apology, XV:30-31, Tappert, p. 219.
- 36 Apology XXVIII:11, Tappert, p. 283.
- 37 Apology XXVII:20, Tappert, p. 272.
- 38 Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article XV: Human Traditions: 1-2, Tappert, p. 316.
- 39 Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article II: The Mass:11-24, Tappert, pp. 294-296.
- 40 Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article XV:4-5, Tappert, p. 316.
- 41 Formula of Concord, SD X:10, Tappert, p. 612.
- 42 Formula of Concord SD X:5, Tappert, p. 611.
- 43 Formula of Concord SD X:9, Tappert, p. 612.
- 44 Formula of Concord SD X:16 Tappert, p. 613.
- 45 AC, Abuses, 6 [Latin], Tappert, p. 49.
- <sup>46</sup> AC, Conclusion:5 [Latin], Tappert, p. 95.

# **Citizen Soldiers: Heirs of Heaven Besieged by Powers of Darkness – Exegesis of Ephesians 6:10-20**

*by Steven R. Sparley*

The Apostle Paul, in his final admonition to the Christians of Ephesus, made use of a striking illustration so that they would grasp their perilous situation as members of the church militant. Paul's picture of the well-armed warrior has received many different interpretations since that time because the church is itself divided in its view of the nature of the warfare which confronts the Christian and the means which God, in His grace, has given him to survive it. In these last days, when so-called Christian bookstore shelves are filled with ever newer manuals for the conduct of spiritual warfare, we find our strategy in approaching the subject little changed from the days of the Reformation.

In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages. For it was not without purpose that God caused his Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone - the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. Now if God did not despise them but chose them above all others for his word, then we too ought to honor them above all others. St. Paul declared it to be a peculiar glory and distinction of Hebrew that God's word was given in that language, when he said in Romans 3[:1-2], "What advantage or profit have those who are circumcised? Much indeed. To begin with, God's speech is entrusted to them." King David too boasts in Psalm 147[:19-20], "He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation or revealed to them his ordinances." Hence, too, the Hebrew language is called sacred. And St. Paul, in Romans 1[:2], calls it "the holy scriptures," doubtless [verfasst] therein. Similarly, the Greek language too may be called sacred, because it was chosen above all others as the language in which the New Testament was to be written, and because by it other languages too have been sanctified as it spilled over into them like a fountain through the medium of translation. And let us be

sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit [Eph. 6:17] is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined ... <sup>1</sup>

We approach the text as recorded in its original language, firmly convinced that it is clear and understandable when allowed to speak for itself out of its own context. We approach it mindful also of the apostle's admonition to Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) Law must remain Law and Gospel, Gospel.

### *Text*

10 Τοῦ λοιποῦ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. 11 ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου· 12 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. 13 διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στήναι. 14 στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης 15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης, 16 ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνησθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι· 17 καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἔστιν ῥῆμα θεοῦ. 18 Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀγίων 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 20 ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι.

### *Grammar and Vocabulary*

**Verse 10:** Τοῦ λοιποῦ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ.

Τοῦ λοιποῦ - ADJECTIVE pronominal neuter, genitive, singular: remainder

ἐνδυναμοῦσθε - VERB middle present imperative, 2nd person plural: strengthen

ἐν κυρίῳ - NOUN common masculine, dative, singular: lord

ἐν τῷ κράτει - NOUN common neuter, dative, singular: power, might, intensity

τῆς ἰσχύος - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: strength, might

**Verse 11:** ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·

ἐνδύσασθε - VERB middle aorist imperative, 2nd person plural: to dress, clothe

τὴν πανοπλίαν - NOUN common feminine, accusative, singular: panoply, full armor

τοῦ θεοῦ - NOUN common masculine, genitive, singular: God

πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι - VERB deponent middle present infinitive, functioning as an articular infinitive, neuter, accusative: to be able

στήναι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to stand

πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας - NOUN common feminine, accusative, plural: craftiness, pl: wiles, stratagems

τοῦ διαβόλου - NOUN common masculine, genitive, singular: accuser

**Verse 12:** ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκοτόυς τούτου πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς ποιηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

ὅτι - CONJUNCTION subordinating: that

ἡ πάλη - NOUN common feminine, nominative, singular: struggle

πρὸς αἷμα - NOUN common neuter, accusative, singular:

blood

καὶ σάρκα - NOUN common feminine, accusative, singular:  
flesh

ἀλλὰ - CONJUNCTION superordinating: but

πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς - NOUN common feminine, accusative,  
plural: ruler

πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας - NOUN common feminine, accusative,  
plural: ruling power

πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας - NOUN common masculine, ac-  
cusative, plural: world-ruler

τοῦ σκότους τούτου - NOUN common neuter, genitive, sin-  
gular: darkness

πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ - ADJECTIVE pronominal neuter, ac-  
cusative, plural: pertaining to spirits

τῆς πονηρίας - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular:  
wickedness

ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις - ADJECTIVE pronominal neuter, da-  
tive, plural: heavenly

**Verse 13:** διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα  
δυναθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα  
κατεργασάμενοι στήναί

διὰ τοῦτο - PREPOSITION

ἀναλάβετε - VERB active aorist imperative, 2nd person plural:  
to take up

τὴν πανοπλίαν - (see above)

τοῦ θεοῦ - (see above)

ἵνα - CONJUNCTION subordinating: in order that

δυναθῆτε - VERB deponent passive aorist subjunctive, 2nd  
person plural:

ἀντιστῆναι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to withstand,  
resist

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular:  
day

τῇ πονηρᾷ - ADJECTIVE pronominal feminine, dative, sin-  
gular: evil, degenerate

καὶ ἅπαντα - ADJECTIVE pronominal neuter, accusative,  
plural: all

κατεργασάμενοι - VERB deponent middle aorist participle, masculine, nominative, plural: to achieve, accomplish

στήναι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to stand

**Verse 14:** στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης

στήτε - VERB active aorist imperative, 2nd person plural:

οὖν - CONJUNCTION superordinating: therefore

περιζωσάμενοι - VERB middle aorist participle, masculine, nominative, plural: to gird, belt

τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν - NOUN common feminine, accusative, singular: waist

ἐν ἀληθείᾳ - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular: truth

ἐνδυσάμενοι - VERB middle aorist participle, masculine, nominative, plural: (see above)

τὸν θώρακα - NOUN common masculine, accusative, singular: breastplate

τῆς δικαιοσύνης - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: righteousness

**Verse 15:** καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνῆς

ὑποδησάμενοι - VERB middle aorist participle, masculine, nominative, plural: to bind beneath

τοὺς πόδας - NOUN common masculine, accusative, plural: foot

ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular: readiness, preparation

τοῦ εὐαγγελίου - NOUN common neuter, genitive, singular: gospel, good news

τῆς εἰρήνης - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: peace

**Verse 16:** ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ ποιηροῦ τᾶ πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι·

- ἐν πᾶσιν - ADJECTIVE pronominal masculine/neuter, dative, plural: (see above)
- ἀναλαβόντες - VERB active aorist participle, masculine, nominative, plural: (see above)
- τὸν θυρεὸν - NOUN common masculine, accusative, singular: shield
- τῆς πίστεως - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: faith
- ἐν ᾧ - PRONOUN relative masculine, dative, singular: which, who
- δυνήσεσθε - VERB deponent middle future indicative, 2nd person plural:
- πάντα τὰ βέλη - NOUN common neuter, accusative, plural: arrow
- τοῦ ποιηροῦ - ADJECTIVE pronominal masculine, genitive, singular: (see above)
- πεπυρωμένα - VERB middle/passive perfect participle, neuter, accusative, pl: to burn
- σβέσαι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to extinguish, quench

**Verse 17:** καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ

- τὴν περικεφαλαίαν - NOUN common feminine, accusative, singular: helmet
- τοῦ σωτηρίου - NOUN common neuter, genitive, singular: salvation, deliverance
- δέξασθε - VERB deponent middle aorist imperative, 2nd person plural: (see above)
- τὴν μάχαιραν - NOUN common feminine, accusative, singular: sword
- τοῦ πνεύματος - NOUN common neuter, genitive, singular: spirit
- ὃ - PRONOUN relative neuter, nominative, singular: (see above)
- ἐστὶν - VERB active present indicative, 3rd person singular: to be

ῥῆμα - NOUN common neuter, nominative, singular: word, speaking

θεοῦ - NOUN common masculine, genitive, singular: (see above)

**Verse 18:** Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερῆσαι καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων

Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: prayer

δεήσεως - NOUN common feminine, genitive, singular: entreaty

προσευχόμενοι - VERB deponent middle present participle, masculine, nominative, plural: to pray

ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ - NOUN common masculine, dative, singular: right, proper, fixed time

ἐν πνεύματι - NOUN common neuter, dative, singular: (see above)

εἰς αὐτὸ - PRONOUN intensive neuter, accusative, singular:

ἀγρυπνοῦντες - VERB active present participle, masculine, nominative, plural: to stay awake, keep watch

ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερῆσαι - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular: perseverance

δεήσει - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular: (see above)

περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων - ADJECTIVE pronominal masculine, genitive, plural: holy

**Verse 19:** καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ - PRONOUN possessive

ἵνα - CONJUNCTION subordinating: that

μοι - PRONOUN personal dative, 1st person singular: I, me

δοθῇ - VERB passive aorist subjunctive, 3rd person singular: to give

λόγος - NOUN common masculine, nominative, singular:

word

ἐν ἀνοίξει - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular:  
opening

τοῦ στόματός μου - NOUN common neuter, genitive, singular:  
mouth

ἐν παρρησίᾳ - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular:  
boldness

γνωρίσαι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to reveal, make  
known

τὸ μυστήριον - NOUN common neuter, accusative, singular:  
mystery

τοῦ εὐαγγελίου - NOUN common neuter, genitive, singular:  
gospel, good news

**Verse 20:** ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι  
ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι

ὑπὲρ οὗ - PRONOUN relative neuter, genitive, singular: (see  
above)

πρεσβεύω - VERB active present indicative, 1st person sin-  
gular: act as an ambassador

ἐν ἀλύσει - NOUN common feminine, dative, singular:  
chain

ἵνα - CONJUNCTION subordinating: that

ἐν αὐτῷ - PRONOUN intensive neuter, dative, singular:

παρρησιάσωμαι - VERB deponent middle aorist subjunctive,  
1st person singular: to speak courageously

ὡς - CONJUNCTION subordinating: as

δεῖ - VERB active present indicative, 3rd person singular: it  
is necessary

με - PRONOUN personal nominative, 1st person singular:  
(see above)

λαλῆσαι - VERB active aorist infinitive: to speak, utter

### *Translation*

10 From now on strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the  
power of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you are

able to stand against the devil's wiles; 12 because it is not a case of our wrestling against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the cosmic tyrants of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [realms]. 13 For this reason take up the full armor of God so that you would be able to resist in the evil day and, having accomplished all, to stand. 14 Take your stand therefore by belting your waist in truth and by putting on the breastplate of righteousness 15 and by having shod your feet in the readiness of the Gospel of peace, 16 in all [things] taking up the shield of faith, with which you can put out all the flaming [darts] of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying in spirit every kind of prayer and petition in every situation, and to that end staying alert with all steadfastness and petition concerning all the saints, 19 and for me, that word would be given me when I open my mouth to make known the mystery of the Gospel in public forum, 20 for which purpose I am an ambassador in chains, so that in this I would speak openly as I ought.

### *Context*

In order to understand rightly any text of the Holy Scriptures it is necessary to examine its context. In the case of Ephesians 6:10-20 it is especially important. To be noted first is the general context, that is to say, the whole of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesian church. In his "Prefaces to the New Testament," Martin Luther provides a succinct overview of the general context of the letter:

In this epistle St. Paul teaches, first, what the gospel is, how it was predestined by God alone in eternity, and earned and sent forth through Christ, so that all who believe on it become righteous, godly, living, saved men, and free from the law, sin, and death. This he does in the first three chapters. Then he teaches that false teachings and the commandments of men are to be avoided, so that we may remain true to one Head, and become sure and genuine and complete in Christ alone. For in him we have everything, so that we need nothing beside him. This he does in chapter 4. Then he goes on to teach that we are to practice and prove our faith with good works, avoid sin, and fight with spiritual weapons against the devil, so that through the cross we

may be steadfast in hope.<sup>2</sup>

Somewhat in contrast to Luther's overview, a theologian of a much later era, offers this summary of the letter:

The Letter may properly be divided into two parts: first, dogmatic, chapters 1–3; second, paranetic, chapters 4–6. But it is a mistake to describe the first as a *breviarium* of Pauline theology, or as a thanksgiving for the rich blessings of the Gospel, or as a hymn of praise poured out because of the glory of the redemption through Christ, or because of all that God has done for man and especially also for the Christian readers through Christ. If we examine these chapters carefully, we will soon find Paul's special theme, which dominates both parts of the Letter and in the warp and woof of which the common Pauline ideas are interwoven by co-ordination or subordination, is the *Una Sancta*, the one holy Christian Church.<sup>3</sup>

While one can readily agree with Stoeckhardt that the subject matter of Paul's letter is the Church, viewed both as a whole, and thus having the one faith in common, and also as a collection of individuals, each possessing a different calling in life, nevertheless it is to be noticed that Luther does not once use the word "church" in his description of the book's content. He also divides the book differently, into three rather than Stoeckhardt's two parts, though he agrees there is a major break after chapter three. The two-fold division seems to represent the opinion of the majority of expositors.

Generally speaking, most commentators treat 6:10ff as if it were a general conclusion to the letter as a whole and, practically speaking, not tied to any one part of it more closely than another. It seems to be for this reason that most then treat the phrase, Τοῦ λοιποῦ, (or, Τὸ λοιπόν, see below) as if that which follows is almost an addendum or even an afterthought and not closely connected to that which precedes it.

Leaving aside for a moment the thrust of the phrase, Τοῦ λοιποῦ it should also be noted that the content of the twenty-two verses which immediately precede our text are very familiar ones to any teacher of the Small Catechism. They speak specifically of six of the thirteen stations or offices enumerated in its Table of Duties. Four of those six paragraphs of the Catechism (i.e. SC IX 8-11) are in

fact simply direct quotations from Ephesians 6:1-9. This fact should not be passed over lightly.

## *Interpretation*

### *The Nature of the Connection to the Epistle – Introduction*

How does the section under consideration connect to the Epistle? Stoeckhardt writes, “By writing Τὸ λοιπόν (which is the preferred reading, not Τοῦ λοιποῦ), 'as to the rest,' the Apostle now turns to the close of his admonition.”<sup>4</sup> There is a variant reading here, which Stoeckhardt prefers. The United Bible Society’s fourth edition of *The Greek New Testament* does not even list the variant in its critical apparatus and thus expresses its opinion. However, Nestle-Aland does give the variant. An older textual resource, which would have been current in Stoeckhardt’s day, supplies the rationale for preferring the variant. It states that in the usage of both the Classical and Koine periods the accusative means “finally” or “as for the rest,” the genitive has more of a temporal meaning, thus, “in the future” or, possibly, “henceforth.”<sup>5</sup> It further notes that whereas the accusative can be used for the genitive, it does not appear to be equally interchangeable the other way.

In general, the reformed commentators prefer the variant reading with the accusative<sup>6</sup> or tend to minimize the difference between the genitive and accusative and opt for the sense of the accusative<sup>7</sup> even though not accepting it as the actual text. Surveying the situation, Lenski comments:

The texts and the text critics differ as to whether the reading is Τοῦ λοιποῦ or Τὸ λοιπόν. Either would be adverbial. Robertson calls the former an incipient abverb, the latter is an adverbial accusative. There is only a shade of difference between them: *des weiteren – was das Uebrige betrifft*. There is no need to

have the genitive refer to the future: “from henceforth”; it is logical: “with respect to the rest” (R., W. P.). Beyond question Paul now offers his final admonition which is to cover all that he has yet to say.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless there is a difference, and in this case perhaps more than a shade. As an example of the difference note the conclusion of Galatians (6:17). There Paul says, Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω, “From now on let no one trouble me.” Luther gives as Paul’s meaning this: “I have preached the Gospel faithfully as I received it by revelation from Christ Himself. Whoever does not want to follow it may follow anything he wishes, provided that he does not bother me anymore.”<sup>9</sup> It is precisely this temporal sense of the genitive, so evident in Galatians, that Lenski seems to want to avoid here. Habecq agrees with him.<sup>10</sup> The reason for this will become evident.

### ***The Problem for the Citizen Soldier – Verses 10 through 12***

10 Τοῦ λοιποῦ ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ 11 ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου· 12 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἶμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς ποινηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

To be sure Paul’s words introduce a final admonition to his hearers. However here lies the single most important question to be answered in this examination of the meaning of Ephesians 6:10-20. Is the reader of the epistle to see this admonition as the last in a string of somewhat independent admonitions?<sup>11</sup> Or, should the reader view it as a culminating, summarizing and unifying admonition that hears all the way back to 4:1-7, 3:14-17 and, probably, even 1:15ff.? If it is the latter, then Paul would be saying, “You have heard what is the nature of our common faith and hope in this world of darkness

and sin, and also the nature of our individual callings in that same world. Therefore from now on strengthen yourselves in the Lord ...” Such an understanding gives good sense in view of the structure of the epistle as a whole. Paul has prayed for the Ephesians (1:15ff. and 3:14ff.). He has instructed them in the one faith (chapters 1-3) and in their individual callings (4:1ff.). Now – that is to say – from now on, they are to strengthen themselves in the Lord for the reason that, however much he commended them for their “faith in the Lord Jesus”(1:15) and their “love for all the saints” (1:15), they are still woefully weak in comparison to the enemies who even now gather menacingly around them as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

In his *Loci Theologici*, in the locus on angels, Martin Chemnitz takes up the matter of “The Warfare Between Evil and Good Angels.” There he repeatedly refers to the verses under consideration here:

With regard to spiritual blessings, we think the devil is far away, when actually it is at this point that he encircles us to the greatest extent, as we shall note. For he is permitted to harm us in external matters and to lay siege to us in physical matters for the very reason that we thereby may be warned concerning his spiritual wickedness in high or heavenly places, Ephesians 6:12.

1. When the truth of the Gospel is preached, he blinds many, so that they cannot see, 2 Corinthians 4:4.

2. When a person hears the Word, but hears it in a perfunctory or lackadaisical manner, the devil comes and snatches away the Word, Luke 8:12.

3. Even when we do hear the Word with diligence and careful attention, Paul says in Ephesians 4:27, “Do not give opportunity to the devil,” that is, by putting on the old man (cf. Ephesians 4:22).

4. Even after the truth has been recognized, the devil again leads many away from the simplicity of Christ. See for example 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 5:15.

... And there are many more negative things, that is, evil and adverse things which we do not see or understand, into which the devil desires to cast us, if he were not prohibited from it by God ...

But what is to be done? “Beware,” says Paul in Ephesians 4:27. “Resist,” says Peter, 1 Peter 5:9. “Put on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand (*wehret euch*), Eph. 6:11. O Lord our God make us steadfast and protect us. (*Ach Herr Gott unsers wehrens/huetens*). He is master of a thousand arts. He is more powerful than the whole world, Ephesians 6:12. What are we who are commanded to resist? We are dust and ashes. Therefore, what will be done about us? I answer from that famous hymn so filled with the life-giving Holy Spirit, the words of our dear Luther.<sup>12</sup>

Even in the midst of great spiritual blessings the Ephesians, and indeed Christians of every place and time, are surrounded by great danger. From now on, Paul says, they (as individuals) are to strengthen themselves in the Lord and in the power of His might, even as Luther sang in the aforementioned hymn. Practically speaking, believers do so when they put on the full armor which God provides for His people – the full armor of which Paul has spoken in the foregoing epistle, especially its final three chapters. Otherwise they will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Certainly the church itself will stand, even in the face of the very gates of hell. But individuals can fall in the midst of the battle. This is the warning.

πανοπλία refers to “the full equipment of the heavily armed foot-soldier.”<sup>13</sup> In most editions of the Bible the word is translated “whole armor” or “full armor.” Markus Barth objects, stating, “Five arguments speak against the seemingly literal translation of *panoplia* by “whole armor.”<sup>14</sup> Thereafter he shows that the historical panoply of the ancient infantryman is not fully enumerated by Paul and that such vocabulary often had other connotations in ancient literature. He suggests “splendid” as a better translation than “whole.”<sup>15</sup> It is an interesting and well-informed argument. If Paul’s concern were that of the ancient armorer or the ancient moralist/nationalist, one might give it credence. But it is not. Paul’s point of comparison is this: Just as the full armor of the Roman soldier is intended to allow him to remain standing at the end of the day’s battle, so too is the armor here spoken of intended to allow the Christian who wears it to remain standing at the end of “the evil day.” The panoply Paul here commands his hearers to put on will accomplish just that purpose because it is indeed the “whole armor of God.”

Paul's panoply is not the normal one of the Roman soldier. It lacks some of the usual offensive accoutrements. It has only the sword, the weapon of close-quarter, individual combat. The purpose of the panoply is therefore primarily defensive. It is to allow the citizen soldier of the city of God to remain standing on the field of a battle already won, as the Apostle clearly stated in Ephesians 1:20-23. So the point is not that such a soldier is equipped to stand in the face of the direct, frontal assault of Satan and his entire host as the crucified Christ did at Calvary, but *στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου*. The enemy has been defeated, but he remains in the battleground's vicinity, wounded, resentful and exceedingly dangerous to the one who walks about without armor.

*μεθοδεία* occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Ephesians 4:14. In fact, Spicq adds, "This noun is unknown in Greek before Eph. 4:14; 6:11."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, its meaning is clear from the context.

The nature of the attacks (the plur. suggests that they are constantly repeated or are of incalculable variety) constitutes their great danger, against which the armour of God is the only defence. They are distinguished not so much by technique or strategy as by refinement and insidiousness (Vulgate translates *insidiae*, Luther "cunning attacks," A.V. "wiles"). If this be so, however, *methodeia* is also used in a bad sense in 4:14. What is meant is not "methodical confusion of truth," but a cunning process which seeks to deliver up to error, or such as is proper to error.<sup>17</sup>

The fuller meaning of *μεθοδεία τοῦ διαβόλου* will become clear in the discussion of the panoply below.

For the individual Christian the nature of the battle Paul has here begun to describe will be one where the enemy remains out of sight, never fully coming into view. He strikes from the shadows with the skill and craftiness of the hardened veteran he truly is. It is at this point that Paul changes the metaphor from war to wrestling. In doing so, he shows his hearers why "the wiles of the devil" are so insidious. He says, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς ποιηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. Here Lenski makes an excellent observation.

Paul is not mixing his figures and inserting the idea of the wrestler into the description of the hoplite. “The wrestling” is the proper word and is used here for that reason. When one contends with “blood and flesh” he comes to grips, he wrestles with, such an antagonist. This is a human antagonist. Wrestling is also a game, a human game. In this game the wrestler only throws his opponent, he does not kill him as he does in war. Paul says that we have (Greek: “there is not for us”) no mere wrestling match with an unarmed, human opponent, who at the worst is able only to lay our back to the floor, we face a tremendous army, all the evil forces of the supernatural world.<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted, as Lenski also points out,<sup>19</sup> that the expected order of flesh and blood is reversed. “Flesh and blood” as a phrase is used in the Scriptures to refer to the sinful nature of man. Here the reversed αἷμα καὶ σάρκα seems to point not to the moral quality of the hypothetical foe, but to his physical as opposed to spiritual nature. The same ordering is to be observed in John 1:13 and Hebrews 2:14, both of which concern Christ’s taking on our humanity, our “blood and flesh,” “yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

The struggle which confronts each individual follower of Christ will appear to him or her simply as a struggle against blood and flesh. In such a struggle one sometimes will win and sometimes will lose, much like in an ongoing contest. The nature of the opponent will always appear to be that which we ourselves know, like that which we see in our own mirror. How can such a one ever do more than lay us on our back on the floor? There will always be another day, another match. Paul employs that metaphor to contrast it to the situation which truly obtains for the citizen soldier. The metaphor of wrestling does not therefore depict the true nature of the struggle, only its appearance to the human eye.

The Christian is engaged in a battle of faith with hostile powers which are not flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). Hence in his struggle he cannot find weapons in his own psychological or moral powers, but must turn to God for aid.<sup>20</sup>

Paul, having told his hearers who the enemy is not, now tells them more fully who it is. The struggle, though to all appearances a series of bouts against our own kind, is in fact a protracted war πρὸς

τὰς ἀρχάς πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς ποιηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. Strikingly, Paul describes the very same enemies over which Christ accomplished His great victory. Note the similarity of language with Ephesians 1:20-21: “Ἦν ἐνηργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου. Surrounding the citizen soldier of Christ’s kingdom is the very same demonic army that came fully and terribly into our Lord’s sight when He said in Gethsemane, “When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:53) The twelve, who fled from Jesus just then, saw only αἶμα καὶ σάρκα, only the temple guards and high priest’s servants with their clubs and torches. But the whole host of hell was there. It hurled itself upon Jesus at the place called Golgotha.

Because this same enemy now operates in the context of his opponent’s victory, he has to adopt the tactics of the partisan, the guerrilla of modern parlance. As such he operates in conquered territory. The reader therefore should not be surprised to learn he operates not only in the world we see and know, but also in the very “heavenly realms” where Christ Himself sits victorious. He is therefore immensely dangerous.

### *The Panoply of the Citizen Soldier – Verses 13 through 17*

13 διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ποιηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στήναι. 14 στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὄσφιν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης 15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης, 16 ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ ποιηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι· 17 καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ.

In view of the dangerous reality which confronts the Christian, Paul commands his hearers to take up the whole armor of God. If not, they will be unable to withstand the spiritual assault which will engulf them in the evil day. It is to be noted that in precisely this context the Lutheran Confessions plainly connect the “armor” of Ephesians 6:11-17 to the catechism! Thus Luther writes in the preface to the *Large Catechism*:

Why should I waste words? Time and paper would fail me if I were to recount all the blessings that flow from God’s Word. The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. What, then, shall we call God’s Word, which routs and destroys this master of a thousand arts with all his wiles and might? It must, indeed, be master of more than a hundred thousand arts. Shall we frivolously despise this might, blessing, power, and fruit – especially we who would be pastors and preachers? If so, we deserve not only to be refused food but also to be chased out by dogs and pelted with dung. Not only do we need God’s Word daily as we need our daily bread; we also must use it daily against the daily, incessant attacks and ambushes of the devil with his thousand arts.

If this were not enough to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, there is God’s command. That alone should be incentive enough. Deuteronomy 6:7-8 solemnly enjoins that we should always meditate upon his precepts whether sitting, walking, standing, lying down, or rising, and keep them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant token and sign. Certainly God did not require and command this so solemnly without good reason. He knows our danger and need. He knows the constant and furious attacks and assaults of the devil. So he wishes to warn, equip, and protect us against them with good “armor” against their “flaming darts,” and with a good antidote against their evil infection and poison. O what mad, senseless fools we are! We must ever live and dwell in the midst of such mighty enemies as the devils, and yet we despise our weapons and armor, too lazy to give them a thought! <sup>21</sup>

Before proceeding on to the connection between the panoply and the catechism, there are a few other points to clear up. Whether Paul’s hearer was to conceive of the panoply as six-fold or seven-fold, that is to say, including prayer, is difficult to answer. More recent Lutheran exegetes differ in this. Stoeckhardt <sup>22</sup> and Habeck <sup>23</sup> prefer to

leave prayer out of the panoply. But Lenski includes it, stating, “Now these literal items are seven (a number we expect Paul to use): truth – righteousness – gospel of peace – the faith – salvation – the Word of God – prayer. This figure of the hoplite is fitted to these. The fact that it cannot be applied to point seven does not disturb Paul even as no one expects a figure for prayer.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Luther speaks of it as being six-fold.<sup>25</sup> Martin Chemnitz on the other hand includes prayer (“prayer and supplication”) in the panoply:

Therefore no other remedies or aids for salvation are to be sought in death than those offered in the Word in order to be accepted by faith while we are living. For the one and only true and sufficient antidote against death is Christ, our Life. He offers and imparts Himself to us, together with all His benefits, in the word of the Gospel; and through faith He is not only accepted but dwells in our hearts (Ephesian 3:17) ... In Ephesians 6:11ff. Paul describes the whole armor of God, by which we are able to stand against all the ambushes of Satan in every evil day – truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, prayer and supplication. And in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,10 he says that the usefulness of this armor is “that, whether we wake or sleep, we may live with Him.”<sup>26</sup>

The question of whether or not prayer is to be included in Paul’s description of the citizen soldier’s armor would seem to be a minor one, and probably is. But it points to a larger question. There are significant differences in the interpretation of these verses among the various commentators. This is true not only between the Lutheran and Reformed, as one would expect, but also among the Lutherans. Such sharp differences are probably to be explained by the fact that Paul’s words and imagery, though not in and of themselves difficult to understand, do not find ready parallels in the Scriptures of either Old or New Testament. In his search for meaning the expositor is therefore either forced back into the context of the epistle itself, or into grasping at parallels from extra-Biblical literature, or, and this is the most likely explanation of the differences, into the analogy of faith. It is this last method, of course, which so readily differentiates the Reformed from the Lutheran commentators on the meaning of Ephesians 6:10-20. But such an observation does little to explain why

Lutherans would differ among themselves. For the answer to that, other questions must be asked.

Another question which divides expositors, including Lutheran expositors, is this: Does the phrase ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ποιηρᾷ refer to the judgment day, or the last, apocalyptic day of struggle between God and the devil, or the entire lifetime of the Christian, or some single, critical day in the life of the Christian, or the day of the Christian's death? There is wide difference of opinion. Lenski provides a synopsis of the competing views as well as stipulating his own preference:

This day is called "wicked" because the spiritual forces of the wickedness of the other world will hurl themselves against us. Recall the words of Jesus spoken to his enemies: "This is your hour and the power of the darkness," Luke 22:53. It is not the day of the last battle at the end of the world, Revelation 20:7-9. Only the Christians who are then living will see that battle with Gog and Magog, and not the panoply of God will win the victory in that battle but "fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them," the enemy. "The day of death" cannot be referred to, for this is a blessed and not a wicked day for the Christian, the day of the crowning (2 Timothy 4:8). This wicked day is also not the entire time of our life, for we are to arm ourselves for this day, to be ready when it breaks. Paul has in mind the critical and decisive day which comes for each one of us, sometimes but once, again repeatedly, in which Satan pounces upon us with all his forces. Then we must "be able or powerful (the same verb that was used in v. 10, 11) to withstand" without yielding to a single assault.<sup>27</sup>

Habeck agrees with Lenski and gives the following as examples of what Paul means: Job's day of loss, Joseph's temptation by Potiphar's wife, David when he saw Bathsheba bathing, and Peter in the courtyard during Jesus' trial.<sup>28</sup> Stoeckhardt is far more cautious. His view agrees in general with Lenski and Habeck. But he lets a quotation from another commentator (Haupt) be his last word. "The spiritual battle of the Christian is not at all times equally intense and difficult. There are times and days of especially severe inner conflicts, when the Christian has special need to concentrate fully on the battle

and make use of the full armor of God.”<sup>29</sup>

Earlier it was noted that Martin Chemnitz preferred to include prayer and supplication as part of the “whole armor of God.” In that citation he appears to be identifying the “evil day” with the day of a Christian’s death. If one reads further in the same context (his examination of the Roman doctrine of Extreme Unction), this impression is confirmed.

Therefore also this is certain, that our most gracious Redeemer, who willed that salutary remedies against all dangers to their salvation should at all times be in view for His servants, has not only prepared aid by which Christians may be preserved in grace while they live and are whole, but chiefly that at the end of their life, when the struggle is hardest and most perilous, they should be fortified and strengthened with firm defense and effective support for their tottering confidence, in order that they “may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13) and give thanks to God, who gives us the victory over death and its sting. (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)<sup>30</sup>

Another difficulty in accepting either the Lenski/Habeck/Stoeckhardt view or that of Martin Chemnitz is that while the phrase ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ is singular, apparently referring to one day, it is followed by καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι. Are all these things accomplished in that one single, critical day? That is to say, for example, does the Christian go about all the other days of his life needlessly encumbered with his uncomfortable belt, restrictive breastplate and odd footwear? Is this freedom under the Gospel? Also, does the Evil One loft volley after volley of fiery darts at us only on one day and not others? Such a view does not fit well with other passages of the Scriptures.

Martin Luther leans toward the view that such warfare, for which Paul says the panoply of God is necessary, is to be expected throughout the life of the Christian. In commenting upon the famous passage from Isaiah 40 in which God comforts His people, telling them that their warfare is over, Luther said

“The life of man is warfare upon earth,” that is, there is a set time for it. I prefer to take it simply, in the ordinary grammatical sense of “warfare,” so that Isaiah is understood to be speaking

of the toilsome course of the people under the law, as if they were engaged in military service. For Paul similarly loves to compare both preachers and hearers of the Word to soldiers, as for example when he bids Timothy be a good soldier [2 Timothy 2:3] and fight the good fight [1 Timothy 6:12]. And he makes the Corinthians run in a race [1 Corinthians 9:24]. He also says: “No one is crowned unless he competes according to the rules” [2 Timothy 2:5]. He equips the Ephesians and Thessalonians with arms [Ephesians 6:13-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8], and glories that he himself has fought the good fight [2 Timothy 4:7]; and there are similar instances elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the fact that Lenski emphatically denies the possibility that “the evil day” could mean the day of the believer’s death while Chemnitz quite obviously is willing to take it that way, there is a simple solution. It is one that also accommodates Luther. According to the Scriptures no one knows the day or hour of his death. It is hidden from us in the unseen will of God even as is the time of the coming of Christ to judgment. Since one does not know on which day he will die, he is well advised to put on the whole armor of God as soon as he hears the Apostle’s words and grasps their meaning. For that very day may be the evil day. Thus the apostle’s urgent warning, “from now on,” yields good sense. As for the view that the day of a believer’s death is a day of victory and therefore cannot be thought of as “the evil day,” that is simply untenable. It can be both. If the believer is plagued by “terrors of conscience” it is the evil day that Paul describes.

The question that has loomed in the background must now be asked. What finally is this panoply? Why the urgency to put it on, all of it, and right away? How will it allow the Christian *στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου*? How will it protect him all his life long up to and including his most desperate hour? That is, how will it allow him to put out the devil’s frequently shot and expertly aimed “fiery darts,” as well as to resist the onslaught of all the hosts of evil in the “heavenly places?” Here there is sharp division between old Lutherans and modern ones.

The division between Lutheran expositors on the interpretation of Ephesians 6:10-20 can most easily and clearly be seen in a revealing remark of Lenski. Commenting on the first and second

articles of Paul's panoply, he says,

"In truth" (better than the instrumental "with") is not subjective, *sittliche Lauterkeit*, the moral quality of truthfulness. We are surprised that Luther understands "righteousness" in the same way as the moral righteousness of the Christian. To be sure, both must be the Christian's possession, but this is expressed by the participles: belt yourselves, put on yourselves. The "truth" which Paul has in mind is the divine, saving truth or reality. . . . As truth is to be the belt, so "the breastplate" or *Brustpanzer* is to be "the righteousness." This is the righteousness of Christ put on by faith, the *justitia imputata*. No righteousness of our own, *justitia acquisita*, could be proof against Satan; since it is always still imperfect, it would be promptly pierced. Our righteousness of good works ever needs Christ's merits and righteousness to cover up its imperfection. After describing the horrible power of our demon foes, as Paul does in v. 12, it would be folly to send us against them with works that our own hands have done.<sup>32</sup>

Habeck speaks with much more reserve than Lenski. But he says the same thing: "Paul now lists the items that comprise the panoply God supplies to believers and explains the metaphorical use of the terms. The interpreter will seek to answer whether these items are subjective, referring to something outside him that is given to him to use, or a mixture of the subjective and objective. I favor the objective interpretation throughout."<sup>33</sup> It is evident that both Lenski and Habeck see the phrase, τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης, and are captivated by the word, "righteousness." It is easy to understand why. For the Lutheran, especially the Lutheran preacher, to put on righteousness, whether as robe (Isaiah 61:10) or breastplate (v. 14), seems without question to mean putting on the alien righteousness of Christ by faith. But does δικαιοσύνη always have to mean the alien righteousness of Christ? It does not. The context must decide. So the question is, does the interpretation of δικαιοσύνη as Christ's righteousness agree with the context of Ephesians?

Perhaps a search for the uses of the word "breastplate" will yield something. Breastplate is a word not used often in the Scriptures. If one leaves out the passages which describe the clothing of the high priest (Exodus and Leviticus) and those which describe the accoutrements of heavenly beings in the last battle (Revelation), one

is left with only two other passages. In Isaiah 59:17 righteousness is put on like a breastplate. Here it is clearly not an alien, but an actual righteousness. However, it is put on by the Messiah Himself. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul exhorts his hearers, “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation (ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας).” Here the word “righteousness” is not found, but the context gives no comfort to the interpretation of Lenski and Habeck. So one is left with the immediate context of Ephesians.

It was noted above that Lenski was surprised that Luther did not take “righteousness” in this context as the alien righteousness of Christ imputed to the Christian by faith. Indeed he did not! And it does not matter whether one looks at the early Luther or the later. He is remarkably consistent. He also had the weight of earlier interpreters on his side.

Luther distinguished between the first three items of the panoply and the last three.<sup>34</sup> To summarize, the first three concern our conduct toward (and conflict with) people in the realm of the law, which Satan also can and does use to undermine the foundations of our faith. The last three concern our conflict with Satan himself in the realm of the Gospel. Luther can be seen saying the same thing in his Galatians commentary. “When the Law accuses and sin terrifies you, and you do not feel anything except the wrath and judgment of God, do not despair on that account. But ‘take the armor God, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and the sword of the Spirit.’ (Ephesians 6:13, 16, 17) ... In the conflicts and fears that continually return to plague you, you should patiently look with hope for the righteousness that you have only by faith.”<sup>35</sup> Note, when referring to the shield, helmet and sword, he does not say “whole armor,” but “armor” only. Later Lutherans are in substantial agreement with Luther in regard to these items of the accouterment. It is his view of the first three that differs from theirs.

### ***The Waist Belted in Truth***

In the sermon on the Epistle for the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity

from the year 1532, Luther gave his most extensive interpretation of the text under consideration. Concerning the first item of the panoply, he said:

First, the waist should be girded with truth, that is, that they lead an upright life, that there be no hypocrisy but rather sincerity. For the Scripture calls “truth” upright character that is neither false nor fabricated. Therefore it says: See to this first that you be upright Christians concerning your person and that you attend with earnest to the word and the faith. For whoever wants to be in the church and will not earnestly concern himself with these things, but allows himself only to be numbered among the crowds, wants ease and not struggle, will soon fall to the devil’s portion; for he is not “girded,” that is, belted up, and armed with truth and true sincerity, as a warrior should be ... Therefore [the belt of truth] should also be first here, it is proper to this struggle that we be girded and belted up, that is, that we think that it must be fought and contended, and ourselves earnestly committed and resigned to it, and to do it uprightly. For the other, false Christians, who do not attend to it earnestly and truthfully, go securely and without care into it and look for good days or their own honor and pleasure; when they do not permit fighting they do mortal damage to Christianity; just as the devil always mixes in such people who nicely carry along the appearance and the name, but have neither heart nor sincerity, through these he does more damage than otherwise through those who are outside of us; as St. Paul everywhere decries such false Christians and false workers.<sup>36</sup>

### *The Breastplate of Righteousness*

Before turning to Luther concerning the second item of the panoply, it should be noted that his view was similar to that of earlier theologians. For the sake of brevity, Augustine, who well understood “the righteousness of God” in the forensic or alien sense, provides a representative example:

(27.) WHO MAY BE SAID TO KEEP THE WAYS OF THE LORD, WHAT IT IS TO DECLINE AND DEPART FROM THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

Then again, as for what [Job] says, “For I have kept His ways, and have not turned aside from His commandments, nor will I

depart from them;” (Job 23:11-12) he has kept God’s ways who does not so turn aside as to forsake them, but makes progress by running his course therein; although, weak as he is, he sometimes stumbles or falls, onward, however, he still goes, sinning less and less until he reaches the perfect state in which he will sin no more. For in no other way could he make progress, except by keeping His ways. The man, indeed, who declines from these and becomes an apostate at last, is certainly not he who, although he has sin, yet never ceases to persevere in fighting against it until he arrives at the home where there shall remain no more conflict with death. Well now, it is in our present struggle therewith that we are clothed with the righteous-ness in which we here live by faith, — clothed with it as it were with a breastplate. . . . Hence also he says: “I put on righteousness, and clothed myself with judgment like a mantle.” (Proverbs 18:17) Our vesture at present no doubt is wont to be armour for war rather than garments of peace, while concupiscence has still to be subdued; it will be different by and by, when our last enemy, death, shall be destroyed, and our righteousness shall be full and complete, without an enemy to molest us anymore.”<sup>37</sup>

Luther’s consistency of interpretation over time in regard to the first three items of the panoply can be seen in his exposition of the phrase, “the breastplate of righteousness,” from the year 1521. Here, in the treatise, “Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig – Including Some Thoughts Regarding His Companion, the Fool Murner,” Luther says:

Paul calls the breastplate or cuirass of righteousness the righteous, guiltless life which does no one an injustice, or, as one says in German, “a good cause and a good conscience.” For St. Peter teaches [1 Peter 4:15-16] that a Christian should live so that he cannot be persecuted justly, suffering persecution only because of his innocence. Just as the cuirass or breastplate protects the chest and gives one courage against stabs, so someone who has a good cause, a good conscience, and is righteous, is fearless, relies on his armor, and is courageous when facing his enemies.<sup>38</sup>

Eleven years later, Luther still viewed “the breastplate of righteousness” in the same way:

If the first piece is present so that the station of the Christian is without hypocrisy, then it must also follow that one guards his breast “with the breastplate of righteousness,” which is a good conscience, that a Christian therefore live so that he give offense to no one and no one might accuse him, as the Apostle Paul everywhere commends . . . this he calls the “breastplate of righteousness,” an innocent, upright life and outward character toward all men, so that one does neither damage nor injury to anyone . . . Therefore the dear Apostles everywhere admonish that believers should lead such a life that they be blameless before the world and everyone. Which should serve for the purpose that our heart would be happier, and adhere the more firmly and strongly to the Gospel, and could become certain; as St. Peter’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle 1:10 says of this: “Dear brethren be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, etc.”<sup>39</sup>

### *The Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*

Again, in the sermon of 1532, Luther gives this explanation of the “preparation of the Gospel of peace” with which the believer’s feet are to be shod:

This is the third, that a Christian should be not only pious, doing good, and not comporting himself as the world lives and does, but also having peace with everyone (as also Romans 12:18 says), both for our own sake and in the face of others, with help, counsel, encouragement through the Gospel, so that through it we could walk with readiness and skill and pass unhindered through this evil world even though the world causes rumor and futile unrest, discord and bickering among its own and evil people irritate us also to anger, impatience, vengeance etc. In summation, it means this: If you want to be a Christian and live rightly in the world, then resign yourself to patience.<sup>40</sup>

It was noted earlier that the immediate context of the verses under consideration was, for all practical purposes, the Table of Duties of the *Small Catechism*. It is this contextual connection which is decisive in determining the meaning of the items of the panoply. Paul’s conclusion, beginning with Τοῦ λοιποῦ (not Τὸ λοιπόν, which is so commonly found in other Pauline epistles), is the culminating exhortation to his hearers. They are both to believe the objective faith

which he has proclaimed, and so take up the last three items of the panoply (the shield, helmet and sword), and at the same time to fulfill faithfully the vocation God has given them while they yet live in the shadow and darkness of this world, and so take up the first three items. In this way the full armor of God will protect them, in good days and in evil, in life and in death.

Man is created by God and has received God's Word, which is both promise of life in heaven (the gospel) and command concerning life on earth (the law). The devil seeks to lead man astray on earth, away from his vocation, in which the law is embodied, and to deprive him of salvation by destroying his faith in the gospel ... [man] stands between earth and heaven, and between God and the devil. The first of these implies that, whatever a man's age, on earth he always has the most important events of his life ahead of him, namely, death and that which follows. Inescapably he travels on toward that. The second implies that he is placed in a field of force, that he is never autonomous or isolated but stands ceaselessly in the midst of an invisible conflict.<sup>41</sup>

As an aside, one could paraphrase Wingren and say "the evil day" always lies before the Christian, or at least the possibility thereof. It is of great importance that the Christian understand the offices (in the so-called *creatio continuo*) he or she holds (i.e. the Table of Duties) as one of the elect of God. In this connection note Luther's reference to 2 Peter 1:10 in this very context.<sup>42</sup> God requires the believer to carry out faithfully his duty to love all those whom He through His calling (*vocatio*) has made that believer's neighbors, be they believing or not. Thus God works providentially through those He has called in all places and given offices in every area of life, even in this the realm of the Law, in order to bless and preserve His creation. For the Christian to faithfully carry out his duties (i.e. fulfill his *vocatio*) not only agrees with the commandments but also brings earthly blessings to the neighbor, and to the one who so acts. To walk in step with God's created order is to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called, (Ephesians 4:1) to not give place to the devil, (Ephesians 4:27) and to put on the "whole armor of God," at least as concerns the first three articles of the panoply.

In his exposition of 1 John 2:23 regarding his own vocation as

one of the “Pastors and Preachers,” as our own synodical catechism titles the office, Luther made this observation regarding the *μεθοδεία τοῦ διαβόλου*:

In spiritual matters we are kings over Satan, priests in spiritual things, because we call people to participate with us. You see that it does not displease the apostles to repeat the same things, so great is the glory of not departing from them. Therefore Satan does not rest. It is his purpose to call us back from this Word. The fanatics depart from Christ and relinquish their posts. Day and night Satan does not cease to plot against us, in order that he may call us away from the knowledge of the Word. This is his verse in Psalms 2:3: “Let us burst Their bonds asunder and cast Their cords from us.” There Satan is depicted. For this is how he roars; this is how he rages among the kings themselves. He seeks to burst us, who are a part of Christ, and the bond of that Word, with which Christ binds us, asunder. Therefore we should not cease to beware of his snares. Christianity is a continuous struggle, not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this darkness, as Ephesians 6: 12 says. One should not act smugly. The apostles inculcate the same things because they know these snares of Satan. We have been appointed kings and priests, but in such a way that we should make use of our office and wage war against the adversary ... Our nature is such that we always desire new things. We are not content with the doctrine that has been handed down and received. And because the devil knows that our nature is like this, he attacks it with his snares and introduces his light.<sup>43</sup>

Without question each Christian is similarly tempted and assaulted within his or her own God-given vocation. Satan desires us to leave our posts, to not make use of our good and God-pleasing office, whether of pastor or hearer, governor or governed, husband or wife, parent or child, employer or employee. In the ensuing chaos, he will be able to strike down many naked warriors.

Paul opened the second half of Ephesians (where all agree the book is divided) with this exhortation: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love ... But to each one of us grace was given

according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραύτητος, μετα μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ, σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης ... ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ)

In the verses that follow, Paul implores and instructs his hearers in how they are to live according to their calling. Righteousness and holiness (4:24), kindness and love (4:32-5:2) are to characterize their walk (περιπατεῖν). Furthermore, while they are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love (4:3) and submit to each other (5:21), they are to let no one deceive them with empty words (5:6) and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11). In other words, they are no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened (4:17-18), but to speak truth with the neighbor (4:25), not be overcome with anger (4:26), and not give place to the devil (4:27). In short, they are to find out what is acceptable not to the world but to the Lord (5:10). Beginning with 5:22, Paul then enumerates the table of duties, the immediate context of Ephesians 6:10ff.

Almost everything Paul speaks of in these verses (4:1-6:9) is law or, perhaps said more accurately, love — the fulfillment of the law. Here he is describing not metaphorically but concretely the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the footwear of the Gospel's preparation. Although such things concern only the world and the people therein (αἶμα καὶ σάρκα), even here the citizen soldier contends πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. For the devil would deceive and mislead him also in these things. One is tempted to overlook these parts of God's whole armor as being of negligible value because they concern merely our vocation, and thus the works of the law, which will pass away. But it is just that that is so devilish and wily about our adversaries. Great damage can be done here. Thus a pastor is tempted to do that which achieves tangible, self-satisfying results, yet with means other than those God has assigned to that office. A man is tempted to divert his energies to things more gratifying than his wife and children, and

their constant need for support in things both earthly and heavenly. A woman is tempted to escape the often thankless and difficult task of wife and mother for something seemingly more meaningful. A Christian is tempted to desire something higher or holier than that which demands his attention every day.

The aspect of the work of one's vocation that labor is given forth and lost is very important; and it is a great temptation for the individual as he confronts his vocation. He is tempted to do something other than his vocation, something that has more meaning and receives some measure of recognition from the world. But the conflict between God and the devil demands that God's work have appearances against it in a world deranged by sin; and all false byways have appearances in their favor. This must involve an inner struggle for the one who is employed in his vocation. He often stands alone with the day's task, without guidance from God's people, with God's command as his only support and prayer his only resource. <sup>44</sup>

### *The Shield of Faith*

Paul follows his description of the armor which God gives to protect us from the devil's indirect assaults with a description of that which protects us from his direct assault upon our faith. Luther's inclination to distinguish between the first three and last three items of the panoply is clearly a result of his fine sense of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Later Lutherans would hesitate to make the same distinction, and so not allow to stand the close connection of these verses to that which precedes them, beginning with Τοῦ λοιποῦ. Luther's distinction also is supported by Paul's syntax. Instead of using καί to link the last three to the first, Paul now writes, "in all [things] taking up the shield of faith, with which you can put out all the flaming [darts] of the evil one" (ἐν πάσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι). In every area of our vocation, our walk, we are to take up the shield of faith. Lenski said of the breastplate, "No righteousness of our own, *justitia acquisita*, could be proof against Satan; since it is always still imperfect, it would be promptly pierced. Our righteousness of good works ever needs Christ's merits and righ-

teousness to cover up its imperfection. After describing the horrible power of our demon foes, as Paul does in v. 12, it would be folly to send us against them with works that our own hands have done.”<sup>45</sup> To this Paul might answer: “Yes, of course. That is why you must put on the whole armor of God and not one piece only.” That which may pierce the breastplate will not penetrate the shield of faith. Here one unquestionably discovers the alien righteousness of Christ, as Luther said in the sermon of 1532: “Now such a ‘shield’ is faith ... and answers the devil: I may be a sinner, and have not lived rightly or done too little, but that Man is holy and pure who gave Himself and died for me, and was given me by the Father so that He would be my own with His holiness and righteousness etc.”<sup>46</sup> In regard to these last items of the panoply there is no great difference between older and the more modern Lutherans, but between the early and later Luther!<sup>47</sup>

### *The Helmet of Salvation*

The meaning of the helmet is well established not only from the context, but also by comparison with 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Here too Luther well grasps Paul’s meaning and clearly is in agreement with succeeding generations of Lutheran theologians. He says, “The ‘helmet of salvation’ is nothing other than the hope and expectation of another life that is above us in heaven for the sake of which we believe in Christ and suffer all things, without which we could not bear all the blows that fall upon our head and beset our body and life.”<sup>48</sup> Again, the later Luther corrects the earlier.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Sword of the Spirit*

In the interest of brevity, Luther is allowed again to give the meaning of the last item:

This is the last, but altogether strongest, and proper weapon of war through which we strike the devil and must be victorious. For it is not enough (as I said above) that one has guarded himself well from the enemy and could stand up to him when he attacks us so that we will not be struck — which means a strong defense;

but there also belongs to this a strong offense with which one pursues the enemy and puts him to flight. Therefore it is not enough here to resist the devil with faith and hope, as shield and helmet, but one must also draw “the sword,” and strike back at him and thereby drive him back so that he must retreat and flee and therefore have the victory over him. Such a “sword” is ([Paul] says) “the Word of God” . . . This happens primarily when one publicly makes use of the Word in preaching; thereafter also each Christian by himself or with others carries on with hearing, reading, singing, conversation, contemplation. For it has power, where it is preached and used clearly and purely, learned with diligence, and with sincerity meditated upon, so that there neither Satan nor any devil can remain.”<sup>50</sup>

In summary, the panoply Paul commands his hearers to put on is nothing more than a figurative representation of those same things he has already exhorted the Ephesians to do. They were to walk in love and also in faith. Then God’s mighty power would sustain them in all things, even in death.

### *The Plea to the Citizen Soldier – Verses 18 through 20*

18 Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀγίων 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν ἀνοιξίῃ τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 20 ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι.

Paul’s plea that those clothed in the whole armor of God pray for all the saints is readily understandable and needs little explanation. He has exhorted them to fulfill their vocations while at the same time applying to themselves the blessed comfort and hope of the gospel in every area of their walk as citizen soldiers. In other words, he urged them to put on the whole armor of God. Then He immediately urges them to prayer. Why? It was evident that Martin Luther had a singularly clear and full grasp of Paul’s purpose in the previous verses. Although there is no direct Luther reference to these verses to be found, Wingren points in the right direction: “A most characteristic

thought of Luther's is that through prayer the orders in which life is set are renewed by God."<sup>51</sup>

At the beginning of his letter Paul prayed, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), far above all principality (πάσης ἀρχῆς) and power (ἐξουσίας) and might (δυνάμειως) and dominion (κυριότητος), and every name that is named (note: even the name of Satan), not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:17-23) These are the forces of evil Paul said were a threat to the Ephesians when he urged them to "strengthen themselves in the Lord and in the power of His might" by putting put on the whole armor of God.

Paul prayed that God would give them victory by that very activity for the sake of Jesus Christ who rules over all such powers. Now, having finished his exhortation to put on the whole armor, he exhorts them to pray as he did for all other Christians to do the same and thus have the same victory from God. In light of this, Christians today should come to know, appreciate, and sincerely imitate the long standing practice of the church at worship to pray the general prayer and the many special petitions for believers in every vocation as they face the perils of the "evil day." Furthermore, they should learn to add their own prayers and special petitions as individuals who watch and are alert in their own vocations, for example, parents for children, hearers for their pastor, citizens for their government, all Christians for those whose paths they cross daily, etc.

Prayer is a difficult task at all times and is often made more difficult by the same wily foe who would persuade the Christian to lay aside this or that piece of the whole armor of God. "There is an evil

and clever devil riding me and other people and frequently playing these tricks on me in my temptation or anxiety, whether it has to do with spiritual or secular affairs ... He is well aware of what prayer achieves and can do. That is why he creates so many obstacles and disturbances, to keep you from getting around to it at all.”<sup>52</sup>

For that very reason Paul intensifies his plea in so many ways in verse eighteen. Those to whom he makes the plea are citizen soldiers. They stand in the holy orders in which God has placed them. In faith they have put on God’s whole armor and put it to use. With the same well trained discipline they are now to pray ἐν παντί καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι that is, at every opportune time. They are to make use of every kind of prayer and petition (διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως). Furthermore, they are to stay alert and vigilant on the field of battle for the purpose of petitioning (εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσῃ καὶ δεήσει) for God’s extraordinary help when they or others have done all they can with the armaments He has given them and have nowhere else to turn. For in this way theirs is the very power of God Himself who guarantees victory.

Prayer rests on a firm foundation only if man stands where God has placed him and commanded him to stand. We know that our vocation has simply been given to us without our option, and in it we can claim God’s help when we reach the end of our own ability. Then, according to the word and promise of God, his help is absolutely certain.<sup>53</sup>

With the full confidence in the great power of prayer the apostle then turns to his beloved Ephesians with one final plea — for himself. Stoeckhardt comments here, “In mentioning this, the Apostle grasps the opportunity to commend himself to the intercessions of his beloved Christians in Ephesus.”<sup>54</sup> However, it certainly appears from the entire context of Ephesians that Paul’s plea is more than merely grasping an opportunity. It has surely been a part of his purpose in writing the epistle from the beginning. Paul is, by his vocation, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, he is in many ways His foremost apostle. In his vocation Paul too stands on the battlefield beset by the same forces of evil as he awaits the final outcome of his imprisonment in the imperial capital. In other words, he is very nearly ἐν

τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ πόνηροῦ himself. It is therefore vital, not only for himself, but also for many others that he faithfully carry out his vocation of being the King of king's ambassador despite his chains (προσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει). If he does, then those in the seat of Roman imperial power will hear from the throne of Him who has all things under His feet and who rules far above every principality and power.

The sovereign speaks through his ambassador (*di' hemon*; cf. 1 Macc. 10:51; Ephesians 6:19, *en anoixei tou stomatos mou*); the credit given the ambassador's words corresponds with the authority of the sovereign. Paul is not the one who matters – he does not act in his own name, and his message does not originate with himself – he represents Christ, and when he speaks, his words are to be taken as coming from God.<sup>55</sup>

For this reason Paul requests that they who now wear the Lord's armor and confidently advance toward the heavenly goal as a result of his preaching and his prayers kneel as one before the same gracious and mighty God to petition for him. It seems Paul knew he would be given the opportunity to speak publicly and freely (ἐν παρρησίᾳ)<sup>56</sup> before his own battle came to an end. He must have the words in that day so that the mystery of the gospel would be made known even as his apostleship came to a close.

## *Conclusion*

Paul had prayed for the Christians of Ephesus in 3:16-21, having already related to them the trials and difficulties of his own vocation and the glory of his own hope in Christ, a glory they shared with him. Now, having instructed them in that hope of their common faith and the importance of each one of them faithfully carrying out the duties of his own unique vocation as a citizen soldier of Christ, he pleaded with them to pray that he might carry out faithfully his vocation in his last and most bitter struggle, his “evil day.”

In the light of the foregoing inquiry into the meaning of Ephesians 6:10-20, it is apparent that putting on the whole armor of God in this new millennium can be accomplished in no better way than by learning, trusting and living all that is in the Small Catechism. In those remarkably few pages rests the whole armor of God waiting

to be put on. There the new Christian can be trained in God's own ordered system to carry out his divine vocation as he lives under the blessed Gospel, so that he would become not as one who wrestles alone and without God's gracious help, as if against blood and flesh, but instead a citizen soldier protected by His Lord's own strong and holy armor, fit to withstand the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. May all who hold the apostolic office of Word and Sacrament treasure the catechism as did its author, being themselves students of it and also teachers of many others, that both may stand at the close of the evil day.

## Bibliography

- Abbott, T. K. *Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*. International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1897.
- Barth, Markus. *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary of Chapters 4-6*, Anchor Bible. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974.
- Brown, Colin, editor. *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, vol. 1-4. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. 1-4. trans. Fred Kramer, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1971-86.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *Loci Theologici*, vol. 1-2. trans. Jacob A. O. Preus, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1989.
- Habeck, Irwin J. *Ephesians: Amazing Grace*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern, 1985.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1967.
- Kittel, Gerhard, editor. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1-10. trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Lenski, Richard C. H. *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians*. Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg, 1937, 1946.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, vol. 1-30. edit. Jaroslav Pelikan, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1958-67.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, vol. 31-56. edit.

Helmut T. Lehmann, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress, 1958-67.

Luther, Martin. *Saemmtliche Schriften*, St. Louis Edition, vol. 1-23. edit. Johann Georg Walch, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1880-1910.

Nicoll, W. Robertson, editor. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 1-4. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1900.

Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1-6. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman, 1931.

Simpson, E. K. and F. F. Bruce. *Ephesians and Colossians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957.

Schaff, Philipp, editor. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994.

Spicq, Ceslas. *The Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. 1-3. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994.

Stoeckhardt, George. *Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, trans. Martin S. Sommer, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1952.

Tappert, Theodore G., editor. *The Book of Concord*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress, 1959.

Wingren, Gustaf. *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen. Evansville, Indiana: Ballast, 1999.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1954.

## Endnotes

- 1 Luther's Works 45, pp. 359-360.
- 2 LW 35, p. 385.
- 3 Stoeckhardt, pp. 32-33.
- 4 Ibid, p. 254.
- 5 Nicoll, v. 3, p. 381.
- 6 Abbott, p. 180; Hendriksen, p. 269; Simpson and Bruce,  
p. 142.
- 7 Robertson, p. 549; Wuest, p. 140.
- 8 Lenski, p. 656.
- 9 LW 27, p. 142.
- 10 Habeck, p. 128.
- 11 For example, Stoeckhardt gives chapter headings  
as follows: IV "An Apostolic Admonition 4:1-16"/  
"Additional General Admonitions 4:17-5:2" (p. 178)  
V "Additional General Admonitions 5:3-21"/"The  
Table of Duties 5:22-33" (p. 227) VI "The Table of  
Duties (continued) 6:1-9"/"Closing Admonitions 6:  
10-20"/"Conclusion and Blessing 6:21-24".
- 12 Chemnitz, Loci, vol. 1, p. 176. Chemnitz thereafter quotes  
the words of ELH 250, v. 2.
- 13 TDNT, vol. 5, p. 295.
- 14 Barth, p. 793.
- 15 Ibid, p. 795.
- 16 Spicq, vol. 2, p. 462. "In the papyri, the verb ap-  
pears for the first time in AD 102, with the same nu-  
ance, 'trick' or 'dupe' the strategos (P. Oxy. 2342, 27).  
... Well attested in the fourth to the sixth centuries, it  
seems to have been used mostly in financial jargon,  
with respect to taxes ..." (Spicq, vol. 2, 462, fn. 1)
- 17 TDNT, vol. 5, p. 103.
- 18 Lenski, pp. 658-659.
- 19 Lenski, p. 659.
- 20 NIDNTT, vol. 1, p. 222.
- 21 Tappert, The Book of Concord, Large Catechism, Pref-  
ace, 360, 12-15. Note that in the citation from the Loci Theologici

(see above), Martin Chemnitz, speaking about the nature of spiritual warfare while citing Ephesians 4 and 6, says of the devil that, “He is master of a thousand arts.” Chemnitz here reveals himself to be a student of the catechism.

22 Stoeckhardt, p. 262.

23 Habeck, p. 133.

24 Lenski, p. 665.

25 Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften, St. L. IX, p. 847.

26 Chemnitz, Examination, vol. 2, pp. 656-657.

27 Lenski, p. 663.

28 Habeck, p. 130.

29 Stoeckhardt, pp. 256-257.

30 Chemnitz, Examination, vol. 2, p. 655.

31 LW 33, pp. 217-218.

32 Lenski, p. 666.

33 Habeck, p. 130.

34 Luther, St. L., IX, pp. 850-851. “Die vorigen Stuecke dienen dazu, dasz man gegen den Leuten bestehe, dasz wir dieses aeuszerlichen Lebens halben nicht moegen gestraft werden, als die, so geruestet sind, dasz uns niemand kann verklagen, noch unsern Ruhm und Trotz nehmen. Aber die folgenden drei gehoeren dahin, dasz wir mit dem Teufel allein kaempfen sollen, wenn er uns angreift, auf dasz wir vor Gott bestehen koennen wider den boesen Geist, der nach uns schieszt (wie er hier sagt) mit feurigen Pfeilen, und auf unser Gewissen treibt Gottes Gericht, und dasselbe so verklagt, dasz alles nicht gelten noch helfen kann, ob wir gleich vor der Welt wohl bestehen, mit jedermann treulich gehandelt und friedlich gelebt haben.”

35 LW 27, p. 26.

36 Luther, St. L., IX, pp. 847-848. “Zum ersten sollen die Lenden umguertet sein mit Wahrheit, das ist, dasz sie ein rechtschaffen Leben fuehren, dasz keine Heuchelei, sondern Ernst sei. Denn “Wahrheit” heiszt die Schrift rechtschaffen Wesen, das nicht falsch, noch erlogen ist. Darum spricht er: Sehet zum ersten zu, dasz ihr fuer eure Person rechtschaffene Christen seiet, und euch des Worts und Glaubens mit Ernst annehmet. Denn wer in der Christenheit will sein, und sich nicht

der Sache mit Ernst annimmt, sondern laeszt sich nur unter dem Haufen mitzaehlen, will mit genieszen, und doch nicht mitkaempfen, der wird bald dem Teufel zutheil werden; denn er ist nicht “geguertet”, das ist aufgeschuerzt, und geruestet mit Wahrheit und rechtem Ernst, als ein Kriegesmann sein soll. ... Darum soll es hier auch das erste sein, das zu diesem Kampf gehoert, dasz wir geguertet und aufgeschuerzt seien, das ist, dasz wir denken, dasz es musz gekaempft und gestritten sein, und uns mit Ernst dazu ergeben und schicken, und thun es rechtschaffen. Denn die andern, falschen Christen, die sichs mit Ernst und Wahrheit nicht annehmen, gehen sicher und ohne Sorge dahin, und suchen gute Tage, oder eigene Ehre und Geniesz, als duerften sie nicht streiten, die thun moerdlichen Schaden der Christenheit; wie der Teufel allezeit solche mit einmengt, die wohl den Schein und Namen mit fuehren, aber kein Herz noch Ernst da ist, durch die er mehr Schaden thut, denn sonst durch die, so auszer uns sind; wie St. Paulus allenthalben ueber solche falschen Christen und falschen Arbeiter klagt.”

37 Augustine, *A Treatise Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, p. 168.

38 LW 39, p. 144.

39 Luther, *St. L.*, IX, pp. 848-849. “Wenn das erste Stueck da ist, dasz der Christenstand ohne Heuchelei ist, da musz dies darnach auch folgen, dasz man die Brust verwahre “mit dem Krebs der Gerechtigkeit;” welches ist ein gut Gewissen, dasz ein Christ also lebe, dasz er niemand beleidige, und kein Mensch ueber ihn klagen moege, wie der Apostel Paulus allenthalben ruehmt ... Das heiszt er den “Krebs der Gerechtigkeit,” ein unschuldig, gerecht Leben und aeuszerlich Wesen gegen alle Menschen, dasz man niemand Schaden noch Leid thue ... Darum vermahlen die lieben Apostel allenthalben, dasz die

Glaebigen sollen ein solch Leben fuehren, das vor der Welt und jedermann unstraeflich sei. Welches soll dazu dienen, dasz unser Herz desto freudiger werde, und desto fester und staerker am Glauben halte, und sein gewisz werden koenne; wie St. Petrus 2. Ep. 1,10. davon sagt: "Lieben Brueder, thut desto mehr Fleisz, euren Beruf und Erwaehlung fest zu machen usw."

40 Luther, St. L., IX, p. 850. "Das ist das dritte, dasz ein Christ soll nicht allein fromm sein, Gutes thun, und sich nicht daran kehren, wie die Welt lebt und thut, sondern auch gegen jedermann Friede haben (wie auch Roem. 12,18. sagt), beide fuer uns und gegen andern, mit Helfen, Rathen, Foerdern durch das Evangelium, dasz wir dadurch bereit und geschickt wandeln koennen, und in der boesen Welt hindurch kommen ungehindert, ob gleich die Welt unter einander Rumor und eitel Unfrieden, Hader und Zank anrichtet, und der Leute Bosheit uns auch reizt zu Zorn, Ungeduld, Rache u. Summa, es heizt: Willst du ein Christ sein und recht leben in der Welt, so schicke dich zur Geduld."

41 Wingren, pp. 162-163.

42 (see above)

43 LW 30, pp. 258-259.

44 Wingren, p. 171.

45 (see above)

46 Luther, St. L., IX, p. 851. "Solcher 'Schild' ist nun der Glaube ... und dem Teufel antwortet: Bin ich ein Suender, und habe ich nicht recht gelebt, oder zu wenig gethan, so ist der Mann heilig und rein, der fuer mich sich gegeben und gestorben ist, und mir geschenkt vom Vater, dasz er mein eigen sei mit seiner Heiligkeit und Gerechtigkeit u."

47 E.g.: "Nor is any cause so good that one could boast about it before God, before whom no one is guiltless (Exodus 34[:71]). Thus one needs the shield of faith to retain one's trust in God. And even though everyone has been repulsed because of the poisonous tongues, if he keeps from becoming fainthearted and weary, and puts his trust

not in human assistance or in his own right but in God alone, he will bring everything to a good end. That is why Paul says, ‘Above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one’ [Ephesians 6:16] (he could almost have referred to Emser’s short dagger). He does not say ‘flaming darts of the evil one’ and ‘quench’ in vain, for the lies and false declarations of the evil ones are so maliciously hot and poisonous that, if they could, they would set the whole world on fire ... That is why the righteous one must put his cause in God’s hands and trust him, and in this way quench the fiery darts with the shield of faith.” LW 39, 145.

48 Luther, St. L., IX, p. 854. “Der ‘Helm des Heils’ ist nichts anders denn die Hoffnung und Warten eines andern Lebens, das droben im Himmel ist, um welches willen wir an Christum glauben, und alles leiden, ohne welchen wir nicht koennten ertragen alle die Streiche, die man uns nach dem Haupt schlaegt und zu unserm Leib und Leben zusetzt.”

49 “Furthermore, one needs the helmet of the Savior – the Savior or salvation is Jesus Christ. He becomes a helmet if we console ourselves with and act according to his example and keep him before our eyes. St. Paul says, Hebrews 12[:3], ‘Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary in your faith.’ He made himself into a helmet when he said, ‘Remember the word that I said to you, “A servant shall not be greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you’ [John 15:20]. Just as the helmet gives the heart security and peace, so does a Christian feel secure and peaceful when he thinks of his Lord Christ and of how the same things happened to him. He lets things take their course and joyfully says, ‘Well, whoever wants to have a better life than his dear Father and Lord must be a rogue.’” LW 39, 146.

50 Luther, St. L., IX, p. 855. “Das ist das letzte, aber das allerstaerkste, und die rechten Kriegswaffen, dadurch wir den Teufel schlagen, und siegen muessen. Denn es ist nicht genug (wie ich droben gesagt habe), dasz man sich vor dem Feinde wohl verwahrt habe, und koenne ihm vorsetzen, wenn er uns angreift, dasz wir nicht geschlagen

# Notes and Commentary on Joshua 2:1-7

by Adolph L. Harstad

- 1 וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֹן נֹון מִן־הַשְּׁטִים שְׁנַיִם־אֲנָשִׁים מְרַגְלִים חָרַשׁ לֵאמֹר לְכוּ  
רְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־יְרִיחוֹ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית־אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וּשְׁמָהּ רַחַב  
וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ־שָׁמָּה
- 2 וַיֹּאמֶר לְמֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה אֲנָשִׁים בָּאוּ הֵנָּה הַלַּיְלָה מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
לְחַפֵּר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
- 3 וַיִּשְׁלַח מֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ אֶל־רַחַב לֵאמֹר הוֹצִיָּאִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבָּאִים אֵלֶיךָ  
אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ לְבִיתְךָ כִּי לְחַפֵּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ
- 4 וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה אֶת־שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וַתַּצְפֵּנּוּ וַתֹּאמֶר כֵּן בָּאוּ אֵלַי הָאֲנָשִׁים  
וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֵאֵן הָמָּה
- 5 וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לְסָגוֹר בַּחֹשֶׁךְ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים יָצְאוּ לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אָנָּה הָלְכוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים

רָדְפוּ מֵהָר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כִּי תִשְׁיָגוּם

- 6 וְהִיא הֵעֲלֵתָם הֲגָנָה וַתִּטְמְנֵם בְּפִשְׁתֵּי הָעֵץ הַעֲרֹכוֹת לָהּ עַל־הַגֵּן
- 7 וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם הֶרֶף הַנִּרְדָּן עַל הַמַּעְבְּרוֹת וְהַשַּׁעַר סָגַר אַחֲרֵי

1 Now Joshua son of Nun sent from Shittim two men as spies, secretly saying: "Go and look over the land and Jericho." So they went and came to a house of a woman, a prostitute whose name was Rahab; and there they lay down for the night. 2 It was said to the king of Jericho: "Some men came here just tonight from the Israelites to search out the land." 3. So the king of Jericho sent (messengers) to Rahab, saying: "Bring out the men that came to you, the ones that came to your house, because it's to search out the whole land that they've come." 4 Now the woman had taken the two men and had hidden each one, so she said: "Yes, the men did come to me, but I didn't know where they were from. 5 And when the gate was to be shut at dark, the men left. I don't know where the men went. Go after them quickly so you can overtake them." 6. Now she had taken them up to the roof and had concealed them among the stalks of flax spread

out for her on the roof. 7 Then the men pursued them along the way to the Jordan leading to the fords. And the gate - they closed it just after the pursuers had gone out after them. (translation by author)

### *Notes on Verse 1*

**sent/ וַיִּשְׁלַח** - Or the pluperfect in English (“had sent”). The form is a Qal imperfect with *waw* consecutive. The Hebrew has no separate pluperfect tense. Chapter 2 may be a “flashback,” whose events transpire before 1:10-11. Verses 4, 6, and 22 also call for pluperfect translations in their immediate contexts.

**Shittim/ הַשִּׁטִּים** - While the word may sound vulgar to English speakers, it is beautiful in Hebrew, meaning “The Accacias.” The Hebrew has the definite article and is plural. Its full name is “Abel Shittim,” “meadow“ or “moist place” of the Acacias.” (Numbers 33: 49). Shittim is Israel’s last campsite before crossing the river. It is located near the Jordan River, opposite Jericho, in the plains of Moab, 8 miles NE of the NE end of the Dead Sea. See Numbers 25:1, 33: 49-50; Micah 6:5. The name suggests a shaded shelter within that generally desert area near the earth’s lowest point at 1300 below sea level. Shittim has been associated with two sites: Tell el-Hammam and Tell el-Kefrein, the latter ca. 2 miles west of the former. Both occupy strategic positions.

**two men/ שְׁנַיִם־אֲנָשִׁים** - In 6:23 the author calls them “young men,” as does the LXX here in 2:1 (δύο νεανίσκους).

**(as) spies/ מְרַגְּלִים** - The word is a Piel participle from the denominative verb רָגַל “to go about as explorer, to spy.” Literally: “to foot it.” The verb appears in Joshua in 6:25; 7:2 twice; 14:7; participle in 2:1; 6:22; 6:23.

Josephus says of the activity of the spies: “They noted where the walls were strong, or insecure, and which of the gates were weak enough to allow the army to enter.” (Maier, *Josephus*, 77)

**secretly/ סְתֵרָה** - This adverb is derived from a verb that in Qal means “be silent” or “be deaf.” There are three possibilities as to which word it modifies here: 1) “sent,” 2) the participle here translated as “spies,” and 3) “saying.” The Masoretic accents connect it with “saying,” thus, “secretly saying.” Most translations, however, connect it with “sent” (“secretly sent”).

Even after determining which word “secretly” modifies, the question of “secret to whom?” remains. Since spying is always secret to the ones being spied upon, we prefer the interpretation that the spies’ mission was kept from the ears of Israel, as the commentary below reflects. The word is lacking in LXX and Syriac.

**and Jericho/ וְאֶת־יְרִיחוֹ** - This is the second of a double direct object, the first being “the land.” In this construction the “and”/waw may carry an emphatic (“especially”) or an explicative (“specifically”) nuance. (NIV, NRSV, GW: “especially Jericho.”) Compare Isaiah 1:1: “Judah and/specifically Jerusalem.”

### Excursus on Jericho

The name “Jericho”/ יְרִיחוֹ appears in Joshua 30 times, all with the same spelling יְרִיחוֹ. In other OT books the name appears with this same spelling seven times, and with the spelling יְרִיחוֹ another twenty one times, accounting for its fifty eight appearances in the OT (Even-Shoshan. *A New Concordance of the Bible*, 497). Our English spelling is thus based on its spelling in Joshua.

The spelling in Joshua יְרִיחוֹ may suggest a derivation from ריח, having to do with “fragrance, aroma, scent,” perhaps from the palms, balsam, and rose gardens of the area. The spelling יְרִיחוֹ suggests the Hebrew root for “moon.” (The name for moon seems to come from a verbal root whose basic meaning is “wander, travel.” Thus the moon is seen as a “traveler.” So *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament* VI 356.) “Sweet-Smelling City” or “Moon City” are thus two possible translations of the name, the latter being more commonly accepted. Along the extended Great Rift Valley settlements

with names relating to the moon appear from ancient times. The name Qumran, about eight miles south of Jericho, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, is said to refer to “two moons” because of the outstanding reflection of the moon in the Dead Sea at that site. (So says Saliba Danho, guide in Israel.) Moon-related religious activities were evidently practiced in this area. OT passages relating to the moon as an object of worship appear in Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 23:5; Jeremiah 8:2. A full moon rising over the Rift Valley at Jericho is indeed a spectacular sight that declares the glory of the Creator and shows his handiwork. The ancient heathen in their superstition missed the point.

Good sense leads Joshua to concentrate on Jericho. It is a gateway to central Canaan when coming from the east. Jericho controlled the major passes into the heart of the land. It is close to the main fords across the southern Jordan. And it holds control over the fresh spring water critical to the area.

Jericho is one of the oldest known cities of the world. (The oldest is in Turkey.) Deuteronomy 34:3 calls the ancient settlement the “City of Palms.” By the time the spies entered Jericho, the site had been settled for several thousand years. Its abundant supply of water and pleasant winter climate because of its location 800 feet below sea level enticed people to stay. Like other cities of Canaan at Joshua’s time (about 1400 B.C.), Jericho was now an independent city-state under a king. If the king and his city fall, Israel will have a first crucial hold on the center of the land of promise.

Old Testament Jericho is commonly identified with Tell es-Sultan, a “tell” or mound of ruins about a mile northwest of modern Jericho and four and one-half miles west of the Jordan River by road. (New Testament Jericho is yet another location.) The present site at Tell es-Sultan covers about eight and one-half acres, evidence that even larger ancient cities were small by modern standards. The size of Joshua’s Jericho is estimated to have been between nine and twelve acres (Hoerth. *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, 207). The bulk of the population probably lived outside the city walls and gathered inside during times of danger. Digging straight down from the top of Tell es-Sultan sixty-five feet to its base takes you through thousands of years and at least twenty-five phases of habitation. Its defensive

walls are the earliest discovered so far in human history. When Joshua arrived at Jericho, buried on the site was a circular stone tower that was as far removed from Joshua in time as twice the time from us to Joshua. The excavated tower still stands for the inspection of visitors at the *tell* today.

If Tell es-Sultan is ancient Jericho, is there archaeological evidence for the fall of Jericho as described in Josh 6? Is there a level of habitation and destruction at all from about 1400 B.C.? Such questions have long intrigued scholars. The site was excavated starting in 1907 by Carl Watzinger, who concluded that Jericho was not occupied at all during the Later Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.). John Garstang, who excavated the site from 1930-1936, thought he had solid evidence of Joshua's Jericho. He found a city surrounded by a double wall that had been violently destroyed and a living area that was destroyed by fire. Garstang placed a fifteenth century B.C. date on the city. Kathleen Kenyon, as a result of her excavations in 1952-1961, found that almost nothing is now present at the site from 1500 to 1200 B.C. Garstang's double city walls, she concluded, is actually from the third millennium B.C. and there would have been no walls at all about 1400 for Joshua to topple.

Bryant G. Wood took a fresh look at the evidence from Tell es-Sultan and questioned many of Kenyon's interpretations. The double wall, he concluded, was indeed from a time long before Israel's invasion of the land. He, however, saw strong evidence for a 1400 B.C. destruction of a level of the tell. He found that Kenyon's opinions had been developed on the basis of a lack of imported pottery and that she did not consider the local pottery from the Late Bronze Age. Wood, an expert on Canaanite pottery, notes the abundance of pottery found from that period and the existence of Egyptian scarabs (beetle-shaped amulets) from that same time. Carbon-14 testing of debris points to a 1400 B.C. date for devastation. There is clear evidence of leveled walls and destruction by burning. Fascinating is the discovery of large stores of grain in the houses destroyed at the same time. This abundant grain correlates with two facts from the Joshua account: (1) Jericho was taken during Nisan, the month of the spring barley harvest; (2) the city did not fall after a long starvation siege, common at the time, but after just seven days while plenty of food was still in

the houses (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1990).

In spite of the insights of Wood and others, readers of commentaries on Joshua can expect to read such comments as these from higher critical sources: “Archaeology does not allow this passage (Joshua 6:1-14) to be read as a factual account of events connected with the entrance of Israelite tribes into Canaan . . . The text reads like a description of the later liturgical celebration of what must have been a conflict over the spring that watered the plains of Jericho.” (*New Revised Standard Version, The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 275-276). The reader will want to remember that archaeology has the power neither to prove nor to disprove the Bible, which stands as its own witness. It is interesting when archaeology seems to collaborate information of Scripture. Saving faith, however, has never been generated by the tools of an archaeologist. That power is reserved for Scripture. The contribution of archaeology to bible studies is limited to several areas: Illuminating the cultural and historical settings of bible accounts; shedding light on people, places, things, and events mentioned in the Bible; aiding translation and exegesis of some passages of Scripture. (For examples of each, see Hoerth A & OT 16-18)

Because of intense interest in Jericho, the last spade has not pierced Tell es-Sultan. An Italian archaeologist is again at work on the site. The problem today is that the site is badly eroded. The last interpretation of evidence from past excavations has certainly not been written. Not all scholars are absolutely convinced that Tell es-Sultan is Old Testament Jericho, but a suitable alternative in the area has not been found.

Origen, with his bent toward typology, saw in Jericho a figure or type of this world and the collapse of Jericho as a picture of the end of the world:

“Jericho is besieged and it must needs fall. We often find Jericho taken figuratively in the Scriptures. Even in the Gospel, what is said of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves is doubtless a type (*forma*) of Adam who is fallen from Paradise and exiled in this world . . . Jericho – that is, the world, – will collapse. The end of the world,

as we know, is often referred to in the Sacred Books”  
(Origen, quoted in *From shadows To Reality*, 276)

**came to a house of a woman, a prostitute/** **וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית־אִשָּׁה זֹנָה** - The house of a prostitute or innkeeper was apparently a common meeting place for spies and plotters, as is clear from a law in the Code of Hammurabi from the first half of the second millennium B.C. Law #109 reads: “If scoundrels plot together in an innkeeper’s house, and she does not seize them and bring them to the palace, that innkeeper shall be put to death.” (Quoted from M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by Israelites*, 142-143) If a similar law was in force in Canaan, Rahab’s life was at stake because of her hospitality.

**prostitute/** **זֹנָה** - A Qal feminine participle modifying **אִשָּׁה**/woman. It is from the verb **זָנָה**, “fornicate, be a prostitute.”. “The ptc. *zonah* or *ishshah zonah* designates a woman who has sexual intercourse with someone with whom she does not have a formal covenant relationship.” (S. Erlandsson in TDOT IV,100) The meaning in the figurative sense is to “have intercourse with other gods,” sometimes involving actual prostitution (*The New Brown Driver Briggs Geseenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, 275; TDOT,99). The verb appears in Joshua in 2:1; 6:17, 22, 25.

That Rahab was a prostitute is clear from the Hebrew verb. The Greek of the LXX (γυμνακὸς πόρνης), Heb 11:31 and James 2:25 likewise show that she was a prostitute (πόρνη). Whether she was a sacral or common prostitute is not certain from the term. Erlandsson writes, “In Canaanite culture, extramarital relationships in connection with the fertility cult were common. Through sacral prostitution the harlot and her lover became consecrated individuals (*qedheshah* and *qadhesh*; קדש qds). (TDOT IV, 101) We assume that Rahab was a common prostitute. A feminine sacral prostitute is called a *qedeshah* in Deuteronomy 23:18 (v 17 in Engl.) and in Hosea 4:14 (plural). Was Rahab still a harlot at the time of the spies’ visit? She was a justified believer at this time according to the NT. On-going willful activity as a prostitute would certainly contradict the faith attributed to her. Jewish commentators connect the verb **זָנָה** with the verb **זָן** (“to feed,” BDB 266) and the derived noun *mazon* **מִזֶּן** (“food”) and call Rahab an innkeeper (*Soncino Books of the Bible: Joshua, Judges*, 7), as does Josephus in *Antiquities* V.i.2. She may have been both

at one time. Perhaps she was formerly a prostitute, but by the time of the spies' visit was in the motel business, since her house is still a public place. If that is the case, the author is speaking of her in terms of her past life as a prostitute, as the Hebrew term clearly shows. He thereby accents the grace of God toward her.

Luther comments:

“But the rabbis want the word to have two meanings: harlot and innkeeper. Hence some argue that Rahab was not a harlot. (These comments of the rabbis are reported by Lyra *ad* Joshua 2:1.) But from the former passage (i. e. Gen 38:15) the proper meaning of the word is manifest.” (LW 7:39)

**Rahab/ רַחַב** - Rahab's name contains the West Semitic (including Hebrew) root רַחַב that means “to make wide.” The same root provides the Hebrew word for “a broad open place in a city” or “public square” and perhaps sometimes “street.” The word is *rechoḇ*. The root appears also in extra-biblical Near Eastern names that praise a god for opening or making wide a woman's womb. One such name comes from Late Bronze Age Taanach. Her name may have been popular at the time of Joshua.

Rahab's name is one of twelve non-Israelite personal names mentioned in the book of Joshua, eight of which are West Semitic and the other four Hurrian. The four Hurrian names - Hoham, Piram, Sheshai, and Talmai (10:3 and 15:14) - are especially useful for dating the writing of Joshua. Hurrian language, culture, and personal names disappeared by the end the tenth century B.C. A comparison of these Hurrian names and their counterparts in extra-biblical writings thus points toward a Late Bronze Age time of writing for Joshua. (See Richard S. Hess, “Getting Personal: What Names In The Bible Teach Us,” *Bible Review*, December 1997.)

There is no typology relating to Rahab in the NT. Early Christian writers, however, used their imaginations and made much of Rahab as a type. Origen, with his bent for allegory, thought of Rahab's name as referring to “room,” and saw her as a type of the world-wide church that is wide and roomy enough for sinners of all kinds. The thought is interesting, but that typology is not from Scripture. Origen wrote,

“Thus Rahab, which means breadth, *dilatatio*, increases and goes forth, until her name extends over the whole limits of the earth.” (Origen, quoted in *From Shadows To Reality* 250)

Rahab’s name should not be confused with the monster of the deep of Job 9:13, which is usually spelled the same in English but with different vowel pointing in Hebrew.

**and ... they lay down for the night/ וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ** - This is a single word in Hebrew. The verb **שָׁכַב** means in various contexts: 1) lie down 2) lodge or lie down for the night 3) have sexual relations 4) lie down in death 5) relax, sleep (BDB, 1011-1012). There is no reason to assume the sexual connotation in this context. See also v 8, where the point is more obvious from the context. The spies lie down to sleep, not to sleep with Rahab. Note that the action of v. 8 takes place before their lying down for the night of v. 1. The expression here in v. 1 is thus proleptic.

### *Notes on Verse 2*

**It was said/ וַיֹּאמֶר** - The impersonal use of the Niphal leaves the identity of the reporter unstated.

**the king of Jericho** - Canaan at this time consisted of city-states led by local kings. Chapter 12 names thirty-one such kings. The Amarna Letters from this same period show that many of these Canaanite kings acknowledged the Egyptian pharaohs as their overlords and protectors. It is not surprising that the hearts of these kings would melt in fear when they heard that Israel had defeated their benefactor at the Red Sea and was now just across the Jordan. (See 2:10,11.)

**just tonight/ הַיָּמִינָה... הַלַּיְלָה** - The “presentative” *hinneh* gives the nuance of “vivid immediacy” in verbal clauses (Waltke and O'Connor. *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 675).

**to search out/ לְחַפֵּר** - The form is an infinitive construct of **חָפַר**, “to dig, search, explore.” The same verb occurs in Deut 1:22 concerning the activity of the early spy team of which Joshua had been a part.

The verb is most often used of the digging of wells. Thus the spies are “digging out” the facts. The verb here is different from the one whose participle is translated “spies” in v 1.

### *Notes on Verse 3*

**sent (messengers)/** וישלח - The word “messengers” is not present here in the Hebrew. In English, a direct object must be supplied to the Hebrew idiomatic use of the verb שלח/sent. NIV: “sent this message”; TANAKH and NRSV: “sent orders.” The ones that the king sent are the same as “the men” of v 7 who pursue the spies.

Josephus writes, “The king sent men to arrest them, so that he could torture them and learn why they had come.” (Maier, *Josephus*, 77)

**the ones that came to your house/** אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ לְבֵיתִיךָ - By this very specific clause, the messengers show Rahab that they know the facts. Thus she cannot casually deny the whole business. The BHS opinion is that the clause should be deleted, probably assuming that it is a late addition to the text. It is lacking in the Syriac.

### *Notes on Verse 4*

**had taken/** ונתקח - The verb לקח is sometimes used as a preliminary action to further activity (BDB 543). Her action of taking and hiding the spies must have been prior to her conversation with the king’s messengers. Thus the past perfect in English (“*had taken*”).

**and had hidden each one/** ונתחפנו - In the MT the object suffix on the verb is singular (“had hidden *him*” or “*it*”). There are at least two ways of understanding the text as it stands without assuming a corrupt text that should actually have a plural suffix. There is no overwhelming reason to choose one interpretation over the other.

1) The singular suffix is impersonal: “hidden *it*” or “hidden *the fact*,” meaning that she kept secret her act of taking the men.

2) The singular suffix is collective or distributive: “had hidden *each one* of them.” Perhaps she hid each, one at a time, in a separate place. This same collective or distributive idea of the singular may be present at 5:15 where Joshua is commanded. “take off your sandal” (singular: each of them).

The LXX, Syriac, and Targums have plural object. The significance of the singular or plural for exegesis is minor.

**I didn't know/ וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי** - The Hebrew verb יָדַע has to do with knowledge gained by the senses. Technically, she had not observed with her eyes the spies' journey from Shittim. See the verb also in v 5.

### *Notes on Verse 5*

**And when the gate was to be shut/ וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לְסָגוֹר** - Literalistically: “and it was the gate to shut.” This is a temporal construction with *lamed* + the infinitive construct of *sgr*/סָגַר. Williams sees this construction as equivalent to a Latin gerundive (Williams #196). While the obligatory idea (“when the gate ought to shut” or “had to shut”) is assumed by Williams, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, and Keil, a simple temporal translation (“at the time of the shutting of the gate”) suffices when the verb “to be” is in the construction, as it is here. (Jouon and Muraoka #124l) Compare Genesis 15:12 (“when the sun was setting”). Other examples of this temporal construction with *lamed* + infinitive occur in 2 Samuel 18:29 and Isaiah 7:15. (Some see the *lamed* in Isaiah 7:15 as expressing purpose rather than time.) The infinitive construct is neutral in regard to voice, that is, the active form can be passive in force, as it is here in Joshua 2:5. (Jouon and Muraoka #124s)

**the gate/ הַשַּׁעַר** - Excavations at some of Israel's cities have given us a sharper focus on the gates of ancient cities. City gates could be elaborate structures with more than one level and several rooms. They functioned for more than just security. The OT often refers to the city gate as the place where elders meet, deals are struck, and hearings and trials take place.

**I don't know/** לֹא יָדַעְתִּי - See v 4 note on “I didn't know.”

**quickly/** מְהֵרָה - Or “hurrying.” The Hebrew form is an infinitive absolute in the adverbial accusative of manner (Williams #204, p 37). See 1:13 for another infinitive absolute. Both can be understood as gerunds.

### *Notes on Verse 6*

**to the roof/** הַגִּנְיָה - The ה at the end of the word is “ה directive.”

The flat roofs of ancient houses made them practical for various purposes. See Judges 16:27; 1 Samuel 9:25. They could serve as work spaces, spare rooms, and storage areas.

**stalks of flax/** פְּשְׁתֵי הָעֵץ - Literally, “flax of tree/wood,” i.e., flax on the stalk. The clarification of the term “flax” by an explicative genitive after the plural construct is necessary because the word for flax can refer to either the stalks of flax or the linen material made from it. In Egypt flax stalks grow to three or four feet and are as thick as a reed. (Keil 1195). Nisan, the first month of the sacred calendar (March/April), was the time of flax and barley harvest. Compare 4:19.

Flax was used to make linen clothing, sails, rope, and lamp wicks.

**spread out/** הֶעֱרַכּוֹת - Or “arranged in a row.” The form is a Qal passive participle of עָרַךְ. The same verb is used of Abraham *arranging* wood on his altar (Genesis 22:9), of Moses *setting out* the bread of the Presence on the table, and of *setting* a table with dishes (Proverbs 9:2). When spread out to dry on the roof, flax would provide ideal hiding cover.

### *Notes on Verse 7*

**along the way to the Jordan/** הַדֶּרֶךְ תַּיְיבֵּן - The expression in Hebrew

has only two words, the first in construct. The term may be the proper name of a road (“The Jordan Highway”), or it may simply express direction (“toward/in the direction of the Jordan”). Compare *derek hayam* in Isaiah 8:23 (9:1 in Engl.) where the expression may be a proper name for the highway later known in Latin as the *Via Maris* (“Way of the Sea”).

The Hebrew noun דרך has a broad field of meaning: “road, journey, direction, manner, undertakings (cf. 1:8)” etc.

**leading to/ על** - The preposition על could also be translated here “on/over.” The idea would then be that the road continues on or over the fords of the river.

**the fords/ הַמַּעְבְּרוֹת** - Literally, “places of crossing over.” The noun is from the same root as the verb in 1:2 translated “cross.” The definite article seems to indicate that these fords were the commonly known and generally used fords, perhaps the same as those in Judges 3:28 and 2 Samuel 19:15-18. The proximity of the fords explains partially why the city of Jericho sprang up here.

**And the gate - they closed (it)/ וַהֲשִׁיעַר סָגְרוּ** - This translation brings out the syntactic position of “gate” in the Hebrew sentence. It stands before the verb for emphasis, while in usual Hebrew word order the verb comes first.

This is a second closing of the gate, which had been reopened for the pursuers following its initial closing of v. 5. By this detail about the gate and its closing, the author is highlighting the fears of Jericho.

### *Commentary*

Joshua’s act of sending spies does not contradict his faith in the covenant LORD and his recent promises. Neither did Moses’ employment of his brother-in-law Hobab as guide in the desert take away from his trust in the LORD directing Israel. The people of God are to be “as shrewd as snakes” at the same time that they are “as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). While at times God makes

clear that the only right act for Israel is the non-action of “quietness and trust” and being “still” (Isaiah 30:15, Psalms 46:10), Joshua here demonstrates trust through a confident active response. The Scriptures never recommend laziness and presumption but often call for confident activity from those who know the promises of their saving LORD. Joshua continues to draw on his God-given “spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9) as he dispatches from Shittim the two spies.

About thirty-eight years earlier at Kadesh Barnea, Moses had sent Joshua himself into Canaan as part of the twelve-man forty-day spy mission. (Numbers 13) The end result of that reconnaissance effort was rebellion, death by plague of the ten spineless spies, almost four decades of wandering, and the death by God’s judgment of the whole rebellious generation. The strategy of Joshua is now different from that enterprise in at least three ways.

He sends just two spies, not one from each tribe as earlier. While representation from all twelve tribes is called for later to illustrate the unity of the covenant nation (e.g. 4:4-7), Joshua does not follow that procedure here. The author does not name the tribe or tribes of the pair, nor does he indicate that their number reflects that of the earlier mission, i.e., the duo of Joshua and Caleb.

He speaks secretly to the two agents. Apparently even Israel does not know about their activity. If the two return with a report of massive city walls, a surging river, harrowing experiences, and seemingly slim chances for success, the whole nation does not have to hear. The spies will report to Joshua, as v. 24 will show.

A third difference is that, while the spies are to gather information on the land as a whole (vv. 1,2,3), they will center their efforts on one part of Canaan, Jericho. Joshua would know from meditating on the Torah (1:8) that the LORD is not expecting him to take the whole land in a few months or even in a year (Exodus 23:28-30; Deuteronomy 7:22). Such a demand might have been psychologically defeating. The LORD through Joshua will drive out the Canaanites “little by little” over some years so that the land will not become desolate and the wild animals proliferate from too few Israelites in a “spacious land” (Exodus 3:8). Joshua can concentrate on Jericho now and later move on to other portions of central Canaan; then he can sweep to the south and finally to the north, all in step-by-step fashion. The process of conquering,

it appears, will take some seven years, (This information comes from Caleb's age at the time of the first spy episode and his age when the intensive conquest appears to be finished. See 14:7,10. In between was the 38 years of wandering.) followed by more years of taking firm possession of the land by the individual tribes. But first the spying out of Jericho!

For the kind of facts the two "footmen" might collect as they "look over" and "search out" the land and Jericho, see Moses' instructions to the twelve spies in Numbers 13:18-20.

Joshua sends the spies out from Shittim, the last campsite of Israel east of the Jordan. That name ("The Acacias") describes the pleasant location on a promontory overlooking the plains of Moab. Shittim is about eight miles from the Jordan and about thirteen miles from Jericho. The site has been identified with both Tell el-Hammam and Tell el-Kefrein, the latter circa two miles west of the former. Both occupy strategic positions. For more information on Shittim, see the note at v 1.

The trip from Shittim to Jericho holds two forms of danger for the men. They must cross the surging Jordan and the Kikkar ("circle" or "oval"). The Kikkar is the portion of the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea that is a wide-open plain where it would be a challenge to escape notice. One should not be misled by the fact that this is the earth's lowest point. It is not a deep gorge, but broad, open terrain. And the river dividing the Kikkar is at floodstage. Crossing the Jordan even at the fords during this month of Nisan is treacherous.

Joshua's "spirit of wisdom" (Deuteronomy 34:9) leads him to send the spies to Jericho. It is the key city of central Canaan for several reasons: it controls the major passes into the heart of the land to the west; it is near the main fords across the southern Jordan that link the area with the east; and it holds control over the fresh spring water critical to the district. To conquer Jericho would be a first big step in taking the heart of Canaan.

Why do the two spies, men under the covenant who know the Sixth Commandment from Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18, enter the house of the "prostitute" Rahab in Jericho. There are several explanations that do not presume fornication or deviation from duty.

Since Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 show that Rahab is already a woman of faith in the LORD at the time of the spies' visit, her days of prostitution may be past while she continues to operate a motel suitable for the two.

Her house with its lingering reputation may offer special cover. Two young male travelers in a sex-saturated society would not attract special notice by entering a house associated with prostitution.

Rahab's residence, if open to the many travelers coming to the strategic city, may be the best place in town for spies to soak up information on Jericho and environs, as Joshua instructed. They enter what may have once been a bad house for a good cause.

Her house, as part of the city wall (v. 15), is ideal as a place of quick escape if the spies' project is uncovered. They would not be trapped in the city-center.

The LORD's hand of grace leads them to the house of Rahab. He has plans for her eternal and earthly safety and even chooses her as a link in the line of the Savior (Matthew 1:5). Her story will accent God's unmerited love to three-and-a-half millennia of Bible readers. What sometimes appear to be the chance happenings of life are later shown to be God-determined events leading to a grace-filled conclusion.

At the house of Rahab, the spies' cover is blown away, even though the flax covering them is not. An unnamed informer (or informers) tells the king of Jericho about their presence and project, since the king ultimately would be in charge of security of the city-state. The best-laid plans of the spies to avoid detection come to nothing. However not only their safety, but the destiny of Rahab and her family is a part of the greater mission.

The LORD often rearranges the plans of his people to pour out blessings to them as well as to others. Believers thus prefix their plans with "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:15) and suffix the episodes of their lives with "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Rahab disobeys the king's order, delivered through his messengers, to bring out the spies she has hidden. Now a woman of

covenant faith, she is acting in the spirit of the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) and wants to protect life. Her civil disobedience is in harmony with the words of the Apostles, who were given strict orders by authorities not to teach in Jesus name but responded, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Now what about the much-discussed question of Rahab’s lie? Rahab does more than arrange the bare flax to cover the spies. She rearranges the bare facts to cover for them. The author of Joshua, however, does not pause to comment on the moral issue of deliberate deception. Neither do James (2:25) and the author of Hebrews (11:31). The writer neither condemns nor defends her deception as he reports what happens at her house. Teachers are also wise not to broach the subject at this point. But experience shows that questions arise. When they do, some comment is in place. The following may be appropriate responses.

All forms of deception are not necessarily immoral. The two spies themselves have to be crafty. In 8:2 the LORD orders an ambush, a military stratagem. In Exodus 1:15-21 the midwives deceived Pharaoh to protect the lives of Hebrew baby boys, and God approved of what they did. Clever deception is called “skill” in sports with no one accusing another of an ethical lapse when “faked out.”

The Old and New Testament inspired authors that tell of Rahab’s actions make no comment whatever on her deception. Note that the word “lie” does not appear in any of the biblical contexts that speak of Rahab.

Rahab’s purpose is to protect the lives of the two Israelite spies. Her desire is in harmony with God’s will. That fact, however, does not imply a general principle that “the end justifies the means.”

Rahab must respond “on the spot” without the benefit of a seminar on ethics. She does what she thinks is best under the circumstances. Some questions easily answered in an academic setting are not always as simple in the sinful “real world.”

Ancient ideas about hospitality made it a matter of integrity to protect even your greatest enemy if he had once “eaten salt” at your house. Rahab is protecting her houseguests as her culture demanded. That is not to say that all cultural practices are morally sound.

Rahab is not perfect. She is a justified believer, and as such she is declared forgiven and holy. Sanctification, however, is an ongoing process. Her thoughts, words and actions, just like ours, are far from guiltless. (Cf. the lies of Abraham in Genesis 12:10 ff. and 20:1 ff., though he was justified through faith (Genesis 15:6). The Formula of Concord therefore states for the comfort of believers:

“We also believe, teach, and confess that, although the genuinely believing and truly regenerated persons retain much weakness and many shortcomings down to their graves, they still have no reason to doubt either the righteousness which is reckoned to them through faith or the salvation of their souls, but they must regard it as certain that for Christ’s sake, on the basis of the promises and the Word of the holy Gospel, they have a gracious God.” (FC, Epitome, Article III. Righteousness. Tappert p 474)

Our joy as people whom God has freely justified by grace for Christ’s sake is not that we have made the right decision in every moral conundrum. The Apostle John states our chief confidence: “If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 2:1,2). Our delight is in the first predicate applied to us in the expression *simul iustus et peccator*:

Luther offers his candid comments related to what Rahab did:

“The second kind (of lie) is the obliging lie, that is, a lie of love or compassion, as when the government happened to be searching for a thief to punish him and I knew where he was yet said that I did not know. In that case I am lying, not to harm but to help my neighbor. Or if I saw that someone had designs on the chastity of a virgin or matron, and I pretended not to know her, then I would be lying to help, and out of respect for, the girl. Thus Michal is lying to her father when she says that David went away, but she is doing this to help David (1 Samuel 19:11ff.). Accordingly, where it can be done without harm to the government or to parents, one may protect and defend those whom they are seeking or are asking about. Rahab’s lie in Joshua 2:5 is similar. Accordingly, it is an obliging lie by which one has regard for the welfare and the good name of the body or the soul. On the other hand, a harmful lie attacks all these, just as an obliging lie defends

them and is not properly called a lie. Then this term is used ambiguously and is misapplied, because it is a very fine defense against danger to the soul, the body, and property. Therefore it is a respectable and pious lie and should rather be called a service of love, although Augustine calls it a lie and nevertheless tones it down by means of the epithet “obliging”; for the persecutor is deceived in order that the devil and the wickedness of the persecutor may be hampered and the innocent may be defended. This is keeping the commandments of God, not transgressing them. Someone will object: “But the truth should not be concealed.” My answer is that in such instances it should not be told unless you are driven to do so.” (LW 5:40-41)

The drama in vv. 1-7 is intense. The facts themselves make it so: spies, a prostitute, a king in panic, cover blown, cover-up, the dark cover of night, men covered by flax on a roof, a wild chase, and a quick closing gate that squeaks of Canaanite fears. The author captures the drama as he mixes direct quotes with brief commentary. The Spirit and his chosen writers of salvation history are not bland narrators. Christian educators can learn from the style here and throughout Joshua.

The quick closing of the city gate testifies to the deep fears of the citizens of Jericho. The words of Rahab in later verses (9-11) show that their dread does not result merely from an Israelite spy-team and army. Their horror is tied to the LORD himself, his past acts of judgment, his protection of his covenant people and his total authority in the universe. Deepest fears arise from a sense of guilt, rejection of the only living God, and his deserved judgment. Jericho has chosen man-made gods and superstitions over “the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sins” (Exodus 34:6,7). Jericho’s unrepented sin has now reached the “full measure” spoken of by God to Abraham when he promised the patriarch that his descendants would come back again to Canaan in the fourth generation (Genesis 15:16).

The discovery in 1929 of artifacts and epic literature at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) from about the time of Joshua reveals some of the detestable religious practices of the Canaanites. Polytheistic idolatry, child sacrifice, religious prostitution, and divination were all part of

the sordid cesspool. With their rejection of God's grace proven by their overflowing measure of sin after centuries of God's patience, his judgment by Israel's hand now approaches. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Fears haunt Jericho for good reason. A closed city gate cannot defend against the LORD when the floodgates of his judgment swing open.

Readers may be reminded at this point of "psychological gate closings" that swing freely among unbelievers and the old nature of Christians. Some of them are denial of sin, attempts to dull guilt feelings through substance abuse, denial of a righteous God, and rejection of the Scriptural teaching of eternal judgment in hell.

While fears flourish at Jericho, the LORD of free and faithful grace grants perfect safety to a believing prostitute through the faith he has given her. That is the focus of the following verses.