

Evangelical Lutheranism and Today's Evangelicals and Fundamentalists*

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Some thirty-five years ago, in the days before there was an Arizona-California District, our former district president, the Rev. E. Arnold Sitz, delivered an essay at the Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention entitled, *Calvinism (or: The Reformed System): Its Essence and Its Menacing Impact upon American Lutheran Doctrine and Practice*. In it he reviewed the primary Reformed confessional statements, warned against certain inroads that Reformed theology and practice were making upon American Lutheranism, and outlined some positive steps for us to take to preserve our truly scriptural, Lutheran heritage.

In this essay we will be treading upon somewhat similar ground. But we will be narrowing our focus considerably. We will be centering our attention upon what, in comparison with the world-wide Reformed scene, is clearly a minority view, but which nevertheless is making a considerable impact upon our country at the present time. We are referring to the growing conservative Reformed movement of our day.

So phenomenal has been the growth of the conservative Reformed churches—the evangelicals and fundamentalists—and the concurrent decline of the mainline liberal churches that liberal churchmen are somewhat worriedly sitting up and taking notice. Already ten years ago Dean Kelley, a United Methodist minister and Director for Civil and Religious Liberty of the National Council of Churches (a liberal organization by nearly anyone's definition), was given a sabbatical leave by the NCC to write a book analyzing why the conservative churches are growing and the liberal churches dying. He acknowledges in the preface to his book, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*:

Amid the current neglect and hostility toward organized religion in general, the conservative churches, holding to seemingly outmoded theology and making strict demands on their members, have equalled or surpassed in growth the yearly percentage increases of the nation's population. And while the mainline churches have tried to support the political and economic claims of our society's minorities and outcasts, it is the sectarian groups that have had most success in attracting new members from these very sectors of society.¹

Since these words were written, the conservative Reformed churches have continued to grow. Back in 1970, in an October 19 U. S. *News and World Report* article, "New Life for Old-Time Religion," the number of evangelicals in our country was estimated to be between 40–45 million. Today's estimates place them at 50 million, although these figures are not altogether reliable because there is no universal agreement as to what constitutes an "evangelical." Bernard Ramm, for example, in his book, *The Evangelical Heritage*, includes among evangelicals "the obscurantistic fundamentalist and the learned Lutheran" as well as the "Reformed confessional theologian." He also considers Pentecostals and the "evangelical neo-orthodox" to be evangelicals. Including all these greatly increases the number, of course.

Be that as it may, we are dealing here with a growing movement which is having an increasing impact upon society and, in many cases, upon the people in our congregations. Quite a turnabout from the early 1900s when it appeared that the theological liberals had won the battle against the conservatives. Now the conservatives in many respects have the upper hand. Even politicians and television producers, who know which way the wind is blowing, have become sensitive to the voice of the conservative churches.

This growth of the conservative Reformed churches interests also us, who are a voice for conservative Lutheranism in our time. On the one hand, we rejoice to see churches which are taking seriously God's Word

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¹Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), viii.

and Christian doctrine growing and flourishing. But on the other hand, we need to make sure we “orientate ourselves properly over against the conservative Reformed camp.”² We need to examine closely the theology and practice of today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists. It is not easy to do this because, for one thing, as we will see, there is no such thing as one evangelical-fundamentalist body of doctrine. We will find a variety of theological stances since today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists combine in various ways Calvinistic-Zwinglian, Arminian and Anabaptist theologies.

Another difficulty in properly evaluating today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists is that, being basically conservative in their theologies, they speak somewhat the same language we conservative Lutherans speak; but they don’t always mean the same thing that we do. It is this observation that led Martin Scharlemann to write in a recent issue of *Affirm*, a publication put out by conservatives within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

Our Lutheran heritage is threatened not only from the left, by historical critics and their followers, but also from the right, by fundamentalism (evangelicalism). In fact, at the moment, the latter is, by all odds, the more menacing because so much of it sounds very biblical, and also because so many of our fellow conservative Lutherans hear fundamental preachers and read “evangelical” literature with Lutheran eyes and ears, so to speak, and thus feel at home in the material.³

Is Scharlemann’s observation correct? Ask yourself: What books are our WELS people reading? If they frequent the Bible bookstores in our larger cities, virtually all of the books on the shelves come from the pens of evangelical or fundamentalist authors. If they are invited by a friend to visit another church, chances are that it will be to visit one of the booming fundamentalist churches in the community, which are usually very aggressive in their outreach and don’t hesitate to proselytize from other churches. And chances are that people will like what they read and enjoy the message they hear because of its biblical orientation and apparently “Lutheran” ring.

But how Lutheran, how scriptural, are the messages from the evangelical-fundamentalist pulpits, podiums and printed page? In short, what should be the stance of an evangelical Lutheran over against today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists?

To help answer this question we are first going to back up somewhat in time to the early days of this century and explore the roots in our country of today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists. Then we will step back even farther to examine the Reformation-time roots of today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists. After that we should be in a better position to take a look at present-day evangelicals and fundamentalists and to formulate a proper evangelical Lutheran response.

I. The Historical Roots In Our Country Of Today’s Evangelicals And Fundamentalists

The Fundamentalist Movement

Both today’s evangelicals and today’s fundamentalists consider themselves to be descendants of a religious movement in our country during the first third of this century called the Fundamentalist Movement. In fact it was during this time, 1909–1930, that the term “Fundamentalist” was coined. Today’s fundamentalists deliberately use a lower case “f” in an attempt to divorce themselves from the partially unfavorable connotations that the term “Fundamentalist” conveys to those familiar with this earlier era.

The Fundamentalist Movement was, as the name implies, an attempt on the part of Reformed churchmen from several denominations to get the church to return to the so-called “fundamentals” of the

² Edward C. Fredrich, “Twentieth Century Reformed Thinking Analyzed and Evaluated,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 72:1 (January 1975), p 68.

³ Martin H. Scharlemann, “Fundamentalism,” *Affirm*, 9:5 (February-March, 1982), p 2.

Christian faith. It was an emotional and sometimes quite heated battle to bring the Reformed churches back to their Reformation-day biblical foundation.

Its Origin

To understand the intensity of this battle, we need to understand the situation of the Reformed churches at the turn of the century. They had been thoroughly inundated by theological liberalism. Heretofore leading conservative seminaries, such as Princeton Theological Seminary of the Northern Presbyterian Church, were being taken over by liberal theologians, the results of which would soon be evident in many a pulpit.

We can trace this theological liberalism back to the same cause that spawned liberal Lutheran theology in Germany in the mid-and-late 1800s—the Enlightenment that swept much of Europe in the 18th century. By the Enlightenment is meant, in the words of Bernard Ramm in *The Evangelical Heritage*,

...that period in modern history when the educated or intelligentsia ... turned their backs on the authority of antiquity and turned to trust in their own powers. It repudiated the authority of the past or of tradition and affirmed modern man's power to find the truth for himself. It meant that modern philosophy was better than ancient philosophy and that modern science was better than Greek science. It meant that the supreme intellectual vice was dogmatism and the supreme intellectual virtue was tolerance.⁴

The Enlightenment enthroned human reason. Anything that couldn't pass the scrutiny of man's reason would have to be discarded. If that kind of thinking was carried over into religion—and it was in the form of theological liberalism—the results would obviously be devastating. So much of what Christians hold dear cannot be empirically validated to the full satisfaction of human reason: the supernatural, inspiration, the deity of Christ, the exclusive claims of Christianity, continued existence after this life, etc. Liberal theologians, following the lead of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, rejected all such doctrines and any others that could not be proved by experience.

The Reformed theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, for example, writes in his book, *Christian Faith*, "We should abandon the idea of the absolutely supernatural because no single instance of it can be known by us." In place of the faith once delivered to the saints came a vague "Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man" theology which rejected all dogmas and basically lived for the here and now. The descendants of this kind of theology live on today in the churches which look upon the *Christian Century* as their "bible" and the National Council of Churches as their rallying point.

The foremost and first theologian to attempt to reconstruct Christianity in terms of the Enlightenment was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). He hoped to win back the intellectuals by portraying religion not in terms of doctrines, dogma, creeds and confessions but rather as a living experience with God which he defined as a feeling of absolute dependence upon God. Salvation to Schleiermacher is God-consciousness. Sin is lack of God-consciousness. We are "saved" when we are drawn away from sensual self-consciousness to God-consciousness.

The place of Christ? He possessed a perfect God-consciousness. As Christ is preached we are drawn to his kind of God-consciousness and are "saved." Where does the Bible fit in? It records the inner experience of people like Christ and thus shows us what we must do. Schleiermacher's theology centers, then, not in God or the Scriptures, but in man himself who can rise to meet God.

In all this Schleiermacher is very careful not to say anything with which unregenerate human reason would disagree. In Schleiermacher's system, says Ramm,

⁴ Bernard L. Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Waco: Word Books, 1973), pp 64–65.

...religion shines as true in its own light. It needs no artificial support from the outside like a miracle. It requires no credentials outside like the resurrection of a corpse. Religion is part of the fabric of the universe and is therefore as natural to man as the air he breathes and the water he drinks. Omit the scandal of the miraculous and nothing stands in the way of the intellectual's return to the Christian faith.⁵

Closely allied with Schleiermacher's theology of religious experience was the advent of destructive Biblical criticism. Men such as Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) stressed the human elements of the Bible. They applied to the Bible the same type of literary criticism that other ancient literature received. The result was a Bible whose authority was questionable, a Bible stripped of the miraculous, a Bible that no longer could be counted on to show people God's way to salvation through the atoning work of his incarnate Son. The Bible became an account of man's search for God instead of God's revelation of himself and his salvation to man.

When in 1859 Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species* which contradicted the Scripture's teaching about creation, man in God's image, the fall and redemption, this was no problem for the liberal theologians, because it did not contradict their theology of religious experience and negative Biblical criticism. For those who still held to the full inerrancy of the Bible it was another story, however.

One other factor contributed to the protest of the Fundamentalists at the beginning of this century: the rise of the social gospel. During this period of time our nation was in the midst of a transformation from a primarily rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrialized society. With the rapid movement to the cities came new problems, poverty, crime, employer-employee relations, etc. A leading spokesman in the church to help society overcome these problems was Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), pastor of a German Baptist Church in New York City.

Rauschenbusch insisted that society should and could be thoroughly reformed. How could this be done? By reconstructing the social environment. To accomplish this the church needed to shift its emphasis drastically, as Fredrich puts it, "from the individual sinner to the disturbed society, from the means of grace to a legislative program, from the heavenly goal to the building of a heaven on this poor earth, from creeds and convictions to deed and demonstrations."⁶

The Forms It Took

It was out of this background of religious subjectivism, negative Biblical criticism, evolutionary thought, and a rising social gospel that a vigorous protest movement arose which from about 1920 on was labelled the Fundamentalist Movement. The movement took many forms. There were heresy trials in which men were evicted from seminary chairs and church pulpits. Interdenominational Bible conferences arose in various places as forums to discuss the issues and formulate a conservative response. The best known and most significant of these was the Niagara Bible Conference which in 1895 listed the following as the fundamentals of the Christian faith:

1. inerrancy of the Scriptures
2. the deity of Christ
3. the virgin birth
4. the substitutionary atonement of Christ
5. Christ's physical resurrection
6. Christ's bodily return⁷

Bible institutes were founded which in their teaching emphasized the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. The foremost of them was the Moody Bible Institute, founded in 1886 and still going today. The Scofield Reference Bible was published, which popularized John Nelson Darby's (1800–1882) dispensationalist views,

⁵ Ibid., p 78.

⁶ Fredrich, op. cit., p 70.

⁷ Millard Erickson, *The New Evangelical Theology* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1969), p 23.

and was strongly pre-millennialistic in its notes. The Scofield Bible, which in its footnotes upheld the historic Reformed position and advocated Darby's dispensationalism, became the Bible of the Fundamentalists, a goodly number of whom were dispensationalist and pre-millennialist in their thinking.

The Fundamentalist Movement was also marked by the publication of a large number of books and tracts defending the faith. As the battle became more fierce, the pamphlets and books became more and more polemical and even vitriolic in tone. Instead of dealing with the issues, they attacked personalities. Legislative maneuvers, too, were a part of the Fundamentalists' arsenal, especially those directed against evolution being taught in the public schools. In the 1920s thirty-seven anti-evolution bills were introduced into twenty state legislatures, of which only four were passed. The so-called Scopes Monkey Trial in response to a testing of Tennessee's anti-evolution law was won by the Fundamentalists' William Jennings Bryan; but in the long run the ridicule that the press heaped upon the proceedings did more to damage the cause of the Fundamentalists than to help it. Today's fundamentalists and evangelicals still have not learned that lesson.

The Fundamentals

The chief product of the Fundamentalist Movement and what gave this movement its name was a series of volumes entitled, *The Fundamentals*. Financed by two Los Angeles brothers, Lyman and Milton Stewart, this twelve volume, ninety-four article series sought to defend the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Between 1909 and 1915 three million copies of it were distributed. The first nine volumes were sent out free of charge to every pastor, missionary, and seminary professor in the English-speaking world. The authors of *The Fundamentals* saw as their main assignment the refutation of higher criticism and restoration of confidence in the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God. This accounts for the fact that twenty-seven of the ninety-four articles are on the Bible and of these one-half are primarily directed against higher criticism of the Bible.

Of special interest to us as confessional Lutherans is what articles are included in *The Fundamentals* and what are omitted. Writing about sixty years after the publication of *The Fundamentals*, a present-day Reformed theologian, Bernard Ramm, defines a fundamental doctrine as

...one of such importance to the Christian faith that if denied the faith itself would collapse.... The fundamentals are therefore that cluster of doctrines that are non-negotiable; they have no viable alternatives. Destroy this theological cluster and you destroy Christianity.⁸

Ramm recognizes that there is a problem inherent in this kind of thinking for he says, "The problem with such a cluster is that it is easier said than done. Who determines what belongs in the cluster? ... Any list of fundamental doctrines is a human venture and liable to human error."⁹

But he makes a stab at it anyway. "Some doctrines," he writes, "may be very important such as the doctrine of baptism. But Christians may vary in their understanding of baptism, and Christianity and the church still stands."¹⁰ To Ramm, then, baptism is classified as a non-fundamental doctrine.

It is this kind of mind-set that we see in *The Fundamentals* and which is still prevalent among today's fundamentalists and evangelicals. In all of the ninety-four articles, spanning twelve volumes, there is not a single mention of the sacraments. In fact, the determining factor in choosing the subject matter for *The Fundamentals* appeared to be to restrict it to that upon which all conservative Protestants could agree. Thus they would put up a united front against the liberals and not be squabbling among themselves. For this reason, though most of the authors of *The Fundamentals* were strongly dispensationalist and pre-millennial, dispensationalism was avoided and pre-millennialism was relegated to the background. This tendency to agree to disagree as long as "fundamental" doctrines aren't involved is one of the marks of the overwhelming majority of today's evangelicals and fundamentalists.

⁸ Ramm, op. cit., pp 91-92.

⁹ Ibid., p 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., p 91.

As might be supposed, the basic theological stance of *The Fundamentals* is that of the historic Reformed theology to which it urged a return. That meant a repeat of the same errors Luther and the Lutheran Confessions dealt with almost 400 years earlier concerning doctrines such as justification, conversion, election, means of grace, proper use of law and gospel, etc. Just one example, as cited by Fredrich. In the article on “The Science of Conversion” the statement is made: “The divine Spirit operates how and where he pleases and with or without means and agencies.”¹¹ So spoke Zwingli also at the time of the Reformation. We’ll delve more into this as we take one further step back to look at the Reformation-time roots of today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists.

Decline of Fundamentalism

But first, a brief wrap-up. Publication of *The Fundamentals*, according to Milton Rudnick, “demonstrated that conservative theology was still very much alive and that it enjoyed the acceptance and support of competent and learned people.”¹² But, writes Erickson,

...from a movement of genuine scholarship, positive statement, and a certain latitude of evangelical position, fundamentalism came to be increasingly a negative, defensive, and reactionary movement with a narrowing of its theological options and an evaporation of scholarship and literary productivity. Corresponding to it was a diminishing influence of fundamentalism.¹³

Symbolic of fundamentalism’s diminishing influence was the departure Of J. Gresham Machen, an able theologian and leading Fundamentalist, from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929 and his participation in the founding of the new, conservative Westminster Theological Seminary. Whereas in the early days of the Fundamentalist Movement it was the liberal who was being unseated, it was now the fundamentalist who was being forced to withdraw. But this was only a temporary eclipse of fundamentalist influence, as we will see in part three of this presentation. But first we look to:

II. The Reformation-Time Roots of Today’s Evangelical and Fundamentalist

As noted by Professor Fredrich in his *Twentieth Century Reformed Thinking Analyzed and Evaluated*, the conservative Reformed movement today, whether evangelical or fundamentalistic, “in most cases ... represents the old traditions that reach back to the original fathers and founders of Reformed theology.”¹⁴ That is why, if we want to understand today’s scene, it is advisable to make sure we understand as well as possible the traditions and doctrinal base from which today’s conservative Reformed come.

Luther, Zwingli and Calvin

It is instructive for us to note right at the outset that Luther approached theology in a different way than both Calvin and Zwingli, the two chief Reformed spokesmen. That difference in approach led to different emphases and in some ways different results. Martin Luther (1483–1546), as we all undoubtedly know, was burdened by a deep consciousness of sin. He spent long, agonizing hours searching for peace which he finally found in the gospel of free forgiveness in Christ. As Sitz writes:

¹¹ Fredrich, op. cit., p 72.

¹² Milton L. Rudnick, *Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), p 39.

¹³ Erickson, op. cit., p 29.

¹⁴ Fredrich, op. cit., p 68.

By experience he found that nothing else could afford him any relief, help, or cure but the Gospel. In it, and out of it, he lived and moved and had his being.... This explains why Luther ... lived the freest and happiest of all the reformers, while at once he was the most conservative and non-compromising of all in the matter of doctrine.¹⁵

Both Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) and John Calvin (1509–1564) approached theology from a more detached point of view since they did not go through the severe spiritual struggles Luther experienced. Zwingli was heavily affected by the rationalistic, humanistic spirit of the day. Luther was also well acquainted with humanism as advanced by Erasmus of Rotterdam; but his reason always was subservient to the Word. Conservative Reformed theologian, M. Eugene Osterhaven, compares Luther and Zwingli in this way: “Luther was a theologian steeped in the tradition of the church, conservative, biblical and uncompromising. Zwingli was first a humanist influenced by the new learning of the Renaissance, *then* a theologian, and a radical in thought.”¹⁶

Calvin likewise, who tried to take a mediating stance between Luther and Zwingli, especially in regard to the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper, had close ties with humanism. Osterhaven quotes from A.M. Fairbairn’s article on “Calvin and the Reformed Church”:

Calvin, like Zwingli, was a humanist before he became a Reformer, and what he was at first he never ceased to be. On the intellectual side, as a scholar and thinker, his affinities were with Erasmus, though on the religious side they were rather with Luther.... In Calvin the historical sense of the humanist, and the spiritual passion of the Reformer, are united; he knows the sacred literature which his reason has analyzed, while his imagination has seen the Apostolic Church as an ideal which his conscience feels bound to realize.¹⁷

Calvin was a Frenchman who spent most of his adult life in Switzerland, where in Geneva he established his church-state, or theocracy, over which he became both head pastor and mayor. Religious crimes in Geneva were punished by civil law. Servetus was burned at the stake for denying the Trinity. In fact, in one four-year period, fifty-eight were burned at the stake and seventy-six exiled for religious “crimes.” In one year of plague forty-three women were burned as witches.¹⁹

The difference between Calvin and Luther can be seen in their writings. Calvin was a very logical, orderly person. By the age of 26 he had already published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which is a thorough, orderly presentation of all of Christian doctrine as Calvin saw it. Luther never published such a work. He looked upon the Word more as a powerful message to be proclaimed than as a series of doctrines to be systematized in logical form.

The Five Points of Calvinism

Certain of Calvin’s particular doctrinal emphases can be remembered by means of the acronym T-U-L-I-P. *Total depravity*: Man can do nothing to save himself. *Unconditional election*: God has from all eternity elected all of mankind, some for salvation, others for damnation, simply as an act of his sovereign will. *Limited atonement*: Christ died only for those whom God has elected for salvation. *Irresistible grace*: It is impossible to resist the Holy Spirit’s call to faith. *Perseverance of the saints*: Once saved, always saved.

In the early 1600s a protest, called the Remonstrant Movement, arose in Holland against these five points of Calvinism. Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) was appointed to defend the position of Calvin, but in the

¹⁵ E. Arnold Sitz, “Calvinism: Its Essence and Its Menacing Impact upon American Lutheran Doctrine and Practice,” *Quartalschrift*, now *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 43:4, (October 1946), p 235.

¹⁶ M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 43:4, pp 245–246.

process was converted to the other side. The end result, after the death of Arminius, was a meeting at Gouda in 1610 in which the followers of Arminius drew up The Five Articles of Remonstrance in opposition to Calvin's five points. That, in turn, led to a counter-meeting by the Calvinists (the Synod of Dort, 1618–19) which produced the Canons of Dort, the Five Points (T-U-L-I-P) of Calvinism. As a result, Holland remained Calvinistic; but the teachings of Arminius spread to England and from there via the Methodists in the 1780s into the United States. Today in our country the evangelicals and fundamentalists are more often Arminian than Calvinistic.

Arminianism

The Five Articles of Remonstrance assert:

1. *Conditional Predestination*: God desires to save those who by the grace of the Holy Spirit believe in Jesus and persevere to the end. This is a predestination in view of faith, a doctrinal deviation that deeply affected some midwestern United States Lutherans in the 1870s.
2. *Unlimited Atonement*: Christ died for all
3. *Co-operation in Conversion*: Man has free will to choose or reject Christ, thus a denial of total depravity and the introduction of synergism into God's plan of salvation. In this Arminians are following the thought of Zwingli who taught that in regeneration and conversion men are not merely passive but also active. He could think this way because he held that original sin was only a lack of something good, but not total depravity.²⁰
4. *Possibility of Resistance to God's Grace*
5. *Possibility of Falling from Grace*: A believer may totally and finally fall.

Sitz, analyzing the Arminian controversy, writes: "The Remonstrants exercised a necessary sharp critique of Calvinism.... Only ... the pendulum was permitted to swing into the opposite extreme ... From election and reprobation it curved to free will; from God's will and pleasure to man's co-operation in conversion, and faith as a moving cause in election."²²

Justification

Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism lets the full, comforting light of universal justification, shine through. In Calvinism God has declared only a part of the world to be not guilty and offers it an irresistible and amissible grace. In Arminianism, though Christ died for all, it now depends on you to exercise your freedom of the will and choose Christ. The Calvinist can look only to his *faith* as the assurance that he is one of those whom God has elected to salvation instead of to such beautiful promises as, "God was in Christ reconciling the *world* to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The Arminian also looks to his faith, but as a *cause* of his salvation ("I accepted Christ; therefore I'm saved").

The Calvinist's way of being sure of salvation is described in the Westminster Confession (XVIII, 4):

True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in diverse ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted ... yet they are never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, the assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.²³

²⁰ *Calvin's Institutes*, I, V, 2, as related in Osterhaven, op. cit., p 91.

²² As quoted by Sitz, op. cit., 44:1 p 20.

²³ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1919), III, 639.

In other words, for assurance look within yourself, to your life of faith, to your love for Christ and the brethren. Such thinking can lead to religious activism, a restless, ceaseless doing of the Lord's work in order to gain greater assurance that one really is a believer and thus numbered among the elect.

Luther, on the other hand, with the Scriptures, encourages us to look, not within, but up and out to God's gracious promise in Christ. Writes Sitz: "The Lutheran seeks above all the assurance of forgiveness of sins; and this is made sure to him in the judicial and forensic process of justification ... Rom. 5:16, 18. As he appropriates this to himself the justification becomes particular, particular to him, to each believer, by faith and concomitant with faith. *But the accent lies on the objective work of God*, on God's promise, on his Word, on his Sacraments. Hence justification becomes so sure a thing to the Lutheran believer, and anxiety turns to peace"²⁴ (italics added).

We are going to look now at four more distinctive marks of Calvinism and Zwinglianism that are still apparent among today's evangelicals and fundamentalists: their use of law and gospel; their attitude toward the means of grace; their teaching and practice about church and state; and the place given to reason in their theology. But before we do this, we should note that we are not attempting to review all of the theology of Zwingli and Calvin. Were we to do this, we would undoubtedly find much more with which we agree than disagree. Osterhaven's book, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition*, contains many quotations from Calvin's *Institutes* which would warm the heart of any evangelical Lutheran who reads them.

The same is true about the Fundamentalist Movement of 1910–1930. The key issues, the doctrines the Fundamentalists sought to defend, were the authority of the Scriptures, its inspiration and inerrancy, and the deity of Christ, which included his virgin birth, miracles, resurrection, ascension, and return as Judge. We cannot but rejoice over such a concern for God's inspired Word and the honor of his Son.

One of the things we are attempting to do in this essay, however, is to pinpoint key areas of doctrinal divergence between evangelical Lutherans and today's evangelicals and fundamentalists so that we can properly evaluate what our relationship to such churches should be. Hence the emphasis on differences rather than similarities.

Law and Gospel

One of the most marked differences between Zwingli and Calvin on the one hand and Luther on the other was in their use of law and gospel. Let a Reformed theologian explain that difference as he sees it:

Another significant division [i.e. besides the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper] was over the relationship of law and gospel. Luther taught that God had two words for man: his word of judgment and wrath in the law, and his word of grace and forgiveness in the gospel. This is not a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament but a fundamental distinction to be found in all of Scripture. The difference between law and gospel is fundamental to the manner in which the Lutherans interpret Scripture and organize their theology. Calvin and the Reformed church taught that the law was the moral seriousness of the gospel. Therefore law and gospel are not antithetic, but the law adds to the gospel the divine imperatives for a righteous Christian life.²⁵

God, according to what Luther read in the Word and had personally experienced, confronts man either as the Lawgiver or as the Law-Fulfiller. As Lawgiver he demands perfection and threatens punishment. As Law-Fulfiller he reveals himself as a God of love who forgives our sins because of Christ. Under the law, God is to man a dreadful God whom man fears and hates and from whom he flees. Under the gospel, God is to man a God of grace and mercy in whom one is freed from the law's demands and threats of punishment and to whom one turns for refuge. The law always accuses; the gospel always comforts.

²⁴ Sitz, op. cit., 44:2 (April 1947), p 106.

²⁵ Ramm, op. cit., pp 43–44.

F. E. Mayer writes: Luther's rediscovery of the proper distinction between law and gospel, may be viewed as the starting point of the Lutheran Reformation. The proper distinction between these two doctrines is the heart and core of Lutheran theology, or in the words of the Formula of Concord, Art. V, "The specially brilliant light which has come to us through the Reformation." Where this distinction is properly observed, the Scriptures will be correctly explained and understood; conversely, where these two doctrines are mingled, the merits of Christ are obscured, and the Christian is robbed of his comfort.²⁶

Zwingli so blurred the distinction between law and gospel that he spoke of the law as "good news." He hoped to lead his people to a higher level of morality by the "pleasant means" of the law. Paul Peters in an essay, "The Historical Development of the Protestant Churches of the Reformation Era," states that for Zwingli the Bible is the Word of God "not because it contains the gospel of God's forgiving love in Christ, but because it reveals God's will. It is no means of grace in Luther's sense, but a guide for Christian faith and life. The work of Christ consisted chiefly in the revelation of the divine will. The gospel is this total revelation and includes the law. The two are in principle one. The gospel is itself a new law."²⁷

Such intermingling of law and gospel fails to take into account the dual nature of the Christian, old man and new man, as described in Romans 7:14ff. In the process it makes sin less sinful and a Christian's righteousness in Christ less righteous. The law is meant for the Old Adam, to accuse, to condemn. The Old Adam, being a fierce enemy of God, will never accept the mere guidance of the law. Yet in Calvinism and Zwinglianism the so-called third use of the law (the law as a guide for pious living) is seen as its main function. The new man, as new man, on the other hand, has been declared righteous, not partially, but *totally* righteous in God's eyes and thus needs only the gospel.

Walther in his classic *Law and Gospel* puts it this way: "God's Word is not rightly divided when the attempt is made to induce the unregenerate by means of the demands, threats, and promises of the law to renounce sin and do good works, and thus to make them pious, and to impel the regenerate toward the good by means of legalistic demands rather than by evangelical exhortation."²⁸

The law accuses; the gospel consoles. Failure to recognize this vital distinction leads to some faulty ways of teaching sanctification, as we will see in the third part of this essay.

Means of Grace

We turn now to the Reformers' way of looking at the means of grace. To Luther the matter was clear. In the Smalcald Articles he wrote, "We must firmly hold that God grants his Spirit or grace to no one, except through and with the preceding outward Word," i.e. the gospel in God's Word and Sacraments.²⁹ Therefore, as the Augsburg Confession puts it, "They [the followers of Luther] condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and work."³⁰

The other Reformation-time Reformers had different views, some very close to Luther's, others radically different. The most radical were the views of the Anabaptists mentioned in the Augsburg Confession. At first a part of the general evangelical movement along with Luther and Zwingli, they became increasingly critical of the nature and progress of reform. They sought to found a truly Christian church separate entirely from the state, a church in which every member was an earnest Christian. Among their marks were the rejection

²⁶ F. E. Mayer, "Human Will in Bondage and Freedom: A Study in Luther's Distinction of Law and Gospel," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 22:10 (October 1951), p 719.

²⁷ Paul Peters, "The Historical Development of the Protestant Churches of the Reformation Era: The Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Anabaptist Churches," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 57:4 (October 1960), p 269.

²⁸ C.F.W. Walther, *Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), p 182 (a new translation and considerable abridgement of the original).

²⁹ Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VIII.

³⁰ Augsburg Confession, Article V.

of infant baptism as a means of entrance into the kingdom (they required adult baptism instead), perfectionism and the insistence that “God’s Spirit will move and act without the means of grace.”³¹ The Formula of Concord condemns seventeen erroneous and heretical teachings of the Anabaptists, many of which, such as the above, have carried over into some of today’s evangelical and fundamentalist churches.

Zwingli did not go so far as the Anabaptists. But he, too, divorced the Spirit from the means of grace. He writes, “The Spirit is not in need of a guide or a vehicle.” Zwingli, says the Reformed theologian Ramm, “saw the relationship between man and God as direct and immediate through the Holy Spirit. In this immediacy of grace, and in this direct mediation of the Spirit, substances were unnecessary.”³²

Calvin, on the other hand, stands much closer to Luther. In his *Institutes* he speaks of the necessity of the means of grace for the Spirit to be able to work in man’s heart. And yet, perhaps because of his desire to be logical and precise, he defines things too finely and ends up separating the Spirit and the Word, as, for example, in this statement in his *Institutes*: “The Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.”³³

In an excellent essay, “The Word and Spirit in the Life of the Christian,” Robert Koester, up until recently pastor in our district, now in Missoula, brings out from the Scriptures the truth that you simply cannot separate the Spirit from the Word and the Word from the Spirit. By means of copious Scripture references he shows that whatever power the Bible ascribes to the Holy Spirit it also ascribes to the Word. The Word, like the Spirit, is active in conversion (Rm 1:16), sanctifies (Jn 17:17), testifies of Jesus (Jn 5:39), has the power to penetrate hearts (He 4:12), builds us up (Ac 20:32), is at work in us (1 Th 2:13), can save (Jas 1:21), lives in a Christian (1 Jn 2:25), thoroughly equips for every good work (2 Tm 3:17). Ephesians 6:17 ties the two together, Word and Spirit, when it speaks of “the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.”³⁴ We see this tendency, too, among today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists: to separate the Spirit from the Word.

As far as the Sacraments are concerned, neither Calvin or Zwingli looked upon them as means of grace, although here again Calvin is closer to Luther than is Zwingli. Zwingli maintained, “I believe, yea, I know, that all Sacraments, instead of bestowing the grace, do not even bring and administer it.” Instead, Zwingli insists on distinguishing between the Word, the sign, and the thing signified in the sacraments:

The sign in baptism is the water, the thing signified is regeneration or washing from sins. The sign in the Lord’s Supper is bread and wine, the thing signified is the veritable body and blood of Christ.³⁵

This rationalistic spirit of Zwingli became most evident at Marburg in 1529 when he and Luther met, at Zwingli’s urging, to try to effect a union between the followers of Zwingli and of Luther. They could not agree on the word “is” (“This *is* my body. This *is* my blood”). Zwingli’s reason could accept only “signifies,” an indication to Luther that in Zwingli and his theology was “another spirit.”

How, Zwingli argued, can Christ be in heaven at God’s right hand and in the bread and wine at the same time? He can’t be, Zwingli maintains. Accordingly, the Heidelberg Catechism, following Zwingli, says of Christ after his ascension: “Christ is true man and true God. According to his human nature he is not now on the earth, but according to his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit he never leaves us.”³⁶ For a Zwinglian that settles it. He cannot accept the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence.

Calvin, who came upon the scene somewhat later, took a mediating stance between Zwingli and Luther. He writes, “The sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in

³¹ Peters, op. cit., p 276.

³² Ramm, op. cit., pp 42–43.

³³ John Calvin, *Institutes*, I, vii, 4.

³⁴ Robert Koester, “The Word and Spirit in the Life of the Christian,” essay delivered to the Northern California Pastoral Conference, Nov. 17, 1978.

³⁵ As quoted by Sitz, op. cit., 43:4, p 250.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p 247.

him the treasures of heavenly grace.”³⁷ That sounds like Luther, doesn’t it? Yet Calvin does not teach a baptismal regeneration. Reformed theologian Osterhaven points out: “The practice of baptizing in the Reformed Church follows from its doctrine that the church is the new Israel. As the people of God under the old covenant comprised believers *and their children*, the people of God under the new covenant include the same.”³⁸ “From birth God takes them and acknowledges them as his children,” writes Calvin.³⁹ Therefore infant baptism merely *declares* that the infant is a child of God; it doesn’t *make* him a part of God’s family.

In the Lord’s Supper Calvin went so far as to accept the real presence in the Supper. The Calvinist Belgic Confession (Art. 35) states: “We err not when we say what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ.” If that were the entire statement, we would rejoice. Unfortunately it goes on to say, “But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth but by the Spirit through faith. Thus, then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of the Father in the heavens, yet he does not therefore cease to make us partakers of himself by faith.”

Therefore, in spite of the previous fine-sounding words, ask a Calvinist, “What do you actually, physically receive in the Lord’s Supper?” and his response will be that of Zwingli, “Bread and wine only.” The majority of today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists are in Zwingli’s camp in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper; if not in Zwingli’s, they are in Calvin’s.

With the Scriptures, Lutherans insist that you cannot separate the human and divine natures of Christ. Therefore, even according to his human nature Christ is present everywhere, and we have no difficulty in believing that his body and blood are present in, with and under the bread and wine in his Holy Supper.

One other item we must mention briefly before passing over from our discussion of the means of grace to Zwingli’s and Calvin’s concept of church and state. The Calvinistic Confessions leave room for the notion, quite prevalent today, that prayer is a means of grace. In the Westminster Confession (XIV, 1) we are told:

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the Sacraments *and prayer*, it is increased and strengthened [*italics added*].

Note that the Sacraments and prayer are put on the same level, both serving to increase and strengthen faith. This is an error that can so easily creep into our own thinking. We need to remember that prayer is a *fruit of faith*; not a *way* to faith.

Church and State

It is in the area of the proper relationship of church and state, specifically the place of the church in society, writes Reformed author Ernst Troeltsch, that “the difference between Lutheranism and Calvinism is most manifest.”⁴⁰ We may not agree with this assessment, but we would hardly disagree that right here we see yet today a major difference between evangelical Lutheranism and even conservative Reformed churches. It started with Zwingli and Calvin.

According to Zwingli, and after him Calvin to an even greater degree, church and state have the same purpose—to establish the rule of God, a theocracy which will glorify God here on earth. To accomplish this the church needs to infuse a proper religious spirit into the state. The state, on the other hand, is to protect and promote the interests of the church, very much the same kind of rationale that the Roman Catholic Church used to carry out its infamous Inquisition with the help of the secular government.

Zwingli, in his *Exposition of the Faith*, writes:

³⁷ Calvin, op. cit., IV, xiv, 17.

³⁸ Osterhaven, op. cit., p 51.

³⁹ Calvin, op. cit., IV, xvi, 32.

⁴⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, as quoted in Osterhaven, op. cit., p 145.

The visible church contains within itself many who are insolent and hostile, thinking nothing of it if they are excommunicated a hundred times, seeing that they have no faith. Hence there arises the need of government for the punishment of flagrant sinners.... For the higher powers do not bear the sword in vain.... Without civil government a church is impotent and maimed.... Authority is necessary to the completeness of the body of the church.

Zwingli continues:

To sum up: in the church of Christ government and prophecy are both necessary.... For just as man is necessarily constituted of both body and soul ... so there can be no church without government, although government supervises and controls those more mundane circumstances which are far removed from the things of the Spirit.⁴¹

To Zwingli then, and Calvin after him, church and state are not two separate entities as Luther and the Scriptures taught. Luther, in accord with Romans 13, called the state a *Büttel Gottes*, a jailer of God, whose function was to preserve the civil world for the day of judgment. But it was not called upon in any way to do the work of the church whose function was to proclaim the gospel of God's forgiving love in Christ.

In the thinking of Zwingli and Calvin the church and state are geared to such an extent into one another that the two become virtually equated. As Peters puts it:

The magistrate as the commissioner of God executes the law, the minister as God's servant proclaims the law. The magistrate must know what God has revealed in his law and therefore is in constant need of the church. The ... minister must keep watch that the law is not being transgressed.⁴²

These principles were carried out to the extreme in Zurich under Zwingli and in Geneva under Calvin where both secular and ecclesiastical authority were given the responsibility of subjecting the lives of the people in the community to God's will. It goes without saying in these days of the emergence of the Moral Majority that Zwingli and Calvin's theocratic goals for a community are looked upon by many in the conservative Reformed camp as an ideal to strive for.

Reason

This brings us to our final matter to consider before we look at Zwingli and Calvin's most direct descendants today, those in the evangelical and fundamentalist churches. To help us understand today's evangelicals and fundamentalists we should be aware of the place that reason held in the theology of Zwingli and Calvin. Remembering that both men were humanists, as even conservative Reformed theologians sympathetic to them acknowledge, we will not be surprised that they gave a higher place to reason than did Luther. Not that Luther disparaged reason. Far from it. But he refused to let it rule the Scriptures.

Zwingli, on the other hand, is reported to have said, "God does not ask us to believe anything we cannot comprehend." He couldn't comprehend the real presence of Jesus' body and blood, for example, and therefore could not believe it. He couldn't comprehend how God could condemn some of the great classical writers of antiquity who had never heard of Christ, so he believed that some of them might have been saved apart from a knowledge of the gospel, which led Luther to exclaim that either he or Zwingli must be the minister of the devil,

⁴¹ As quoted by Peters, op. cit., pp 267–269.

⁴² Peters, op. cit., p 269.

and Luther was quite certain that it was not himself. As Osterhaven admits, Zwingli “held the power of human reason in high esteem.”⁴³

Calvin, again, is not as radical as Zwingli. Sitz writes:

Zwingli often found his “facts” outside of Scripture, developed his premises from these “facts,” and then intruded his conclusion upon Scripture. Calvin, more careful, usually found his premises in Scripture, but believed it legitimate to draw hard and fast conclusions from these premises, conclusions which are not found in the Word of God. This principle of Calvin’s found express statement in the Westminster Confession in the words, “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, men’s salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in Scripture, or *by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*” [italics added].⁴⁴

In other words, logical deductions drawn from the Scriptures carry the same weight as those teachings clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Sitz goes on:

Luther found facts, premises, and conclusions in Scripture. If Holy Writ offered premises from which according to logic a certain conclusion must follow, Luther still searched the Word for the conclusion, and if he found it not, he left it unconcluded. To Calvin this was intolerable. His sense of the logical drove him to force himself through, though in doing so he tore the page of Scripture.⁴⁵

The difference between Luther and Calvin’s use of reason is illustrated in the way Calvin arrived at the Five Points. Starting with two clear scriptural teachings, the doctrines of the total depravity of man and of eternal election, Calvin from there logically deduces doctrines not taught in the Scriptures—election to damnation, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.

Luther, however, as Sitz puts it, “could preach undisturbed to the reason illogical and contradictory scriptural doctrines, of universal grace, particular predestination, temporary faith, and the personal responsibility of the finally condemned.”⁴⁶ It mattered not that they weren’t compatible with human reason. If God said so, that was enough.

III. Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Today

We have come back now to where we were at the beginning of this essay. On the basis of what we’ve studied so far, we’re ready to take a look at the evangelical and fundamentalist churches in our country today. We’ve been calling them by two different names, evangelical and fundamentalist, to indicate that there is a difference between conservative Reformed churches today; however, the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. Both are direct descendants of Calvin and Arminius—the evangelicals, or neo-evangelicals, as the more liberal among them call themselves, by their own admission allowing for a greater degree of latitude in doctrine and practice than the fundamentalists.

Fundamentalists

Today’s fundamentalists can be divided into two groups, “withdrawing” fundamentalists and “aggressive” fundamentalists, as Elmer Towns calls them in a July 6, 1973, *Christianity Today* article entitled,

⁴³ Osterhaven, op. cit., p 21.

⁴⁴ Sitz, op. cit., 43:4, p 239.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 43:4, p 239.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 43:4 pp 239–240.

“Trends Among Fundamentalists.” The withdrawing fundamentalists represent the most conservative wing of today’s conservative Reformed churches. They place a strong priority on pure doctrine and pure life. They refuse to co-operate with apostasy, which they would interpret as any deviation from the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. They also refuse to fellowship with those, such as Billy Graham, who may be sound on the fundamentals themselves, but who fellowships with liberals. Among withdrawing fundamentalists today are such men as Carl McIntire and his International Council of Christian Churches and Bob Jones and his Bob Jones University.

The aggressive fundamentalists represent perhaps the most potent force among the conservative Reformed churches in our country today. They, too, take doctrine and life seriously and tend to be quite aggressive in their outreach. Much of their growth comes through proselytizing, although they do attract the unchurched also. The fastest growing churches in our larger communities will quite regularly be the aggressive fundamentalists. Generally speaking, they de-emphasize their denominational ties, though they may be affiliated with a particular denomination. Like the withdrawing fundamentalists, they will not fellowship with liberals, but they won’t refuse to fellowship with a man like Billy Graham who himself does fellowship with liberals. Towns, in the article just mentioned, notes that “the two camps among fundamentalists have fellowship with each other and are more similar to each other than either is to the evangelical camp.”

Carl H. Henry, of the more liberal evangelical camp, faults the Fundamentalists of the early 1900s and their fundamentalist successors today for putting too much emphasis on the world to come and personal piety instead of on the whole counsel of God which would include more of a concern for the present social needs of society. He decries their lack of scholarship, their tendency to separation and anti-denominationalism, their emphasis on pre-millennial dispensationalism and their negative, polemical approach.⁴⁷

Evangelicals

From this evaluation of Henry it is not difficult to recognize the stance of today’s evangelicals, or neo-evangelicals. Neo-evangelicals Millard Erickson and Bernard Ramm give us this composite picture of the neo-evangelicals:

- They are less sharply separatistic than the fundamentalists, insisting that one should stay in a liberal denomination and fight for the truth rather than leave;
- They require no uniform position on eschatology. One may be a-millennial or pre-millennial;
- They allow divergence on the exact nature of inerrancy. One group says that inerrancy means all statements of Scripture without exception are without error while another maintains Scripture is inerrant only in matters of faith and practice of the faith;
- They will not disassociate themselves from those who look upon the teaching of theistic evolution as a valid option for the conservative Christian;
- They place strong emphasis upon sound scholarship;
- They advocate increased emphasis on the church’s social responsibility.

This “breadth of viewpoint,” maintains Erickson, “is not a departure from the initial character of the Fundamentalist Movement, but a return to it.”⁴⁸

Be that as it may, it is easy to see why today’s fundamentalists call the neo-evangelicals “half-hearted heretics who really have more in common with neo-orthodoxy and neo-liberalism than with true fundamentalism” and “misguided brethren who should be prayed for and reasoned back into the truth.”⁴⁹

Among the prominent evangelicals of our time are theologians such as Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga, Bernard Ramm, Harold Lindsell and Clark Pinnock. The evangelist Billy Graham, too, fits to a large degree into

⁴⁷ From Carl H. Henry’s 1957 book, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*, as quoted by Fredrich, op. cit., p 76.

⁴⁸ Erickson, op. cit., p 203ff, p 31ff.; Ramm op. cit., p 137ff.

⁴⁹ Erickson, op. cit., p 213.

this group. Some of them, Lindsell for example, are striving valiantly to keep all the evangelicals faithful to the Bible as God's inerrant Word.

Their chief publication is *Christianity Today*, dedicated "to the presentation of the reasonableness and effectiveness of the Christian gospel."⁵⁰ Their interchurch organization is the National Association of Evangelicals, begun in 1942. Prominent schools include Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College and Fuller Theological Seminary.

Emphasis on the Fundamentals

What are the primary doctrinal emphases of today's evangelicals and fundamentalists?⁵¹ In general we can say that they represent both the good and the bad of Reformation-time Reformed theology, as did their more recent ancestors, the Fundamentalists of the early 1900s. On the one hand, we rejoice over their concern for preserving the fundamentals of our Christian faith, doctrines such as the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the Trinity, deity of Christ, his virgin birth and miracles, sin and its consequences, the atonement, the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit and the everlasting existence of the saved and the lost. We praise God that they look upon Bible teaching and preaching as *the* work of the church.

Calvinism

However, we must also recognize that all of the old Reformed errors are still being taught. Strict Calvinism is still being upheld in a few bodies, such as much of the Christian Reformed and the Orthodox Presbyterian. In these churches people are still learning about a predestination to damnation as well as salvation, about a Christ who died only for the elect, about an irresistible grace and a faith that once possessed can never be lost.

Arminianism

Most other evangelical and fundamentalist churches are closer to Arminius with a mixture of the Anabaptists' teaching about believer baptism and, in some cases, perfectionism. Arminius, you will remember, taught a predestination in view of faith and free will in the matter of conversion.

This teaching of free will has had a decided impact on the evangelistic methods used by evangelicals and fundamentalists. Their goal is to get a person to "make a decision for Christ." Even Presbyterian James Kennedy in his training book, *Evangelism Explosion*, is thoroughly Arminian in his approach. We need to be careful we don't unwittingly adopt such a methodology, drawn as it is from false theological presuppositions.

Justification

We note still today a denial (in Calvinism) or a downplaying (in Arminianism) of the comforting doctrine of universal, or general, justification. In his entire book, *The New Evangelical Theology*, Millard Erickson makes only one mention of justification, and then only in connection with faith. Under the general heading of "salvation" we find the statement: "Justification means that God declares the sinner to be righteous, or just, in his sight." He then immediately goes on to say, "Spiritually the believer is united with Jesus Christ so that his sin and guilt are transferred to Christ, and Christ's righteousness is considered to be his."⁵²

He is obviously talking about the personal, individual justification which we enjoy by faith; but, divorced from any mention of universal justification, it fails to offer the full comfort and assurance God wants us to have. As Alan Eckert aptly put it in a recent essay on "The Formula of Concord, Article III: The Righteousness of Faith before God":

In Christ God has already forgiven all men their sins. Forgiveness is not something that awaits man's faith before becoming a reality. Rather, it is an accomplished fact. It provides the comforting assurance that *gives* faith.... As long as we keep the eyes of faith focused on Christ,

⁵⁰ Erickson, op. cit., p 4.

⁵¹ In what follows we are going to exclude the more liberal neo-evangelical wing of the evangelicals, since at present this is only a minority, albeit a fast-growing one, within the entire contemporary evangelical and fundamentalist picture.

⁵² Erickson op. cit., p 111.

on the words and promises of God, our faith is secure. But when we turn our gaze inward and focus on our faith, we run the risk of losing that faith.⁵³

Millennialism

The pre-millennialistic teachings of today's evangelicals and especially fundamentalists are well enough known so that we don't have to go into detail. A combination of popular books such as Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* and scholarly defenses of pre-millennialism such as those advanced by Dallas Theological Seminary make this almost *the* doctrine of today's fundamentalists. Though millennialism comes into the conservative Reformed churches via the Anabaptists, Zwingli's and Calvin's "kingdom of God on earth" approach to theology makes such a teaching quite acceptable to their descendants.

Fellowship

The attitude of today's evangelicals and fundamentalists toward church fellowship varies, as we have seen. Billy Graham will in his crusades fellowship with almost anyone while a withdrawing fundamentalist refuses to fellowship with Graham because of this. But the withdrawing fundamentalists are a minority. Rudnick writes regarding the Fundamentalists of the early 1900s, "With few exceptions, Fundamentalists were perfectly willing to worship together, in some cases even to unite organizationally, so long as there was agreement on the fundamentals."⁵⁴ This remains a characteristic of today's evangelicals and fundamentalists. They would interpret Romans 16:17 as referring only to those who teach contrary to the fundamentals as they define them.⁵⁵

Reason

In the place they give to reason in their theology, today's evangelicals and fundamentalists follow Zwingli and Calvin. Edwin C. Palmer, in his little booklet, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, on several occasions points to the logical reasonableness of Calvin's Five Points. For example, he writes: "The Five Points of Calvinism all tie together. He who accepts one of the points will accept the other points."⁵⁶ It is this over-reliance on reason to which Luther so strenuously objected.

A purpose of the evangelical's publication, *Christianity Today*, as noted before, is to demonstrate "the reasonableness ... of the Christian gospel." We see such a tendency to overemphasize the reasonableness of Christian truth also in evangelical and fundamentalist activity in the field of apologetics; however, we want to be quick to acknowledge that we see in these efforts much that is good, too. Lutherans tend to be quite weak in apologetics.

Means of Grace

Within today's evangelical and fundamentalist churches we see the same three errors regarding the means of grace that are apparent in Zwingli's and Calvin's theology. First, there is the tendency to separate the Spirit from the means of grace, to speak of him working immediately (without means) instead of mediately (with means).

⁵³ Alan J. Eckert, "Formula of Concord, Article III," essay delivered to the Arizona-California District Pastoral Conference, Oct. 27–29, 1981.

⁵⁴ Rudnick, *op. cit.*, p 84.

⁵⁵ "Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them" (NIV).

⁵⁶ Edwin C. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p 27.

For example, in the last chapter of prominent fundamentalist Tim LaHaye's book, *Transformed Temperaments*, there is a section entitled, "How to Be Filled with the Spirit." LaHaye lists five steps one must follow:

1. Examine yourself and confess all known sin
2. Submit yourself completely to God
3. Ask to be filled with the Spirit
4. Take God at his word and believe you are filled
5. Thank him for his filling, and repeat this procedure each time you realize you have sinned.⁵⁷

In other words, to live the Spirit-filled life there are certain things *I* must do, such as submitting myself completely to God.

But what do the Scriptures say? Galatians 3:2, 3, "I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" The Spirit works through a message, God's message, not through any efforts of our own. To ignore this truth is to use the law to attempt to receive what God gives only by grace.

Secondly, today's evangelical and fundamentalist churches, true to their historical heritage, downplay the importance of the sacraments, denying their efficacy. Millard Erickson, who outlines the theology of evangelicals in his book, *New Evangelical Theology*, makes absolutely no mention in all its pages of the sacraments. Present-day evangelicals and fundamentalists reject the real presence of Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper and, in the majority of cases, the need for infant baptism. The senior pastor of one of the fastest growing fundamentalist churches in the United States, California's Los Gatos Christian Church, writes in a tract entitled, "What About Baptism?"

The practice of infant christening comes from an old doctrine that babies were guilty of sin inherited from Adam. Therefore, they were christened or "*christianized*" and give a "*christian name*." Now we understand that we become a Christian by receiving Christ as our Savior by faith and then we obey him in immersion or baptism as he commands. "*By grace are ye saved through faith...*" This capacity is beyond the grasp of an infant who is innocent of all sin and needs no christening to make him a Christian.

With Arminius of old he thereby denies the Bible's teaching of total depravity.

Thirdly, the evangelical and fundamentalist churches of our time tend to view prayer as a means of grace. How does one become a Christian? The answer, according to Campus Crusade for Christ's "Four Spiritual Laws," Billy Graham's *How To Be Born Again*, and most other evangelical and fundamentalist literature, is to pray a prayer such as Billy Graham suggests: "O God, I acknowledge that I have sinned against you. I am sorry for my sins. I am willing to turn from my sins. I openly receive and acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Savior. I confess him as Lord. From this moment on I want to live for him and serve him. In Jesus' name. Amen." Graham goes on to say, "If you are willing to make this decision and have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you have become a child of God in whom Jesus Christ dwells."⁵⁸ Prayer thus becomes the means by which Christ becomes my Savior.

Law and Gospel

⁵⁷ Tim LaHaye, *Transformed Temperaments* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971), p 133. In fairness to LaHaye, though, we should add that when he goes on to talk about "walking in the Spirit" he underscores the need to read and study God's Word daily. After comparing Ephesians 5:18–21 with Colossians 3:15–17 LaHaye writes: "We may legitimately conclude from this that the filling of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit depend on our filling with the Word of God" (p 141).

⁵⁸ Billy Graham, *How To Be Born Again* (Waco: Word Books, 1977), p 169.

Zwingli and Calvin, as we have seen, looked upon the gospel as a new law. We see that same utilization of the Scripture today among the evangelicals and fundamentalists. Martin Scharlemann writes:

The “evangelical” view of the Bible ... is, perhaps, the most misleading aspect of this movement: fundamentalists take the Bible very seriously and yet, for the most part, fail to proclaim the “good news” for what it really is.... They fail to comprehend that the Scriptures are given to us primarily for the sake of the gospel.⁵⁹

To make of the gospel a new law is to rob the gospel of all its comfort and also of its power. It results in a moralistic use of Scriptures. By moralizing we mean that kind of teaching which seeks to motivate and empower Christian living by means of God’s commands rather than his promises. The most the moralizer can do is to change outward behavior and in the process produce either a modern-day Pharisee proud of his good works or, if the individual has difficulty living up to what is commanded, a sinner weighted down with a burden of unresolved guilt.

Time requirements keep us from delving as deeply as we would like into this vital subject. Two recent brief, and excellent, studies on moralizing which we recommend for your further study are: “Moralizing and the Pastoral Ministry: The Proper Use of Law and Gospel in the Pastoral Ministry,” essay presented by Silas Krueger to the Arizona-California District Pastoral Conference, Oct. 25, 1978, and an article in the Winter 1982 (Vol. 79, No. 1) issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* by John Jeske entitled: “Communicate the Gospel More Effectively,” particularly pages 12–15. Krueger writes, “Moralizing is nothing more than an ‘ethical patch job.’ ” Jeske points to a root cause of moralizing: “*If the human problem ... is not analyzed deeply enough, the preacher will make the law and not the gospel the key to solving the problem. That’s like putting a band-aid on skin cancer*” (emphasis added).

Closely allied with this shifting of emphasis from gospel to law is an over-reliance upon methods to effect changes in a person’s life. Methods in and of themselves are not wrong. A method is simply a way by which something gets done. But when we lose track of the truth that *the* method God uses to change hearts and lives is the gospel, then we are in trouble. The next time you browse through your local Christian bookstore, take note of the number of “how to” books on the shelves. Then see how many of them look upon the gospel as God’s great “how to.”

This tendency to look upon the Scriptures primarily as a rule book has also led to the error of seeing rules in the Scripture in places where God isn’t giving rules, the error of calling scriptural examples scriptural precepts. Calvin, for example, looked at the way the apostolic church was organized and made this organization, which is nowhere commanded by God, a part of his doctrine.

Bob Smith, a pastor of Palo Alto’s Peninsula Bible Church, has written a book, *When All Else Fails, Follow the Directions*, in which he does the same thing.⁶⁰ The church must return to the way it was structured in the days of the apostles, he maintains, if it is to be conducting itself according to God’s will. Lutherans will not argue against the fact that churches have the right to try to imitate the organizational structure of the early church; but they will insist that biblical examples are not requirements of God that must be followed, unless God makes it clear in his Word that this is his will. To make laws of *adiaphora* is to rob Christians of their freedom in Christ.

Church and State

One other area in which today’s evangelicals and fundamentalists are clearly direct-line descendants of Calvin and Zwingli is in that of church and state. Zwingli and Calvin, we noted before, saw as a basic purpose of the church the “christianizing” of society and the state’s purpose as that of helping the church carry out its work.

⁵⁹ Scharlemann, op. cit., p 2.

⁶⁰ Bob Smith, *When All Else Fails, Follow the Directions* (Waco: Word Books, 1974).

The philosophy of today's fundamentalist-led Moral Majority and other such groups is that of these reformers. We are now seeing in various communities "Christian" candidates for mayor, city councils, etc., who pledge to make society more Christian. An April 26, 1982, San Jose *Mercury-News* article described a recent television program on the Bay Area's Cable Religious Network:

Two San Jose City Council members (now running for office) and two prominent evangelical pastors joined hands, closed their eyes and solemnly bowed their heads. "Lord, we pray for Christian council people, and we pray that you'll increase their number.... We pray for people like Chuck, here, and Lu, and others who really uphold the name of Christ and want to live by his principles".... (This) benediction concluded the "Celebration of Praise" broadcast, a talk and Gospel show that displayed the role that fundamentalist church leaders are playing in San Jose politics.

The article went on to say that the fundamentalist pastor of one of the candidates has sent a personal letter to all of his 4,000 parishioners endorsing the candidate "as a person, as a Christian leader in our community and prayerfully as the next mayor of San Jose." At the time of the writing of this essay, shortly before the primary election, the spacious grounds of this particular church are heavily decorated with "Fletcher for Mayor" signs.

Obviously, Christians will not hesitate to endorse or vote for other Christians if they feel they are qualified for the office. But when groups of Christians begin to flex their political muscle and seek to get Christian candidates into office in order to "christianize" their community, this represents a grave misunderstanding of the church's purpose as well as of the church's message. The church above all is to proclaim, not the principles of God, the law, but the promises of God, the gospel. That it cannot do from the council seat. "Preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). That is still the commission Christ has given to his church.

Francis Schaeffer

To illustrate what we have been discussing in this section of the essay, let's take a brief look now at three prominent figures among today's evangelicals and fundamentalists, Francis Schaeffer, Jay Adams and Bill Gothard. We choose these three men for two reasons: their popularity even among Lutherans and the fact that so much of what they say is very good. That makes it all the more imperative not to be lulled to sleep but to read and listen critically.

The limitations of time require this to be a very brief analysis. It would be well that further studies be done on these men. One such study, on Francis Schaeffer, has been carried out by John Zarling of our district.⁶¹ Schaeffer, a Pennsylvania-born Presbyterian, as noted in a recent newspaper article, "has become an influential voice among evangelicals through his noted L'Abri communal study center in Switzerland, with branches in the United States and elsewhere and through numerous books, films and lectures. 'A missionary to the intellectuals,' Time Magazine once called him."

Schaeffer stands for much that we stand for: inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, salvation by grace, salvation only through Jesus and faith as a gift of God. He speaks out against false ecumenicity.

But yet he follows Zwingli and Calvin in many ways. With Zwingli and Calvin he emphasizes the reasonableness of the Bible's teachings; with them, he also teaches that fallen man still bears something of God's image. He writes:

In the area of personality, man's relationship is upward to God and therefore the incarnation and death of the Son of God for the sake of man's salvation is sensible.

⁶¹ John W. Zarling, "Francis Schaeffer: How Far from Lutheranism?" essay delivered to the Black Canyon Delegate Conference on February 6-7, 1979. Our quotations from Schaeffer's writings in this essay are drawn from Zarling's essay.

The reasonableness of the incarnation and the reasonableness of communication between God and man, turn on this point, that man as man, is created in the image of God.⁶²

He rejects the efficacy of infant baptism: “The birth of a baby into God’s family is through *understanding* that Jesus, God’s Son, has taken our place”⁶³ (emphasis added). He speaks of the Lord’s Supper as “an *external* sacrament”⁶⁴ (emphasis added).

Schaeffer hedges somewhat on inerrancy when he says that he isn’t sure if the “day” of Genesis is a 24-hour day and states that one shouldn’t make belief in a worldwide flood a test of orthodoxy.⁶⁵ He is a millennialist.⁶⁶ He accepts a universal conversion of the Jews and their return one day to their homeland.⁶⁷

He sees man co-operating somewhat in his conversion: “When a man accepts Christ as Savior, there has been a work of the Holy Spirit, yet man is not simply a zero; there is a conscious side to justification.”⁶⁸ And he shares the fundamentalist’s idea of fellowship:

Find a Bible-believing church and go there. This is not to say that one is going to agree with every detail that is taught.... But if a church is a Bible-believing church, if it falls within the circle [i.e. of fundamental doctrines], then you are not falling off the cliff.⁶⁹

We need to read Schaeffer cautiously and critically, separating the abundant wheat we will find from the chaff that is also present.

Jay Adams

Conservative Lutherans who are involved in counseling find the no-nonsense biblical approach to counseling of Adams quite refreshing. His books, unlike almost all other books on counseling, insist that the Bible is the only counseling tool that a Christian counselor needs.

With much, most, in fact, of what Adams writes in such books as *Competent to Counsel and The Christian Counselor’s Manual* we would have no quarrel. We, along with Adams, recognize the validity of relying on the power of the Word to change lives. However, nowhere does the necessity of the proper use of law and gospel become more critical than in counseling. The Word wrongly used can produce disastrous results. A few examples: to apply the law instead of the gospel to a troubled sinner can drive him into the depths of despair; to restrict our use of the law largely to its so-called “third use,” as a directive for godly living, will succeed perhaps in correcting a surface problem but leave the heart unaffected.

But that’s moralizing. As Krueger writes:

It [moralizing] is merely a matter of trying to change the outward actions of a person. In our ministry, by sharp contrast, we are concerned with effecting a real “change of heart”; we want to replace a sinful heart with Christ’s own heart. Manners, outward appearances, hands and feet—these are the only concerns of moralizing. Mode of thinking, inner attitudes, hearts and minds—

⁶² Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p 95.

⁶³ Francis Schaeffer, *Everybody Can Know* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1973), p 284.

⁶⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), p 71.

⁶⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), pp 57 and 133.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p 64; also *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p 79, and *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971), pp 3637, 76.

⁶⁷ Francis Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), pp 56–65, 113.

⁶⁸ Francis Schaeffer, *The Church Before the Watching World* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), p 92.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p 105.

these are the essential concerns of those who want to minister to others according to Christ's own direction.⁷⁰

Adams is aware of the danger of moralizing. In his little paperback, *The Use of the Scriptures in Counseling*, he writes, "The Scriptures are used moralistically when biblical principles are enjoined in order to achieve a reformation apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ."⁷¹ He warns also against the "prescriptional use" of the Scriptures: "The Scriptures cannot be given out to counselees as if they were a magic potion that (understood or not) will do him good. On the contrary, they must be explained and correctly applied to the specific problems that he confronts."⁷²

But how does Adams actually use the Scriptures? The final chapter of the booklet, *The Use of The Scriptures in Counseling*, offers a "counselor's topical worklist" which consists of about 350 Bible references under some sixty headings, listed alphabetically from "adultery" to "worry." This worklist, writes Adams, is "based upon many of the most commonly encountered areas of needs, sins and problems faced in the counseling context, together with references to key biblical passages that have proven particularly helpful in dealing with each of these topics."⁷³

Adams' Calvinistic "gospel as new law" bent is revealed by a study of the passages he lists. Of the close to 350 passages, 315 are law proclamations, about 100 of them from the book of Proverbs. Two of the three passages he lists on confession are law, as are three of four on grief, eight of nine on forgiveness, six of eight on fear, three of six on hope, even two of six on death. Under sins such as homosexuality, alcoholism, adultery, anger, lying, lust, etc., he doesn't include even one gospel passage emphasizing God's forgiveness in Christ.

Suppose someone comes to you, troubled that he cannot overcome some lifelong sin. What passages does Adams include under the heading "Life-dominating Problems"?

1 Corinthians 6:9–12—Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 5:18—Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Revelation 21:8—The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 22:15—Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

These are the only passages he lists. Such use of the Scriptures will neither calm the troubled heart nor change the ungodly heart. Jay Adams, for all the good he has to say about the use of the Word in counseling, still needs to be used with care. The counseling model set forth by Christian counselor Lawrence Crabb in two recent books is built upon a much better law-gospel foundation than the books of Adams.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Silas R. Krueger, "Moralizing and the Pastoral Ministry: The Proper Use of Law and Gospel in the Pastoral Ministry," essay delivered to the Arizona-California District Pastoral Conference, Oct. 25, 1978, p 11.

⁷¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Use of the Scriptures in Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p 89.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p 90.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p 92.

⁷⁴ Lawrence J. Crabb Jr., *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), and *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Zondervan, 1977).

Bill Gothard

A study of Bill Gothard requires a full-length essay. We will sketch here certain areas that touch upon our subject. Gothard, a Wheaton College graduate, as a result of ten years of working with youth in Chicago put together in the mid-sixties a seminar which in time came to be called the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts. By the late-sixties he began taking this seminar out of town. He has since been heard by close to 200 million people. During the present year Gothard is conducting, either in person or by video-tape, fifty-seven week-long seminars nationwide. With the exception of Arizona, our district is pretty well saturated with Gothard seminars. This year Gothard will conduct seminars, usually in huge convention centers such as the Oakland Coliseum, in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock and San Antonio, Texas; in Oakland, Fresno, Los Angeles, Redding, Sacramento and San Diego, California; and in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Sessions last for three hours Monday-Thursday nights, twelve hours on Friday, and eight on Saturday, thirty-two hours in all. People come in droves and stay the whole time. Why? Because Gothard breaks down the Bible's message into readily understandable, step-by-step basic principles for daily living.

For example, are you having trouble with guilt? Gothard shows "Five Ways of Responding Incorrectly to Guilt." Are you trying to figure out what you should do with your life? Gothard lists "Eight Callings to a Purpose in Life." Do you want to be successful? Gothard reveals "Eight Qualities Essential for Success." In all he presents more than forty Scripture-backed step-by-step procedures to follow that cover virtually every area of the Christian's life.

Gothard makes copious use of the Bible which he, as a fundamentalist, accepts as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. In the 180-page study guide there are 480 references to Bible passages with emphasis on portions not used as often in the Lutheran Church—the Wisdom Literature (especially Proverbs), the Sermon on the Mount and the ethical portions of Paul's letters.

But, as admirable as it is to make such extensive use of the Bible, it is precisely with Gothard's use of the Bible that we find a problem. With Calvin and Zwingli, he looks upon the Scriptures as primarily a book of God-given principles for living. Gothard, like Adams, tends to use the Scriptures in a moralistic way, as he tries to make the law accomplish what only the gospel can do. This, as we have seen before, can lead either to correct outward behavior but without a corresponding change of heart or to spiritual frustration and even despair when one is unsuccessful in following the principles that are set forward.

Is it just by chance that professional counselors experience an upswing in business whenever Gothard comes to town? Wilfred Bockelman writes in his fair, even-handed book, *Gothard, the Man and His Ministry: An Evaluation*:

A well-known researcher on youth problems described a conversation with a psychotherapist who ... told of her increased caseload whenever Gothard came to town. In evaluating the situation the researcher said: "In general there are three responses to the Gothard program. 1. There are those who already have a rather rigid and legalistic view of life. When they go to Gothard, this rigidity is increased, and they are quite comfortable with having reinforced what they already believe. 2. A second group is a very open and healthy group. They go to Gothard and they are impressed with the good things.... The things they don't agree with they simply leave, without any feeling of guilt at not having accepted everything Gothard had to say.... 3. A third group has more of a problem. This includes people of low ego strength. They already have a low opinion of themselves. And now they have another law laid on them and they can't meet these demands either, so they experience yet another failure. *Instead of hearing a gospel that freed them from guilt, they heard a law that laid more guilt on them.*" [emphasis added]⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Wilfred Bockelman, *Gothard, The Man and His Ministry: An Evaluation* (Milford, MI: Quill Publications, 1976), p 141.

Gothard, in his zeal to set forth scriptural principles for living, also tends to find these principles when they're not really there. He makes of biblical examples God-ordained precepts for living. For example: King Solomon didn't take bids to get his cedar from Lebanon. He simply made Hiram a fair offer. This, according to Gothard, is therefore the way all business deals should be conducted. Another example: because the vineyard owner of Matthew 20 paid all his workers the same wage, even though they worked a different number of hours, employers today have the right to give more pay per working hour to one employee than to another.⁷⁶

Gothard also looks upon the Old Testament ceremonial and civil laws, at least those which fit in with his principles, as binding upon Christians today. He draws from the Old Testament ceremonial laws that it is just for a father to give his second son twice the inheritance of any other son and that it is just to require a poor man to pay back four times the cost of the food he stole to feed his hungry children.⁷⁷ He also forbids divorce of any kind, thus ignoring the "exception passage" of Matthew 19:9.⁷⁸

It is this kind of use of the Scriptures, among other things, that leads us to conclude that we simply cannot recommend Gothard in spite of the fact that his teachings represent a highly moral view of life with which we, for the most part, would agree.

IV. An Evangelical Lutheran Response

Admittedly, the approach to this essay has been of a mildly polemic nature as we have been spotlighting those doctrines of today's evangelicals and fundamentalists that differ from evangelical Lutheran doctrine. Yet we see in these churches much that is good, that we admire, in fact, and perhaps should be emulating.

Why are some of our people being attracted to these churches? In many cases it's not the false doctrine that lures them. Some are attracted in spite of the false teachings they know to be there.

Why do they go? Because, in this essayist's opinion, they feel that their needs are being better met from the evangelical-fundamentalist pulpit and podium than from the Lutheran counterpart. One long-time Lutheran who attended a Bill Gothard seminar is reported to have said: "Why wasn't fifty years in the Lutheran Church able to do that for me?" As we've seen, some of what Gothard did for him the man would rightfully never receive in the Lutheran Church, particularly Gothard's moralistic way of teaching which fails to deal realistically with either sin or grace.

But if we don't like everything about Gothard's way of doing things, are we doing them better, or are we just doing nothing? Can we not learn something here, learn of the value of using the Word to deal with specific life situations? We are living in a complex world. God's people are hungering for specifics, not generalizations, pointed applications from the preached and taught Word that touch them where they live. Should we, who no less than the evangelicals and fundamentalists look upon the Scriptures as "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tm 3:16-17), take a back seat to them in using the Word to address the specific needs of Christians living in these concluding years of the 20th century?

Certainly we need to preach justification, but we also need to remember that justification is always followed by sanctification. As John Jeske put it so well in his *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* article, "Communicate the Gospel More Effectively":

For Christ, saving people meant not only rescuing them but also restoring them. God's charter for us speaks, first of all, of *deliverance*, but deliverance always leads to *discipleship*.... In his Word God announces to us not only: "I have called you to be mine!" but also: "I have called you to be different!"⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Bill Gothard, *The Unexpected Enemy of Justice and Mercy*, supplementary alumni book, volume 8, 1982, p 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 10 and 12.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p 15.

⁷⁹ John C. Jeske, "Communicate the Gospel More Effectively," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 79:1, (Winter 1982), p 15.

The fact that one can easily become a moralizer when teaching and preaching sanctification is no reason to back away from this part of the church's ministry. God's people need and appreciate evangelical exhortation, guidance and direction.

There are other positive aspects we see in the programs of many of today's evangelical and fundamentalist churches, especially the larger ones that seem to be attracting some of our members. We can learn from them about the value of multiple ministries which are able to provide a much broader program of education and spiritual care than is possible in our typical one pastor per congregation set-up. For every 200–300 members many of these churches will have a separate pastor who is called to a specific area of work, such as minister to youth, minister of adult education, etc. Our seminary graduates come out as jacks-of-all-trades. Would it not be advisable to give opportunities to our seminary students to specialize in certain areas in addition to receiving their well-rounded theological education?

We can also learn something for our churches' ministries from today's evangelicals' and fundamentalists' use of modern communication media. It's interesting and encouraging to note that we are beginning to move in this direction. According to the June 1, 1982, *Northwestern Lutheran*, a WELS group called West Allis Lutherans is offering a 50-page packet of resource material for those interested in getting into cable TV programming.

Outlying areas of our Synod, such as our District, could benefit greatly also from video-taped lectures and seminars presented by our seminary professors, etc. So many of our people are hungering for further opportunities for in-depth study of the Word. Why not give them the opportunity? A video-tape projected onto a large screen would be so much more effective than an impersonal audio cassette recording of the same material.

Another area of evangelical-fundamentalist strength is in their expository, book-by-book preaching of the Word. Lutherans traditionally don't do things that way. But it appears to this essayist that much could be gained in the way of increased Bible knowledge from such a method.

In short, it appears that we should look with open minds upon the way that the evangelical and fundamentalist churches of our day are operating, learning from them what we can. The fact that something is new or different doesn't necessarily make it wrong.

But all the while we will want to remember that we are Lutherans and not compromise our biblical, evangelical stance. We stand in great danger of doing just that if we live on a one-sided diet of Reformed-produced books, tapes, etc., picked up from local Christian bookstores, no matter how conservative the authors are and how discriminately we read. In time something of the "spirit" of the Reformed, most noticeably a mishandling of law and gospel, is bound to rub off on us.

We need to be reading the Bible itself, not just books about the Bible. We should also, lay Christians too, become more and more familiar with our Lutheran confessional writings as contained in the *Book of Concord*, as well as with the writings of Luther. If we would all be reading the Bible and the *Book of Concord* through each year, how much sounder we would be in our theology and how much more convinced that the Lutheran Confessions truly do set forth the same message as the Bible!

Then, too, there is a crying need for the publication of books that reflect a sound, evangelical Lutheran theology. Not just books on doctrine are needed, but practical books dealing with the issues of life that we face day by day. If there is one aspect of our Synod's work that should be even more strongly emphasized in the years to come, it is this area of publications. We've made a start, but there's so much more to do.

About 100 years ago, in the early days of the Missouri Synod, some of the Missourians were being attracted to the sectarian churches of the day. The first president of the Missouri Synod, CFW Walther, wrote:

When our naive brethren arrive in America and observe the saintly exterior of the sectarians, how sincerely they pray, weep, and sigh, they conclude this must be the true church. In Germany they had frequently seen clergymen who were belly-servers, whose chief concern was their income.... They spoke only of the price of grain, hogs, and the like. It is not surprising, then, that

these poor people, observing the saintly appearance of an enthusiast, would conclude: “This is a totally different sort of person. He wants to save people. Here is the true church.”⁸⁰

How did Walther respond? Without in any way condoning the lackadaisical German Lutheran clergymen, he proceeded to prepare a lengthy series of essays, delivered annually from 1873–86, under the heading, “The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God, An Irrefutable Proof That Its Doctrine Alone Is True.”⁸¹

True religion, he maintained, will give glory to God alone in everything. Only in the Lutheran Church, Walther brings out in his series of essays, is God alone glorified in every teaching. This he demonstrates as he makes a thorough study of twelve biblical doctrines:

1. The Word of God
2. Sin, death, hell, and damnation
3. Divine providence
4. Universal grace
5. Reconciliation and redemption of the human race
6. Justification by faith
7. Regeneration and sanctification
8. Means of grace
9. Conversion
10. Prayer
11. Obedience toward men in matters of faith and conscience
12. Election

We have covered just about the same ground in this essay, although quite a bit more sketchily, and our conclusion is the same as Walther’s. We don’t have to be apologetic about our evangelical Lutheran faith which, with the Scriptures, looks upon God alone as the Giver. Because God gives, I am alive, provided for, protected, and, above all, in Christ, chosen, redeemed, justified, converted, kept in faith by the Spirit through the means of grace, ready for this time and for eternity.

To God alone be the glory!

⁸⁰ CFW Walther, *Convention Essays* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), p 19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*