

# The True Reconstruction of the Church

by August Pieper

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## Introduction

*Reconstruction* is the catchword of our time. The World War has destroyed much. Ten million men are dead, millions of women and children have been put to death or reduced to lifelong suffering. Empires and governments have been overthrown; others have grown enormously and are now oppressing the conquered peoples. Immeasurable opportunities for gaining a livelihood have been destroyed, and whole nations have been reduced to poverty. The economic condition of the wealthy has improved and that of the poor has deteriorated. A tremendous scarcity of foodstuffs has beset the entire world. Consequently social conditions are in a ferment, which threatens destruction. The struggle between labor and capital has become bitterer. The war has unleashed the basest emotions, has blunted the moral conscience horribly, and has enflamed a bestial greed for money and property in all classes of society. These are conditions that threaten a more terrible destruction than the holocaust of the World War now ended has brought. The former world order is going out of joint. That is why there is a great demand for reconstruction, for a thorough renewal of living conditions.

As Christians we know in advance that nothing truly moral, just, and wholesome will result from even the best possible reconstruction wrought by the children of this world, neither in great nor in small things. The world is simply corrupt and will remain that way until the Son of Man will appear in His glory and will destroy the world completely and set up His own "reconstruction." For although the World War was apparently an unexpected catastrophe which befell the world, it was neither accidentally nor artificially produced, nor was it forced upon the world from without, but was the natural explosive end of a cultural period which began with the rejection of the Reformation. The world rejected the Gospel which Luther had preached, devoted itself with a hitherto unprecedented thoroughness and unanimity to the rule of reason, and then to the rule of the flesh, until men crazed in their struggle for power and wealth by the most refined culture of the mind and of the flesh went at one another's throat with all the means of the new "science" and with all the energy of the old flesh and brought about the ruin which we see before us. "*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light*" (John 3:19). So it has been in every cultural period of the world, so it has been in the one that has just come to a close, and so it will be unto the end of time. He is a fool—though he were the most celebrated man on earth—who expects the welfare of the nations to result from a reconstruction of the external living conditions on earth, or who expects the inauguration of Christ's eternal kingdom of peace on earth to result from a peaceful league of nations.

In the sectarian churches there is also endless talk of reconstruction. It is said that the Church has been proved to be powerless and bankrupt by its failure to prevent this war between the Christian nations of the world. Its task is said to be to establish just conditions on earth and to render men moral, so that each may dwell under his vine and under his fig tree safely (I Kings 4:25) and may enjoy the full measure of earthly good fortune intended for him by his Maker. Therefore they say, "Away with all divisions in the church, away with all particular doctrines, and hold fast only to the great essentials, the universal and true Christianity: faith in a good and wise God, love toward our fellow man, and the hope of a better life in the great beyond!" According to them the reconstruction of the Church must consist of the most thorough simplification of its confession, the amalgamation of all denominations into one great national church, and in the most complete organization and utilization of its powers and means for bringing about just living conditions and for the improvement of mankind. We see at a glance, that is no reconstruction of the Church, but the total destruction of the Church.

The thought of a reconstruction is alive and active also in the church that calls itself Lutheran. The Lutheran Church is said to suffer from two great defects, un-Americanism and a narrow partisanship. Both of these defects, but especially the first-named, became evident particularly in the German Lutherans through the war. Through our stubborn insistence on the German language and our fanatical exclusion of the vernacular from our churches and schools we fostered a lack of patriotism and a pro-German attitude that provoked the hatred of the English-speaking populace and regulations imposed by the government, and deprived us of influence on the American people. The remedy for this is the “Americanization” of the Church, a rapid transition to the English language and to the American point of view in regard to education, schools, politics, and church work. Our other defect is said to be our narrow particularism, which refuses to cooperate with other churches to say nothing of practicing fellowship with them, as long as there is a difference in doctrine, and thus splinters the Lutheran Church. This attitude we must forsake. Our time requires broadmindedness and love, the unification of all Lutheran synods into one Lutheran national church that will use the English language exclusively. That this program is false is self-evident.

How much truth is contained in these accusations—and there is a grain of truth in them—will become evident if we examine ourselves thoroughly according to God’s Word in view of the entire situation, and try to discover where our basic defects lie, and what are the basic means that guarantee a true reconstruction of the Church of God.

Our first statement is:

*I. Since the Church lives only from the Word, a true reconstruction of the Church cannot consist of a change or establishment of external factors, but only in a return from all dead traditions to the original sources of the knowledge of salvation: the revelation of God.*

### **1. The Church Lives Only From the Word**

The very concept “reconstruction” is false here. It makes sense—as the term is used presently in the world—only there, where external organizations are something essential. Applied to the Church it presupposes that the Church is an external institution, or at least that its life and prosperity are essentially dependent on external organizations. This is a false conception of the essence and life, of the weal and woe of the Church. According to the Scripture the Church is no external, human kingdom, association, or society, governed and held together by external divine or human statutes, constitutions, laws and ordinances, which are committed to some human authorities for enforcement, with the purpose of bringing about the physical or spiritual or moral, the social or cultural welfare of its members or of humanity as such—but it is *the communion of saints*, i.e., of those whom God out of pure grace has chosen from all eternity unto salvation in Christ, and in time has called by the Holy Ghost, converted, brought to faith, filled with the spirit of the Spirit of Christ, made into spiritual men and preserves unto the end in this spiritual character through the *one* means—the Gospel. The psychic peculiarity of the Church is precisely this *spiritual character*. Through it the Church distinguishes itself from every other human society. This spiritual character Scripture designates by means of a variety of words and concepts, all of which express the same thing, only from different points of view. Most frequently it is called *faith, believing*, because believing is the original, most comprehensive, and in practice the most important part of it. For the first let us remain with the expression *spiritual character*, which Paul uses so often, particularly in Romans 8. He characterizes the Church thus: “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” Whoever has not this character, does not belong to the Church, even though his name be Peter, Paul, or Luther. Luther says that whoever among those who want to be Christians does not have this character belongs to the Church in the same manner as mucus, pus, and filth belong to the human body.

*The true weal and woe of the Church is to be measured by this standard. The stronger its spiritual character is, the more glorious it is, and the weaker its spiritual character is, the more wretched and deplorable is its condition.* This is true of each individual member of the Church, of every congregation, and of every

synod. Our general synod is not in a flourishing condition in as much and in so far as it has brilliant and titled professors, educated and eloquent pastors, masterful teachers, capable officials, model constitutions and organizations, adequate facilities, beautiful church and school buildings, imposing educational institutions, or a phenomenal external growth, constantly overflowing treasuries, heavy endowments, adequate property and lucrative business establishments, *but it flourishes to the degree that the spiritual character just described, faith, knowledge, fear of God, piety, blessedness, holiness, love toward God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the very image of Christ itself dwells in it.* Its glory consists in a *deep, clear, and rich knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in a faith in the word of grace that defies the flesh, the world, death, hell and the devil, in a fiery, fervent love toward its God and Savior, the bridegroom of the soul as well as all His members, in a love that effaces its own human ego and thinks, contemplates, desires, and wills only Him and His glory, and considers everything, everything else as filth—in that fear of God that would rather die a thousand deaths and lose ten worlds, than to grieve the Holy Spirit of Christ, that dwells in it. This is the Glorious, the Exalted, the Princess, the Queen—the Bride, who stands at Christ’s side in pure precious gold, all glorious within, bedecked with golden ornaments, the delight of the eyes of our Savior-God!* And this is her disgrace and her shame, her poverty, her misery, and her harm: lack of knowledge, lack of faith, spiritual satiety and lukewarmness and satisfaction with the world. Then is she brought low, when that which was told the bishop of the congregation at Sardis applies to her, “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,” or what the congregation at Laodicea had to hear, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” When things have to a great extent gone so far, that the knowledge of God has become insignificant, faith has become a reed shaken in the wind, love has become cold, the whole life of faith has become weak and feeble, whereas satisfaction with the world and the cares for the things of this life have seized hold of the hearts of the Christians, particularly of the angels, i.e., the shepherds of the congregations, when the spiritual life, the spiritual character threatens to become extinct, then the disintegration of the Church has begun; then a reconstruction, that is, a regeneration, a renewal of spiritual life must set in, or it will perish in the abyss of spiritual death.

But before we speak of the necessity of a reconstruction, we must complete the thought we have just begun of the life of the Church. *The Church, this spiritual congregation, lives from the Word, that is, it draws its spiritual life, its spiritual character, entirely and only from the revealed Word of God recorded and preached in the Scripture, from the Gospel.*

Its life is an exclusively *spiritual life*, worked in us *only by the Holy Ghost*. Either the Holy Spirit of Christ works, creates, increases, strengthens, ripens, and preserves the spiritual character in us, or it remains forever unachieved. *Only through the Spirit did David become believer and a singer of psalms, Isaiah a prophet, the disciples of the Lord apostles of the Gospel, Saul a Paul, Luther the apostle and prophet of the last times, and you and I believers, teachers, and preachers.*

*The Holy Ghost works all spiritual life in us exclusively through the revealed Word.* The heavens and the whole creation indeed declare the glory of the Almighty, but only the Law, that is, the revealed Word, refreshes the soul with eternal life, Psalm 19. “This only would I learn of you,” Paul writes to the Galatians 3:2, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Compare Acts 10:44 and Psalm 119. The clarity, the depth, and the fullness of its knowledge of God, the fervency of its love for its Savior, the power of its faith, the courage of its confession, the activity and willingness to do good works, the victory over the flesh, over the worldly lust, and over the fear of death—*every individual part of the spiritual life the Church must derive from the Word.* There it is really to be found. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, Romans 1; it is spirit and life, John 6; a fire and a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces, Jeremiah 23; quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Hebrews 4. The Word, the Gospel, is not a dead writing locked up in letters of the alphabet, or human speech which dies away on the wind, but it is the speaking God Himself; that is why it never, never, not even once, returns unto God void without accomplishing its purpose, when it has been heard, read, understood, and perceived, but “as the rain cometh down, and the

snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55). Such a living, effective, fiery power is the Word of God, that no one can hear or read it even once (provided he has understood it), without experiencing its divine converting, sanctifying power, whether he be reformed by it unto eternal life (if he yields to its effect), or whether he become hardened by it, which happens if he resists it. This is the reason why the Scripture pronounces a woe upon those who reject the Word of God, Matthew 12:41f. This is also the reason why the Scripture says, “Blessed is the man . . . whose delight is in the law (Word) of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1). “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it!” This is the reason why God himself exhorts us through the prophet, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!” Jeremiah 22:29—that the Lord, so to say, pleads with us, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me” (Isaiah 48:18–19).—That was the Lord’s advice and plea to the congregation in the Babylonian Exile, which needed reconstruction; *that is His advice and plea today* and at all times, also to the Church of the New Testament, when it needs reconstruction, that is, the renewal of its spiritual life.

## 2. Does the Church in Our Midst Need Spiritual Renewal?

Woe to our Synod, if it says with the angel (bishop) of the church at Laodicea, Revelation 3:17, “*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!*” Woe to our people and to us “angels” of our people, that is, to us professors, pastors, and teachers, visitors, presidents, officials, and commissions, if we in the present circumstances of our spiritual life try to persuade ourselves that there is no need of a spiritual renewal, by saying, “Spiritual life is indeed not as fresh and vigorous in me as it once was and as it ought to be, but it is still there, and not much weaker than elsewhere. It is the natural course of events; all life, spiritual life included, gradually diminishes, and there is nothing that can be done about it. No one can instill new spiritual life into himself - only God can do that. The matter must be committed to Him, who doubtless knows how to save His elect even in times such as these, and I hope, me too!”—Whoever thinks thus, reveals the spirit of the church of Laodicea. This is that *Laodicean laxity* that a person is not truly aware of the danger in which he is, but is rather well satisfied with his own spiritual condition. One’s own spiritual deficiencies go unnoticed and life goes on in a carefree manner. Oh, yes, the deficiencies of others are noticed indeed, are deplored and condemned, but of the beam in one’s own eye no notice is taken. How much of this complacency, that in comparison with others we are still rather pious, is not found among us! This is a little more than mere spiritual weakness. It is hypocritical Pharisaism.

Only he who is convinced that he himself is in need of spiritual renewal, first and foremost, has the right and the duty to pronounce the judgment that the Church of his time is in need of a spiritual renewal. All reconstruction must begin at home. I, I myself need spiritual renewal—this is what each one of us must say. When we look at the Church without, apart from our own person, we dare not faintheartedly and despondently with Elijah declare that the masses have forsaken the Lord and fallen away from Him, and complacently imagine that we alone are left as God-fearing believers. *Today also the Lord has his seven thousand, which have not bowed their knees unto Baal.* There are indeed many God-fearing children still among us—thanks particularly to our parochial schools—out of whose mouths God has ordained strength, and many pious old grandmothers, who daily live in the Scripture and in their hymnal. Yes, in the midst of our Lutheran people there is much true, simple, and deep Christianity, childlike faith, genuine fear of God, fervent love toward God, and a wholesome zeal for God’s kingdom still to be found. There is still much sincere desire among the members of our congregations for the sincere milk of the Word, much good church attendance and attentive listening to sermons, much fervent prayer both in the church and in the privacy of the chamber, and much

willingness to give for the Gospel and for the alleviation of poverty. Our synodical report shows that in the past biennium four times as many gifts were given for the work of our Synod as in the preceding biennium. There is also a great deal of genuine, faithful, and efficient work being done still by our teachers, pastors, professors, and synodical officials. We want to point out some of the defects that are apparent among us; but it would be partial, unrealistic, and unfair to do that without first recognizing that the Holy Ghost still works among us with power and produces genuine fruits of the spirit in both teachers and listeners.

Yet it is unmistakable, *that the spiritual life among us is in the process of diminishing*. We have now had the Gospel in its truth and purity in great abundance and power for so long a time, and have accustomed ourselves to this blessing so thoroughly, *that we no longer regard it as something extraordinary*. This is already the first step toward despising it. We have already begun to make of our entire church life and Christianity a matter of effortlessly transmitted tradition, inheritance, and custom, and thereby to retain the outward form or shell, and to lose the kernel and the essence, that is, the spirit of faith, of love toward God, of fear of God, the spirit of mortification of the flesh and of good works, and the spirit of brotherly love. Our Lord Himself says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But outside of the regular worship service *there is little said or spoken concerning the grace of God in Christ among our people*. To prove this, I shall have to go somewhat into detail. In our Christian homes there is and remains very little of God's Word, hardly even the regular family worship with Scripture reading and prayer every morning and every evening. Yes, in some Christian homes there is no common prayer at all any more, neither spoken by the father, nor by the mother, nor by the children, particularly in such homes in which the children do not attend a Christian school. Even the table prayers have been discontinued in some families. The Bible is seldom or never opened. Only the grandmother still prays perhaps with her hymnal; all the rest either leave the hymnal at the church, or they put it away immediately after the church services until the following Sunday; it only serves in the regular church service.—Is this not true? Yes, unfortunately I am speaking the truth now. What does this fact prove? It proves that the spiritual life, the faith, if it has not already died, is in the process of dying, is hardly a flickering light any more and will soon be extinguished entirely. Prayer is the vital breath of faith; the pulse beat of the believing, godly, and God-fearing heart. Where breath and pulse beat cease, death sets in. Where there is no longer any prayer, there is no spiritual life any more. If the hope could not be entertained, that in those houses, where family prayer has fallen into disuse, silent prayers of the heart are still breathed by some individuals, the inscription would have to be written above the door: "*Here they have a name that they live, and are dead!*" This much is certain: in a family in which there is no longer any family prayer, spiritual life is at very deplorable and dangerous low ebb. Actually the Christian prays constantly. Faith is not only a life *from* God, but also *with* God and *before* God, in uninterrupted communion with God. A Christian experiences something new every day, he daily sins much, he experiences so much grace, patience, so many blessings, so much help and salvation from God, every day he experiences something, and often such great sorrow, enmity, annoyance, and disappointment, he has so many cares weighing heavily on his heart, so many wishes and desires in his bosom. Should he not want to talk all that over with his gracious and almighty heavenly Father, his dearest and truest friend, his Lord and Savior? A Christian who does not pray is a lung that does not breathe, a heart that does not beat, a body that does not live, a spiritual corpse; he has a name that he lives, and is dead. Where there is little prayer, where it is weak and weary and cold, or consists only of feeble efforts and halfhearted sighs, there the life of faith is near extinction.

*How powerfully the worldly spirit has seized hold of our Christian people!* The principal evidence of it is the greed, *the desire* to become wealthy, *to make money*. The war years have fanned this desire in the entire American people into a blazing flame that fairly consumes all other thoughts and imaginations. The opportunity for it is now greater than ever; it is *possible* now, and it is *desirable* now, and everyone is hasting and seizing and grabbing as much as he can possibly seize and grab. The great capitalists make money by the hundreds of thousands and millions, the small businessman by the hundreds and thousands, the farmer cannot sell his products at a high enough price, the laborer is demanding higher and higher wages through massive strikes, the landlords are raising the rents higher and higher; only *one* idea, only *one* aspiration domineers all hearts: money, much money! Our Christian people, our Lutheran people have been infected with this specifically

American sin for many years and are being carried away by the wild flood of service to mammon today. Thus the curse of this sin is fulfilled in them: “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:9–10). Yes, *they have erred from the faith; they have fallen away!* For no man can serve two masters ... ye cannot serve God and mammon, Matthew 6:24. Outwardly they have kept the faith and remained in the Church; but they have lost the spirit of *faith*, the spiritual character, the joy of their heart in the grace, in Christ, in the Gospel, in their state of grace, and in their soul’s salvation. Thus they have also become indifferent and cold in their love to their Savior; the sincere fear of God is gone. Now they can do a hundred things with the world that would have been abhorrent to them as Christians; and so many a good work which they formerly did gladly now becomes burdensome to them. *The flesh has gained the upper hand again.* While they acquire two or even three autos for their own enjoyment, which cost them thousands of dollars, they have only a few miserable crumbs “left over” for the kingdom of God, for the Gospel, the church, the school, missions, and synodical institutions.

Because money and the world have occupied their heart again, the Word has little attraction for them any more. They have gotten out of the habit of reading the Bible; even sermons are distasteful to them and no longer grip them. Church attendance becomes inconvenient and burdensome for them, even though they still cultivate the habit. The young and more vigorous people forsake preaching and the congregation and devote themselves entirely to the pursuit of making money and the life of the world and discard their Christian character entirely, while the older people still cling to the Christian traditions, but are losing the spirit, the heart, the essence and the kernel of Christianity without noticing it. This is happening among us in both city and rural congregations. It is happening in places where the pastors and teachers are discharging their duties faithfully and are devoting all their physical and spiritual powers to the public and private proclamation of the Word. Yes, the testimony must be given to many of our Christian people, especially to such as constantly criticize their pastors and teachers: there still are many faithful and energetic pastors, both among the younger and among the older ones; there still are many faithful and energetic teachers and professors, who not only lead a sincere personal spiritual life, but also discharge the duties of their office with great faithfulness and zeal, with spirit and intelligence, who have kept themselves unspotted from the world, yes, are resisting the spirit of the times, the service of mammon, and the lust of the world with might and main, and are making vigorous efforts to awaken a truly spiritual character again, but are sowing their seed on stony ground or on ground choked with thorns, and must sigh to God concerning it.

*Let each one ask himself:* Is my Christianity, my faith still power and life, or merely an outward form and habit? Is Christ and His grace really still the only strength of my heart and my portion, or is it the things of this world? Do my thoughts and desires seek that which is above, or that which is on earth? Am I still one who prays? Is God’s Word still being used in my house, or have the Bible, the hymnal and the catechism become silent and dead books to me? What is more important to me, the spiritual and eternal welfare of my children, or their temporal and worldly advantage? If you must answer these questions in a manner that jars your conscience, oh, then *it is God who is jarring your conscience and calling you to repent*, lest you be lost; for your faith is about to be extinguished, and your Christianity is near death. See to it that you do not neglect this invitation; it may well be your last. One thing more: Just as prayer and communion with God is the first evidence of spiritual life, so gratitude to Him is the second. The Lord comprehends everything that He expects from His believers in two words: “*Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High*” and “*Call upon me in the day of trouble!*” (Psalm 50:14–15). *How sincere is your gratitude toward your gracious God?* The living, active faith that is overwhelmed by the grace of God exclaims with the 116th Psalm: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” Do you speak thus too? And he answers: “I will take the cup of salvation (the word of salvation), and call upon the name of the Lord.” You too? You have in these days of moneymaking had a larger income than you ever dared to hope for. What are you doing with all that money of yours? Your income is two, three, or even four times as great as formerly; are you actually grateful to your God for all His benefits toward you? Then you will also offer two, three, or even four times as

much money to the Lord, so that His name and His grace may be proclaimed on earth. Have you in these times of easy money doubled, tripled, or quadrupled your contributions for church, school, missions, and the training of pastors and teachers? Have you according to I Corinthians 9:9, “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” (that means your pastor and your teachers), and according to verse 14, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” and according to Luke 10:7 “The laborer is worthy of his hire” (compare I Tim. 5:17–18; II Tim. 2:6; Gal. 6:6), have you according to these words of the Lord let your pastor and your teacher share your affluence in these times, when the world has increased their cost of living and has reduced the value of their salary to one half of what it formerly was?—Finally: *How many members of our congregations do not criticize their pastor and teachers today, and how many still pray for them*, that God may grant them His Holy Spirit, that they may open their mouths with joy, with power and might, so that they win one victory after the other? Unfortunately it must be said as a warning for all who will still permit themselves to be warned: the people of our Church are well on the way to a dead, merely external habitual Christianity, which still preserves the outward appearance of a godly character and has the form of godliness, but denies the power thereof (II Tim. 3:5). Our Christianity threatens to become a mere traditional Christianity; the spirit, the life, the power of faith is disappearing more and more, and the world gradually possesses our hearts more and more. If our people do not turn back, if we professors, pastors, and teachers cannot reverse this decrease of faith, then our Lutheran Church is approaching complete spiritual death.

*We professors, pastors, and teachers!* Yes, if anyone has it, we have the call to avert the threatening decrease of faith. It is the “angel,” that is, the bishop of the congregation at Sardis, which receives the admonition from Christ, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die!”—You brethren in the teaching ministry of the Church, whether you be called pastors, teachers, professors, visitors, presidents, or by some other name, are you not aware of the fact that through our services God wants to build up the Church into a holy temple for the perfecting of the saints, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? Don’t you know from that same fourth chapter of Ephesians, that we—each one of us in his own office—are special gifts of Christ to His holy Church, specially acquired for His Church by His blood, and specially *endowed* for His Church *with special gifts of the Holy Ghost*, and specially given to the Church and placed in their office for the edification and perfecting of the Church? Don’t you know, that the Lord has for this reason so frequently and so fervently and so earnestly admonished us to be faithful in the discharge of our duty, and to be extremely solicitous for the welfare of our own soul? Need I cite all the passages in the Old and the New Testament for you that attest this? Are not three entire Epistles of Paul specially included in the Scripture to admonish us to such faithfulness? Are you not familiar with the books of Moses and Ezekiel, in which the Lord places an almost unbearable responsibility upon us for the souls entrusted to our care, whether members of our congregation, the children in our school, or the students in our college? Is it not written: “O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hand*. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul” (Ezekiel 33:7–9). Indeed it is not so that the Lord holds us absolutely responsible for the spiritual power and the salvation of the souls entrusted to us; but for this *that we are faithful* in our service to these souls; for this indeed he holds us fully responsible. “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful”(I Cor. 4:2), and no less than that is required. Dear brother professor, pastor, teacher, visitor, president, just read the 34th chapter of the Book of Ezekiel in your Bible, and see whether you do not tremble, when you examine yourself as to your own faithfulness! Yes, the welfare of the Church depends to a great degree on our faithfulness. Why should not the flock be destroyed, when the shepherds sleep and snore! Again, why should not that which is ready to die be strengthened, if we are faithful! But *what does it mean to be faithful* in the ministry? That is very simple; it means to do what you can, to work “as of the ability which God giveth” (I Pet. 4:11), as we solemnly promised in our ordination vow. Of course, this requires more than to receive the approval of the hearers or of the students and boards of control, or even

their praise. From the pastor it requires more than to deliver the required sermons and to perform the necessary pastoral acts; more than that he visit the sick and the afflicted and minister to them; more than that he visit the members of the congregation and maintain friendly relations with them. Above all, faithfulness requires a heart that is faithful to God and to those entrusted to his care; the sincere concern, that the whole gracious will of God toward His flock be done, the heartfelt concern for the salvation of every soul entrusted to him. Naturally, the same is true of the teacher and professor, and also of the visitor and president, of everyone who has the office of a teacher or watchman in the Church. Faithfulness, like every other Christian virtue, is not an external matter, but above all a matter of the heart, for the Lord looketh on the heart, I Samuel 16:7. Even more than this is involved in true faithfulness in the ministry; not only the inner concern about the full utilization of the gifts and powers which God has bestowed for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, but also the inner concern about preserving and increasing these gifts and powers according to God's promise, in other words, the inner concern before God, as to how one may become a better, more skillful, wiser, more efficient, more capable servant of the Lord. And the most important part of *true* faithfulness in the ministry is finally this *that one cares even more for his own soul than for the souls of others!* This is the point with which I am chiefly concerned in this essay. I shall treat of it in particular presently. Here I should just like to add this, that there can be no true reconstruction, that is, no true spiritual renewal of the Church that seems to be dying in our hands, if we do not recognize this truth of God through the Holy Ghost and write it indelibly in our hearts. Every office, or better, every service in the church is on the one hand a service to God, divine service; on the other hand, the care of souls, directly or indirectly. Do you imagine that God wants unbelieving, unconverted, unspiritual servants in His kingdom of grace? Is it not written, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee" (Ps. 50:16–17). Or do you tell yourself that the Lord will be pleased with all your other zeal in your ministry, if you are unfaithful in regard to your own soul? Is it not written, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12)? Would you care for the souls of others, and neglect your own? Would you be faithful for others and unfaithful for your own soul? Did not our Lord have something to say about a hypocrite who wanted to pull a mote out of his brother's eye, and was not aware of the beam that was in his own eye? Did not Paul have something to say about preaching to others, and himself becoming a castaway? What does it mean, "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Would you want to make others perfect men in Christ, and not make yourself one also? Don't you know the word of the Lord, "The disciple is not above his master"? Can a teacher teach his pupil more than he knows himself? So no pastor, professor, or teacher can make better Christians of people than he himself is. Therefore it should be the foremost concern of every pastor and public teacher in his ministry, to save himself first, and then those who hear him (I Tim. 4:16). I may have ever so high an office in the kingdom of God, the highest office is to care for my own soul. This office is included in every office in respect to others as the first and foremost element. Whoever is unfaithful in this, is also unfaithful in his ministrations to others. Read Romans 2:17–24.

*Now it is important that we prove ourselves according to this rule.* No service is rendered to the Church, if we of the teaching profession complain concerning the spiritual life in our congregations, that it is declining, yes, becoming extinct. Indeed this is a fact; but by our complaint concerning it we are not producing a spiritual renewal. Because we are the organs by which the Lord wants to build up His Church spiritually and fill it with a new spirit, when it stagnates spiritually, we must ask ourselves whether we are not to a great extent to blame for this condition because of our unfaithfulness in our ministry or because of our own spiritual indifference and stagnation; and if we must confess our guilt in this respect, then we will by all means want to find the way in which we can first of all become filled ourselves again with spirit and power, so that we can in turn awaken new spiritual life also in our people in the congregation.

What is the condition of our own faithfulness in the ministry and of our own spiritual life? My dear brethren in the ministry! *The Revelation of St. John* is a prophetic book that describes to us the nature and the destiny of the New Testament church until Judgment Day in seven visions in pictures. The first vision consists of the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. In these *the angels, that is, the bishops or pastors* of the seven churches are described according to their spiritual character and their faithfulness in their ministry and

are admonished. That would be interesting, but would concern us little, if this were merely a historical description of those pastors. But it is more. These are *pictures of the future*, a pictorial description of the spirit and of the faithfulness in office of the teaching profession in the seven future periods of time in the New Testament church. I shall not enumerate all seven of these periods. The angel of the church at Ephesus is a picture of the teaching profession of the time immediately after that of the Apostles; the fifth, the angel of the Church at Sardis, is a picture of the time before the Reformation, the sixth, the bishop of Philadelphia, is a picture of the teaching profession at the time of the Reformation, and the last, the angel of the church at Laodicea, is a picture of the last times, of the teaching profession of our own time. What does it say here?—This: “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: ... I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then *because thou art lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Thus lukewarmness, spiritual indifference, is the characteristic of the teaching profession of the last time, our time. Of course, this is a general description, which does not necessarily fit every pastor, teacher, or professor in the fullest measure, but it designates the *predominant characteristic* of the teaching profession, taken as a whole, and means to say that this indifference will be so universal, that *some of it will cling to all*. This judgment of the Scripture is corroborated by experience. This spiritual lukewarmness, indifference, lassitude, and obtuseness dominate not only the clergy of other churches in our time, but is *also the greatest defect of our own church*.

We can leave out of consideration entirely the *wretched hypocrites* in the public ministry, who really are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph as long as they see that their own physical welfare is secure, who because of their concern for their own welfare permit their congregation or school, the synod, missions, and educational institutions to deteriorate and perish. Such hirelings and belly servers are, thank God, rare among us. They have their reward. Our pastors, teachers, and professors are still doing their duty generally for their congregation, school, and synod, although it is clear that they do it with a varying degree of zeal and success. They still have a professional conscience. They still study. They still deliver passable sermons. They do not neglect the sick and the afflicted altogether. Of course, this complaint is commonly heard among our people, that their pastors do *not* visit them *often enough or hardly at all*. They say, “Our pastor does not care about us; if he did, he would come to us occasionally.” Where this applies, the pastor must not be surprised, if the people care little for him either. Only love awakens love in return. This complaint may be justified in many instances; in some instances it may also be unjustified. Some pastors are so burdened with work, that they have neither time nor energy for house calls. When a pastor has three or four hundred families in his congregation, or must teach in the school during the week, or must serve several congregations, preach German and English, conduct confirmation instruction classes, and besides serve the ladies’ aid society, the benevolent society, the youth organizations, the choirs, and besides hold this or that synodical office, it is self-evident that he will find little time for making house calls. If a congregation overloads its pastor with work like a pack-mule, then it cannot expect of him to frolic about like a young filly. In general, however, the complaint that the pastors do not visit their people as much as they ought may have some merit. Visiting people and being affable, specifically, making parish calls, is a burdensome task for the Old Adam; and it requires an affable disposition and great spiritual strength and faithfulness to send the Old Adam and the immovable body on an errand of love and concern for souls, and to repeat that day after day. Spiritual indifference, that characteristic of the last times, is inherent in our members. We are spiritually so tired; so dull, so loveless, so weak, so unconcerned and lazy, that is why we no longer succeed in this matter of a thorough conscientious care of souls. The words of our Lord to the bishop of Sardis apply to us, “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Rev. 3:2). It also applies to us professors and teachers. It is relatively easy to prepare well for classes, to present the lessons well, and then to pack up one’s books and go home again. This finally develops into a routine necessity. It is a hundred times more difficult according to the Spirit, to follow up the individual student and to practice private instruction and care of souls on him, as the shepherd’s office requires in every form. It is a deplorable defect of our teachers and professors that they do not practice enough friendly, educational, pastoral private associations with their students. Concerning the teachers in our schools this is a common complaint, that outside the classroom they do not seem to be concerned about their pupils. Our work in the ministry becomes for us a mere dutiful, official,

mechanical routine, which is without a heart. Indifference! Our overload of work is doubtless a partial, but never a complete, excuse for this. Oh, what a pity! If we associate with our students only in an official capacity and in a heartless manner, only publicly, and never privately, only in class and never in a social manner, will they as pastors and teachers behave differently? By our official work we have trained them only for official duties formally; and the disciple is not above his master!

But why go farther into detail? The defect of the teaching profession of the Church in these last times in which we live is *spiritual indifference, half-heartedness, apathy, lassitude, indolence*; and this is rather general. Above we designated this defect among our people as the beginning of a dead, merely external habitual Christianity, a traditional Christianity that lacks spirit, life, heart, and the power of faith more and more, and in which the world occupies the heart ever more completely. The same danger threatens us in the teaching profession, *except that here it takes the form of a mere official activity and a merely official occupation with God's Word*. Thereby it is not said that we teachers of the Church are already spiritually dead, but that we are on the way to making of our official work a dead, external, mechanical, machine-like task which lacks the personal spiritual heart, a merely intellectual work according to acquired forms, according to an adopted routine, which has become a pattern, a habit, a custom with us. This happens quite naturally. All life succumbs eventually to death. Every body gradually stiffens, every heart becomes faint, every spirit dies of itself, if new life is not infused into it constantly. This is true also of spiritual life, of faith, of ministerial fervor. How eager were not our hearts, when we as young pastors were sent from the seminary into the ministry, to preach the Gospel to sinners and to win them for Christ! With what zeal did we preach, how fervently we prayed, preached and cared for the souls entrusted to us! We thought we could convert every unbeliever, make every heterodox person a Lutheran, and how energetically we worked at it! How soon had we visited every member of the congregation, and how diligently did we visit the sick! How we gathered the young people about us, with what self-denial we taught the parish school in order to plant the Word of Truth in the hearts of the children! And we did not tire of it! That was *the time of our first love*. But gradually, unconsciously we left our first love (Rev. 2:4) and cooled off more and more. Our praying and studying diminished, our preaching became more intellectual, our teaching became a burden, visiting our people was neglected, and we became more indolent. And still we got along. We developed a certain facility in our various ministerial tasks by practice, and experience made us richer and wiser, and we got along rather well without much worry and exertion. With this stock of knowledge and with this attitude we proceeded to ride at anchor in the harbor of our office, and conscientiously did what our ministry required of us, always more easily and more complacently, more quietly, and—gradually turned more and more into spiritual and physical machines without noticing it. We still pray, but for the most part officially in the family circle and in church; we still study, but only to prepare our sermons; we still preach, but it is always the same old thoughts as formerly; we still practice the care of souls, but we restrict our visits to a few select families. Things are going quite well, the people praise us at times, and this seals our spiritual obtuseness. We are spiritual workmen, slaves of routine, mechanical men, who discharge their office according to habit, in an official manner. Our sermons are only the repetition of old well-known thoughts; we ourselves learn nothing new, and our hearers hear nothing new any more, always the same words and platitudes, Sunday after Sunday, year after year. We are exhausted. We no longer are pleased with our own thoughts; they have long since become tedious to us. Is it then surprising that our preaching also becomes tedious for our hearers and no longer grips them? Yes, must it not lull our hearers into that same spiritual lethargy and lure them into spiritual death? *This, this, the dead mechanical workmanlike activity in the ministerial office in the church, school, and classroom, this spells certain death for the Gospel and the Church*. The forms remain, but the spirit, the spiritual life perishes. That is how the Church died in Germany. In Luther's lifetime everything was still alive and active. Thirty-five years after his death "pure doctrine" and "pure practice" had been established everywhere in Lutheran areas. Some seventy year later, about 1650, it was still present everywhere, but was almost everywhere dead, for the most part a mere boasting concerning pure doctrine and a loveless struggle for orthodoxy. Pietism, sanctimoniousness, was the first reaction to this, worse even than the death existing hitherto, for it was work-righteousness and Pharisaism. Rationalism and unbelief, the opposite extreme, worse than both, flooded the Church, and the pulpit and the lecture platform became the

seat of Satan, which Germany never got rid of again. Today it is called scientific modern theology. *But Pietism and Rationalism and scientific theology could have done no harm to the Church, if the pastors, professors, and teachers had not first forsaken the pure doctrine by degenerating into dead orthodoxy and into spiritless mechanical operation with the traditional body of doctrine.*

Where the Gospel remains a living thing, a power and fresh life among our pastors, the devil rattles in vain at the doors and windows of the Church. What happened in Germany must also happen elsewhere, also among us, if we do not get out of the dead and deadening mechanical operation with “pure doctrine” and “correct practice.” The damage is only too evident already for anyone who has eyes to see. It is already widespread. We are no longer as fresh spiritually, as we could be under the circumstances. We lack so greatly the hunger and the thirst for a full knowledge of the Gospel that our God has made possible for us today, yes, has laid before our door and dumped into our lap. Actually there are very few who study intensely, pastors who with fervent prayer study the Scripture, the Gospel. There are so few who really know the Scripture even in its most important parts and who experience an urgent need for gaining possession of the Gospel contained in the Scripture to the fullest possible extent. Too many are content with that which they have already learned to know. And that spells the death of knowledge. Here there can be no enough, no standstill. Standstill is retrogression. The professor, pastor, teacher, or Christian, who does not daily grow in the knowledge of salvation, naturally and necessarily withers and wilts. There are young pastors, teachers, and professors who are spiritually senile, spiritually tired and worn out. Their heart does not burn, glow, and blaze anymore *from* the Gospel and *for* the Gospel; it merely glimmers weakly. Meanwhile the interests of this life occupy our heart again unnoticed, and the weeds of the cares of this world, convenience, the love of pleasure, and the desire to make money overgrow our thoughts and our desires. We still perform our duties with external faithfulness, but the inner participation of our heart in the true welfare of the souls entrusted to us, in the divine work which the Synod, its institutions and missions are doing, in winning the world for our Lord Jesus Christ is negligible. It is said that there are pastors who never have earnestly tried to recruit students for our synodical training schools of pastors and teachers. They are satisfied when things in their own parish and in their own school are running smoothly. This is *the spiritual indifference*, working in our ministry without our heart and soul. This is what signifies the death of the Church, and in our circles constitutes the real danger.

But our spiritual teaching profession has deteriorated also *morally*. The recent war has made this particularly evident. In spite of the fact that we emphasized the doctrine of the separation of church and state very strongly up to the war, many of us have hitched their spiritual office and the spiritual organization of their congregation to the war chariot, purely because of human fear, purely because of fear of shame and imprisonment. Some pastors and congregations have permitted their mouths to be stopped and have ceased to preach in the language that the people can understand. This is base *denial*. Peter says of such a prohibition, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” Through David our Lord says, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest” (Psalm 40). Yes, that was a time that tried the hearts and reins and made manifest the thoughts of many hearts. But we must not say that, as though we were better than they. Under the same circumstances we too would have fallen. This is the sad thing about our times that the leaders of the Church no longer have the spiritual power to suffer shame for Christ’s sake. Oh, we wretched sons of Luther, who proudly bear his name, but can also do otherwise, where he could not do otherwise!

Great offenses occur among us: un-Lutheran practice, offensive public actions, insincerity, dishonest dealings, speculation, and gross neglect of duty. The rest of us see it, know it, and—we do not reprove it, and the offense spreads like a cancer, and on our account the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen. It is not that such offenses occur among us, but that they are no longer fittingly reprovved. Indeed, it is said to happen that such things are defended and that those who attempt to reprove them are resisted. That proves a terrifying lack of moral character and a high degree of moral depravity. A Christian teaching profession that tolerates public offenses in its midst has degenerated to the level of the people of this world, ruins the conscience of Christian people, and hastens the spiritual death of the Church.

In the face of these circumstances, is there still anyone among us who thinks with the bishop of Laodicea, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”? We are truthful only. If each one of us, teacher and hearer, confesses before God: I am spiritually wretched and pitiable, poor, blind, and naked; and then attaches the fervent prayer: Lord, sell me gold tried in the fire, that I may be rich; and white raiment that I may be clothed, and that the shame of my nakedness do not appear; and anoint mine eyes with eye salve, that I may see.

A reconstruction that endeavors to make various external changes in the Church or to introduce various external innovations, without correcting the basic damage of the Church, the indifference in spirit, is worth nothing. *What we teachers and hearers need above all is a new and right spirit.* The zeal for our own soul’s salvation and the zeal for the house of God must consume us, as it once did the Lord (John 2:17) and Paul (II Corinthians 11:2), to the degree that we—to use only one example—do not rest until we have filled Saginaw, New Ulm, Watertown, and Wauwatosa with students who wish to become pastors and teachers, so that the walls burst. If God gives the pastors and teachers of the Church above all a new and right spirit, a new burning and consuming zeal for their own soul’s salvation and for the salvation of the Church, then all necessary and wholesome external arrangements become insignificant details.

### 3. How Should and Can Such Renewal Take Place?

Let no one say, we can do nothing about that, that is something that God and God alone must accomplish without our cooperation. The latter is true indeed; but it is falsely applied here. This truth is valid for the absolutely spiritless, dead, natural man and for the blind Pharisee who says, I am rich and increased with goods. However, we do not lack the Holy Spirit entirely as yet, we have at least a spark of knowledge, of faith, of love, and of the fear of God. And with this spark we can again ignite a blazing fire within ourselves that will fill every fiber of our heart with burning zeal for God’s kingdom. To use an illustration: you still have one or two matches in your pocket, which a patient and faithful God has preserved intact for you. Man, why don’t you light one of them? *One of these matches is prayer.* Yes, prayer. You can still pray, can’t you? Or can’t you any more? What a pity! What a terrible indication of the deep spiritual stagnation of our Church it is, that not only the people, but the shepherds and teachers can no longer pray properly! Regular table prayers indeed, but regular morning and evening devotions are no longer customary. There is no free prayer life any more in our families. Yes, there is little prayer, supplication, and crying to the Lord on the part of our pastors, professors, and teachers any more in their private chamber, in their study, for themselves, for their family, for their congregation, for their work, for blessing, for the Holy Spirit, for power from on high for this or that difficult task, no wrestling with God for this or that soul that is on the pathway of error. Are not the lovingly entreating and gloriously promising words written for us: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”? Is not the promise specifically recorded for us that God will give us His Holy Spirit in answer to our prayers? “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11–13) It is true of every pastor, professor, and teacher in particular: “I will not leave you comfortless. If I go ... I will come again to you. I will ... give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth ... he will guide you into all truth.”—Certainly, we still have this much spirit that we can rouse ourselves to make the plea, “Dear Father, for my Savior’s sake, give me thy Holy Spirit, whom thou hast promised to give me.” *Thus the promise must be fulfilled in us, if God is not to become a liar.* We should not, neither do we want to ask for a specific *measure* of the Spirit, but for as much as is necessary to rescue our soul like a firebrand out of the fire, as much as is necessary, so that we do not diminish in spiritual power, but daily become stronger, as much as is necessary to discharge our duty faithfully and to edify the souls entrusted to us sufficiently, and to make them abound in good works, as much as is necessary to carry His Gospel into all the world and to gather the elect of God, so that the Church may not perish in our midst, but rather become strong within and without. In short, He

has promised us sufficient Spirit and power and more than sufficient for the glorification and perfection of His Church, and He will give it to us, if we do not cease praying for it. That is the one means for a real reconstruction of the Church.

*The other is the new life in the revealed Word, in the Gospel, in the Scripture.* I refer here to that which we emphasized at the beginning: God gives His Spirit and faith to no one except through the external Word. The farmer can be on his knees twenty-four hours a day asking God for bread, but he will receive none, if he does not prepare his field according to the requirements of nature and work diligently at it. God performs no miracles unnecessarily, for that He has no time. In spiritual matters it is exactly so. No prayer for the Holy Spirit will accomplish anything that does not immediately rise from its knees and helps to plow the field on which the bread of life, of the spirit grows, the Gospel, the Scripture. Here is the secret of success. This Word is spirit and life, sheer divine power, divine fire. This Word must restore the world, the Church, our ministry, if only it lives in it, that is, in faith and prayer thinks it through, meditates on it, and studies it. No one can sit in a hot oven without being warmed. No one can live in the Word, in the Gospel, without being illuminated by its light, being warmed by its glow, being set on fire by its fire, being strengthened by its power, and being spiritualized by its spirit, unless, of course, a person is entirely unfit for faith, obdurate, ossified, or mummified. Oh, if once again we professors, pastors, and teachers would live and walk and search in the Word, how bright, how light, how clear, how warm, how hot, how glowing, how powerful, how strong, how mighty our hearts would become in spirit, how our preaching and teaching would grip the hearts of our hearers, persuade them, overcome them, so that the Church would become a veritable plain of Sharon, an Eden, a garden of God! (Isaiah 35; 51:3; 65:10.) I am not speaking of a little professional operation with God's Word. Yes, whoever has to teach Bible history and the Catechism, whoever has to deliver a sermon or a theological lecture, must study the pertinent material in the Bible, otherwise it will amount to nothing. This is the necessary official study of the Bible required by the office of the ministry for a specific purpose. No one does this more intensively than the modern scientific theologians, and yet they are accursed. Such official duty of the Scripture can indeed impart to you a certain amount of familiarity with the Bible, if it is conscientiously pursued, but it can leave your heart completely cold and unaffected. Mechanically you extract a piece of information from the Bible, mechanically you write it down in your sermon or lecture, and mechanically you reproduce it. Therefore do not be surprised, if it also has only a mechanical effect, and not only leaves your own heart cold, but makes it ever more indifferent and hard. This merely official study of the Bible is, and always remains, although it may be a sizable quantity, an incoherent piece of patchwork, which does not train spiritually nor perfect anyone, but perverts and distorts, so that a single gust of wind of false doctrine, of unbelief, of temptation causes it to collapse. Yes, *that is our defect, that we use the Bible only officially altogether too much.* Whoever wants to study the Scripture properly and with blessing, so that he himself becomes illuminated, warmed, and filled with the Holy Ghost and with power from on high, *must above all read, search, meditate, and study for his own heart, for his own edification and strengthening*—with the prayer that ever recurs in the 119th Psalm: Lord, teach *me*, instruct *me*, show *me*, lead *me*, strengthen *me*, open *my* eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy Law! This must be done in this sense: Incline *my* heart to Thy testimony, *refresh* me with Thy righteousness, let me *experience* Thy *grace*, my soul *fainteth* for Thy salvation. Scripture study in this sense alone is true, wholesome, fruitful, and fills one with the Holy Ghost. This is precisely what is missing among us. We have to study the Bible so much officially, and a person cannot, of course, sit with the Bible continuously, as a teacher it is also necessary to study pedagogy, as a professor science and technology, and as a pastor matters pertaining to general culture. A person must keep up with current events as they affect life in general. Time must also be set aside for recreation. I reply: That is all true and justifiable. Here I should like to testify for the sake of the spiritual welfare of the Church to a situation that involves a severe indictment against the congregations, the Synod and the respective synodical officials: for wretched reasons of economy many teachers, many pastors, and almost all professors are *overloaded with work* and now because of inflation *robbed of their livelihood*. I do not have the time to depict this here in detail; but with many of us the workload is so tremendous, that it physically exhausts us and ruins our nervous system in a few years. We are almost constantly spiritually and physically fatigued, weary, and tired. We have no time for recreation; we cannot discharge our official duties in peace and quiet and in the proper peace of mind. We do

not drive our office, our office drives us; we are office slaves, beasts of burden ever driven onward. Of course, this applies to some more than to others. Many pastors in large congregations have the same problem, especially those who must now preach in two languages and teach school all year besides. If these people do their work negligently, if their hearers complain of a lack of spiritual vigor and strength, if with their hasty official study and work they never find time for private intensive study of the Scripture, as I described above, if they weary of their office and discharge it only mechanically, in a dull and listless manner, do not be surprised, and do not complain, it is your own fault. When the nerves are frayed, when the mental powers are strained, true spiritual fire and spiritual power cannot be put forth. And while you keep these men overburdened with work, you permit them to be robbed of their sustenance. They never did receive large salaries. Now their living expenses have more than doubled in the last eight to ten years, and the Synod has only recently adjusted the salaries of its professors upward by—say it and write it down—fifteen percent. That is a violation of the contract which the Synod made with them when it called them. This is *a sin that cries to high heaven, to rob the workman of his hard-earned pay*. For it is written: A laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7, I Tim. 5:18), and again: “Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (James 5:4; Lev. 19:13f).—Who will speak against a just increase in salary here in the synod convention? First of all the synodical officials, who see no money in the treasury for such an increase; secondly those pastors who themselves have received no increase in salary or an inadequate one. All this is said here, not to procure a life of ease for the professors, but to remove from them the greatest hindrances that stand in the way of the one great necessity, the intensive faithful occupation of our professors with the Word of life. The same is true of our pastors and teachers. If you want to instill new spirit and power and life into the sermons, into the congregation, into the school, into the synodical institutions, then your professors, pastors, and teachers must have the necessary time to concern themselves with God’s Word not only officially, but also intensively for their own soul. You must lighten their work load, must engage more professors, pastors, and teachers, train more of them, and give them a salary which relieves them of the cares of subsistence.

Now that I have done justice to the previously made objections, I repeat my demands on us professors, pastors, and teachers: Unless we turn back from our merely official study of the Gospel and study the Scripture for our own edification and spiritual strengthening, and that in the spirit of the 119th Psalm, the Church will die in our hands, and God will remove His Word from us and give it to others, who will use it better than we did. That is what I said before: true faithfulness in office consists in this that we care more for our own soul than for the office. We must study the Scripture for our own soul’s salvation. We must not only extract the wine, the milk, and the oil of God which it offers to us from it and sell it to others, but we must drink of it ourselves, draining the cup thoroughly; then our soul will delight itself in fatness, Isaiah 55:2. Only thus can we receive a new spirit and renew our flagging strength, pour new life and new power into our teaching and preaching, and create new spiritual life in our hearers.

*How does a person engage in such Scripture study?* First of all, do not forget, that only an empty vessel can be filled. The Lord says, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1). All drinking is actually a sucking action; and all sucking is done by creating a vacuum, a space without air in it, into which the atmospheric pressure forces a liquid. The liquid is the Gospel truth, grace and spirit in the Scripture. Scripture, God’s Word itself is in its authority and power the atmospheric pressure. Now read, study hungrily and thirstily with fervent prayer for more knowledge of grace, for strengthening of your faith, for sanctification of your mind, for spirit and power to teach and to preach. Thereby you create the spiritual vacuum in your soul and you suck in the divine truth and grace and power. Then hold still and digest it, that is, think about it, meditate on it, apply it to yourself, believe it, reprove yourself, rejoice, warn yourself, encourage yourself. Then it will become spiritual power and spiritual life in you.

But if this is to take place, you must read and study the Scripture attentively, that is, with application of the mind and with lull devotion of the heart. Yes, *study*, that is the word. What you read, you must try to understand, to retain, and to comprehend into a unit. What you do not understand will not benefit you; what you do not retain, you do not possess; what you do not comprehend confuses you. Inattentive reading only dulls the

mind. Much in the Scripture, and especially those parts that contain the most important truths, are so easy, that a seven-year-old child can understand them, such as the historical books in general, Genesis, the Gospels, the book of Acts, many key Bible verses throughout, many passages in the Psalms. These things impress on your memory and retain them. But there is also much in the Bible that is difficult to understand, such as the prophets, Job, several of the Epistles; in these some of the principal doctrines are further explained, more thoroughly proved, more carefully guarded against misunderstanding, are presented in their historical setting and origin, are illustrated by means of pictures, and are embellished poetically. The Scripture is so rich in simple and interwoven knowledge of salvation that, as St. Augustine has said, a child can wade through this water, and an elephant can drown in it. The full understanding of it is further complicated for us by the fact that it was originally written in foreign languages, and no translation can adequately express the precise value of the original languages. No one has ever understood the Scripture completely. Even the most highly educated scholars remain students and amateurs, as Luther admits of himself. But that is all the more reason why no Christian, and least of all those in the public teaching profession, should forego the understanding of these more difficult matters and thereby forfeit from the start a greater measure of the knowledge of the Gospel.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). The Scripture is so large a book, not that we should learn very little in it, but that we may learn *everything that is contained in it*. God has not permitted it to be written in vain. In particular, there is not a word in it that we teachers in the Church should not know. To content oneself with that amount of Scripture knowledge which anyone can gather by an ordinary casual reading and to forego the knowledge of the more difficult matters of the details, of the fuller and deeper matters from the start and continuously, this is intellectual laziness which robs oneself of the true measure of a man, of knowledge, of spirit, and of power, which God has intended for him as a preacher of His salvation and a teacher of His congregation. This leads in a direct course to ruminating of the little that one knows, to mechanical, dead manipulating of the old threshed out material, to boredom and mental degeneration for the hearers, and thus brings about the spiritual death of the Church. “Therefore every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). We must study the Scripture in such a manner, as though we could never exhaust it; we must *daily learn something new*, daily understand more exactly, more deeply, more fully, until we, as St. Paul says, “All come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Every new bit of knowledge concerning salvation gives us new spiritual joy, as David says, “I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil” (Psalm 119:162). New joy is new spirit, new power, new preaching, new life, also with our hearers.

In this manner we must approach the Word of God with our mind. It works first of all purely psychologically. But there is another side to this; that is, our soul and *our heart*. The Bible is no catalog of doctrines or points of doctrine as the so-called Athanasian (actually Roman) Creed, with a “must” before and after it. It is no dogmatics, that is, no systematic collection of theological concepts intended purely for the intellect. It is also no philosophical system intended to explain to us the mysteries of existence, nor a dry historical treatise concerning actual happenings intended to explain to us the cultural conditions in the world today. The Scripture is a living discourse in a thousand iridescent colors, a discourse that narrates and teaches, that sings and sighs, that leaps and dances, that thunders and threatens, that rustles and rushes, that comforts and strengthens, that warns and encourages, abounding everywhere with the loftiest thoughts, but filled with fire and power. O Genesis, O you Psalms, O Job, O Jeremiah and Isaiah, Matthew, John, Paul! How you can relate the wondrous works and the wondrous ways of God in such a manner, that one is forced to listen breathlessly! How you can complain about the Church and the sorrow of Christians, that one’s heart bleeds! How you can depict sin in its grotesqueness and blast with the trumpet of judgment, so that every fiber of the human heart trembles! How you can teach the heavenly love and grace of God in Christ Jesus, so that the heart never ceases to marvel and is constantly filled with greater wonderment, so that it can never hear enough! How you can comfort, as one’s mother comforts! How you can fill the heart with joy and courage, with power and defiance, so that a person is certain that with God he can leap over a wall and destroy death, devil, world and hell in the name of the Lord! *The words of Scripture contain not only understanding, but everywhere also heart and soul, feeling*

*and power* that grips the heart, arouses it, and carries it away with it. Through both the Holy Ghost works His divine work in us: repentance, faith, love, sanctification, zeal, and power. Yes, indeed, *Mary, not Martha, has chosen the good part*. Blessed, yes, blessed is he who has the Lord in the Scripture in his house and daily sits at His feet and hears His words! *This, this must restore the Church*. The start has to be made by us, the teachers of the Church. We must through diligent study of the Scripture learn ever better to experience its divine power in our own hearts, then our words will also convey it to others and create a new spirit in our hearers also.

In conclusion, *the Bible consists of many individual books*. These have not been thrown together pell-mell, but have been assembled by God Himself through the agency of men into a well-ordered whole, in order to reveal to us God's plan of salvation in its entirety. No individual book contains all of it, but each one does contain a specific part; only all of them together contain the whole. For this reason the public teacher of the Word, who wishes to work with full success, dare *leave no individual book of the Bible unexplored*. Some books are more important than others, and *the most important*, such as Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah in the Old Testament, and Matthew, John, Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians in the New Testament, *must be studied with special diligence*. Luther says of the Epistle to the Romans, that it would be well worth the while for every Christian to commit it to memory word for word. Yes, if we professors, pastors, and teachers really want to arrive at a mature knowledge of the Scripture, we dare not content ourselves with the mere knowledge of individual verses or passages, and be they ever so many, but we must learn and know the Scripture *book by book*. The individual verse or longer passage derives its true sense from the *context* with all the others in the book. For each book has its purpose, *drives home a specific point*, is written from a specific point of view, has a specific objective, takes into consideration specific circumstances, and all this gives each important statement its full sense and content. No one can understand fully the well-known passage in Ephesians 2:19, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," etc., who does not read it in the light of everything that has preceded it in chapter two, and of the wonderful main thought of the Epistle which St. Paul expressed in chapter 1, verse 10, the gathering together of all things in Christ. Each book of the Scripture is written as a result of a specific concern of the writer, for example, the Epistle to the Romans out of a great concern for preserving the western church in the future from succumbing to a false gospel, the Epistle to the Galatians out of divine wrath against the damage wrought in the Church by Jewish work-righteousness, the Epistle to the Philippians out of *joy* over the wonderful effects of the Gospel on the Philippians, the Epistle to the Ephesians out of the great overwhelming thought that the plan of God to gather all things together in Christ was now being carried out. The various individual passages in the Prophets and in the Epistles, particularly the individual Psalms, flow out of various dispositions of the heart and therefore strike a sympathetic chord in the heart of the reader in varying degree, whereby the divine disposition of the heart and the divine power is transferred into us. Yes, the Scripture is life and power, life and spirit, calculated and designed for this, that it—sharper than any two-edged sword—pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Hebrews 4:12. It affects also the unseen corners of our heart, converts, sanctifies, and imparts knowledge and spirit. Indeed the Scripture is not a system of dogmatics, but it is *a system of books*, which together constitute a whole, in which each is related to the other, and all to one another and all fit together, the New Testament to the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles to the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, since they continue them, are based on them, refer to them, show their fulfillment, and again project their content into the future, thus offering us a complete stock of knowledge for eternal life and all manner of divine power, which promotes a godly walk of life and serves to perfect the Church on earth (II Peter 1:3), if we will only look for it.—One thing more: God has in the abundance of His grace and in order to make us abound in grace caused His Bible to be written, not with His own hand, not by *one* man, nor at *one* time, but by *various men at various times* of the development of His kingdom, so that we might receive a full account of His grace from contemporaries, and might see with our own eyes, how His kingdom was established and His grace revealed to Moses in his time, how His Spirit was reflected in David, how Isaiah already saw Jesus Christ with his prophetic eye, how a boy like Mark had the Gospel written in his heart in such simple terms, and a sanguine person like John was so deeply overwhelmed, how an active man like Peter employed it in so practical a

manner, how a man strong in spirit like Paul was able to illuminate every facet of the human heart with it and overcome every human intellectual objection with it, and taught how this could be done.—One who does not understand each book of the Scripture by itself and each one in its relation to all the others, has only an academic knowledge of the Scripture. We, who should be masters in Israel, must also acquire a masterful knowledge of the Scripture. This is easily possible with the many helps that God has given us today, also to those of us who are not particularly equipped with a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. The training course used today to train our pastors and teachers is rather adequate in this respect, if only we make earnest and diligent use of it. We need only continue the studies at the Seminary in this respect, and in this we can be helpful to one another at our pastoral conferences. But all this must again not be done merely in an official manner, but *for our own edification*, enlightenment, refreshing, invigoration, and strengthening. If we personally have our life and thought in the Scripture as our foremost concern, then we shall also find the necessary time for other Scripture study. The wretched filth that the daily newspapers daily squirt into our hearts from the street, we can dispense with entirely.

Therefore arise, arise, all you brethren in the ministry! Come to the fountain of youth of the blessed revelation of our salvation! Here is all the divine power necessary for the refreshing and renewal of our heart, our preaching, and our teaching. Study the Scripture prayerfully for your own heart, and the Synod will experience a regeneration that will still be noticeable generations hence.

But:

II. *In our life in the Scripture we dare not give our human intellect the decision concerning what is true and wholesome, but must apprehend the revealed truth of God by repentance and faith.*

### **1. The worst enemy of this new and right spirit that we obtain by sitting at the feet of Jesus is our own human reason.**

Paul says in I Corinthians 2:14, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” And again, “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (I Corinthians 1:23). The Lord means the same thing when He says Matthew 11:25f, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—To express it in concrete terms that means, Mary sits at Jesus’ feet and listens intently to His words, and is so happy in her heart, because heavenly truths and heavenly powers are permeating her soul. And then she thinks and thinks, and suddenly a highly educated friend says to her, “You silly goose, *that is not true at all!*” And now he proves to her that according to human reason the entire matter that she has heard may indeed be a beautiful dream for a sentimental woman’s heart, but for the cool, clear mind of man it is utter nonsense. It is the old trick of the Serpent, “Yea, hath God said?”

I shall briefly set forth, *what the Scripture understands by reason*, who and what this apparently aristocratic dame, the worst enemy of our faith, really is. Reason distinguishes us from the animals. Of these we say, they have instinct; of man, he thinks. Man has certain principles of mental perception and thinking in his mind. As to perception, he visualizes everything that exists as occupying space, and everything that happens as happening in time. You cannot possibly imagine anything that does not occupy space, because your mind is not constituted thus. Neither can you imagine something that does not take place in time, because all your experiences are limited by time. You even imagine God as occupying space, although the Scripture tells you that he is omnipresent, that is, not limited by space, but filling and pervading all space, yes, eliminating space. You even think of eternity in terms of a very long time, although the Scripture represents it as timelessness, an eternal present. You *must* look at things in this manner *because you yourself are a finite being*, and you cannot escape this manner of viewing phenomena. If you want to know how large a thing is, you must measure it: one, two, three feet, etc.; if you want to know how many things there are, you must count them: one, two, three, four, etc., that is, you take a definite amount of space and you divide other space accordingly, or you take a definite

quantity of time and compare another quantity with it. This is a basic law of perception for us; only in this manner, and in no other manner, can we perceive and learn. We are likewise bound to certain *basic laws of thinking*. We *must* say: One equals one, one does not equal two, seven equals seven, seven does not equal eleven. Furthermore: If one man says that the Czar of Russia is dead, and another says that he is alive, then you cannot say, both are right, but your reason forces you to say: one of these men is stating an untruth. At the same time you must say: One of these men *must* be saying the truth. The Czar is either living, or he is no longer living, a third possibility does not exist. I could elaborate this further, but these examples suffice to show that man is subject to certain rules of thinking which he cannot transgress or violate; if he does so nevertheless, we say: He has lost his reason. Thus man is subject to definite basic laws of perception and also subject to definite laws of reason. As soon as a man observes things in the world, he forms a definite concept of each of them for himself by distinguishing one thing from another and again bringing them into relation with one another in such a manner in his mind that he forms a proposition, and then places two such *propositions* alongside one another and draws a third necessary result from them that we call a *conclusion*, for example, he says, All men must die. Then he says, "Carl is a man." From this follows necessarily the third proposition as a conclusion: Carl must die. This mental ability to perceive and to judge all things and all happenings according to the laws that govern us, we call human reason, sound reason; the English also call it common sense. If someone says that  $2 \times 2 = 5$ , that a triangle is the same as a circle, or that Moses, Paul, and Luther were contemporary, or that our President was at the same time in Paris, San Francisco, and Washington, then we know that the man is bereft of his reason.

The Apostle Paul says that natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, that is, the things that God reveals to us by His Spirit. With that he does not want to say that the language, the words and sentences, the grammar of the Scripture cannot be understood by natural man; these the unbeliever can easily understand, since they are natural language. But *man cannot with his natural human reason understand that that is true which the Holy Ghost says*. It is foolishness to him, that is, it seems to be a lot of nonsense to him, it does not seem to be true, according to his human reason it is impossible, it contradicts the basic laws of his perception and thinking; therefore he *cannot* understand it and consider it true. It must be spiritually discerned, that is, it has to be judged spiritually. Spiritual discernment is necessary for this, and that the natural man does not possess. To illustrate: The Scripture teaches that there is one God and that He is one person. At the same time it teaches that in God there are three independent persons, each distinct from the other, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and yet these three are not three Gods, but only *one* God. Immediately our human reason says: That does not agree with logic and arithmetic. If the concept "person" really means "person," and if God is really one God, then he cannot be three persons; and if there are really three persons in the Godhead, then he cannot be just *one* person. One is not three, and three is not one. Therefore the concept "person" must mean something different in the one case than it does in the other. The concept that the Scripture gives us of God demands absolute unity and personality in the strictest sense: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). Therefore the personality of the three persons in the Godhead must be something different from a person. Out of this judgment of human reason all manner of heresies and schisms have arisen in the Church in the course of time, such as the Arians, the Eunomians, the Samosatenes, the Socinians, the Swedenborgians, and our present-day Unitarians. *Reason and Scripture are contradictory here*. But not only here, also in all the chief doctrines of the Gospel are they contradictory. Because of human reason Zwingli, as Nestorius had done in his day, separated the two natures in Christ, the divine and the human, and distorted the words, "This is my body" into "This represents my body," because he said that the human body of Christ could not share the divine attribute of omnipresence, for then it must cease to be a human body, which, however the Scripture declares it to be. His human reason did not permit him to believe the words, "This *is*." Because of human reason *Calvin*, the later leader of the Reformed Church, taught that God had not only predestined those who are to be saved to salvation, but also those who are lost to damnation. Purely because of human reason our adversaries in the recent controversy over the doctrine of election attacked the predestination of the believers to faith and salvation, because they could not understand, how the doctrine of effective universal grace could stand, if the Scripture at the same time taught a specific predestination of certain persons to salvation. They denied this doctrine in order to maintain the other. Yes, *human reason declares the entire Gospel of Christ*, the entire plan

of God for salvation revealed in the Scripture, *to be foolish and senseless*, objectionable and horrible. According to the Scripture God is an omniscient and almighty and a just and good God. But His plan of salvation does not agree with this. When He created the world and man, He knew in advance that the devil would corrupt the whole human race through sin and plunge it into nothing but wretchedness. Why then did He create them in the first place? He could have prevented sin and death through sin from coming into the world, He could have destroyed the devil, before he had done the damage, or He could have prevented him from doing it—why then did He not do so? Instead He caused mankind to be redeemed at so tremendous a price by His Son, and sent the Holy Ghost to convert them. Yes, but with most of them this does not succeed. And that He must have known in advance too. Why then did He not employ a more effective method, one that would really convert and save all men? What a doctrine that is! It makes of God a senseless God, who does not know how to do anything, or a powerless God, who cannot accomplish what He wants, and a cruel God, who delights in the misfortune of mankind.

That is how human reason thinks, judges, and speaks. It cannot do otherwise, says Paul, it must judge thus, after it has lost the spiritual light and has only a natural judgment left, which is under the domination of the Old Adam. For this reason the world does not believe and rejects, hates, and fights the Gospel as the greatest foolishness, the most stupid superstition; and only where our Lord opens the eyes and heart of man through the Holy Spirit, as in the case of Lydia, the seller of purple, or of Saul, the persecutor, can he come to the knowledge of the truth and to a joyful confirmation of the Gospel truth. Luther once told the professors at Wittenberg, “The devil will light the light of reason and rob you of your faith.” That prediction has proved to be terribly true of the great majority of Germany’s professors. They have followed their human reason. Reason became the measure of truth for them. What agrees with reason, what can be perceived with the five senses, what can be understood with the human mind, what can be confirmed by experience, what is in accord with our laws and principles of thinking, that, and that alone, is true. What cannot be brought into harmony with our common experience and with our own thinking, that is not true, is imagination and superstition. Because of reason the learned men of Germany have thrown the Gospel into the attic and have robbed the German people of their faith. Because of reason everything that calls itself science today has become the bitterest and most dangerous enemy of the Gospel.

We Christians have the same human reason in us. We are rational human beings and must perceive and think in the same manner as the rest. There is also a strong Old Man in us who wants to dominate our reason and assert himself against the spiritual man in us and wants to overcome him. When our spirit delights itself in all the glories of the Gospel and rejoices in the grace of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the love and care of God, the promised blessedness of the world to come, and particularly when the conscience of sin strikes, when the lust of the flesh and the world entice us, or when the cares of life and affliction drive us to despair, then our reason asserts itself, especially when we read such infidel writings which call themselves scientific, and whispers in our ear: All that is not true at all, what the Bible says; it is all superstition, it does not agree with human reason! These are the worst and most dangerous afflictions, and they destroy all spiritual joy and power, and consume faith as water quenches fire. He who is not careful in this respect will lose his faith, as so many, as so very many have done.

## **2. But is there no refutation of this cunning of human reason?**

Oh, yes, an absolutely formidable one, if human pride would only acknowledge it. *God Himself gives it to us in His Word*, especially in the *Book of Job*. This book was written precisely for this purpose to put to naught the cunning of human reason. Job is the God-fearing man of his time. God Himself gives him the testimony, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” This man God plagues so terribly, as though He delighted in his suffering. As a result Job, conscious of his own uprightness, lapsed into blasphemous grumbling and complaining against God, and accused Him of injustice and cruelty. And how did God answer him? He answered him out of the whirlwind, the symbol of His almighty power and majesty, and said to him, “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words

without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.” In this vein the Lord goes on speaking to him until he concludes (41:11) with these words, “*Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him?* Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” With this same thought the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:19–21 answers the blasphemer who had blasphemed concerning God’s free election to grace, “Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” He silences him with the words, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’ Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” Wherein does the refutation of human reason consist here? In this, that the man here reproving God with his human reason is charged with terrible pride, and is *convicted of pride*. Job and the man mentioned by Paul are measuring God according to their human reason and accordingly find Him to be unjust and cruel. But this is reprehensible pride, yes, basically insanity. Who and what is man that he undertakes to judge God as to His essence and works, as to His will and works according to his puny mind and reason, and to condemn Him? How great are God’s mind and understanding and wisdom and power? He has a mind that comprehends everything; He has an understanding that is not limited by certain laws of logic, but which is far above all laws, indeed has established the laws that govern nature and the human mind; He has wisdom that directs all things to their ultimate purpose; He has power that works all things, does all things, creates all things. And how great—no, we should rather ask—how small, how puny is the little bit of understanding and wisdom that God has given to man by comparison! It is not infinite as is God’s, but *finite, limited, limited by laws*. It cannot comprehend a single, solitary work of God. It does not even know what it is itself; it does not understand how a blade of grass grows, why the violet is blue and the rose red or white or yellow, man only sees it, but does not understand it. In the course of time man has learned to build machines that utilize many of the powers that God has placed in nature, but all the wise men and inventors have never caused a leaf to grow on a tree, and they never will. And this puny little human reason undertakes to criticize and to reprove and to blaspheme the infinite omniscience of God in His manifold works and ways! God’s omniscience should conform to their limited human reason; otherwise they will condemn it as unreasonable and declare that the revelation of God, His Word, His world-government and plan of salvation are foolish, unjust, and cruel! It is megalomania that possesses human reason, and for that reason it reproves and blasphemes God; and megalomania always results in insanity, yes, is already a form of insanity. How could a finite human being, this tiny creature, understand the mind of the infinite God, the Creator and Preserver of the universe? Can your dog with his canine brain understand you with your human intelligence? Must not much that you do seem unintelligible and nonsensical to him? Yet he is a creature more closely related to you than you are to the Creator of both of you. But the dog is more sensible about it than you are, for he does not criticize you for the measures you take, while you in a high-minded and godless manner want to criticize God and make him conform to act according to your little cubic inch of intelligence. What arrogance!

Here and there an individual among men has recognized something of the limitations of human reason. One such man was the sharpest and most correct thinker of all times, the philosopher *Immanuel Kant*. He has written an entire book in order to prove, and he has proved, that our reason is limited by definite laws of perception and thinking, that we are unable to know the things and the happenings in this world, as they actually are in themselves, and that therefore we cannot express an absolute judgment at all that would be valid under all circumstances, and that our experience does not suffice to speak of unalterable laws of nature, yes, that the statements of so-called scientists concerning eternal laws of the universe are so much charlatantry. That will remain true, what God Himself says, Isaiah 40:12–14, “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?” In spite of all the boasting of our clever human reason it will nevertheless remain true, that God is justified when he speaks, and clear when He judges. Yes, “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness... The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise,

that they are vain” (I Corinthians 3:19, 20). “If He will contend with him, he cannot answer him one in a thousand” (Job 9:3).

Therefore Paul shows us the proper attitude to take over against the ways of God that seem to us so unreasonable. He exclaims, “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen*” (Rom. 11:33–36). In the consciousness of the limitation of your own reason you too should speak thus, then you will remain unaffected by the pride of reason, and can rejoice in the Gospel and in the grace of Jesus Christ with all your heart.

### **3. Danger threatens us from another direction because of the pride of human reason.**

Luther broke off the colloquy with Zwingli at Marburg with the words: “You have a different spirit than we.” He meant the spirit that places human reason above the Scripture, and instead of submitting to that which is clearly written in the Scripture, bends and twists the Scripture, until it agrees with human reason—the spirit of reason, rationalism. Luther took his human reason captive under the obedience to Christ. Zwingli took God’s Word captive under his human reason. *This spirit of reason taints all the Reformed Churches and the various sects in our country to the very core.* Their highest norm is not the Scripture, but reason, common sense. Their gospel is throughout a common sense gospel. This is a result of their origin. The Lutheran Reformation is the result of the anguish of heart caused by sin and of faith in the grace of Christ; the Swiss Reformation is the result of human reason. The founders of the Reformed Church, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Calvin, were all *humanists*, and these are the people, who already a century before Luther had brought the authority of human reason also in matters of religion and faith into prominence in the struggle with Rome. First of all this intellectual tendency passed over into the Reformed Church through its founders; furthermore, it established itself independently in the philosophy that was rising again, and besides found acceptance and eager attention in the lodges that were arising in England. This explains why all the English Reformed Churches get along so well with the lodges. They are twin sisters. *In the Reformed Churches* of our country, particularly in the English-speaking ones, the common sense gospel of humanism and lodgery has *crowded out the true Gospel* of our salvation *to a great degree.* In their circles the Gospel of sin and grace and of Christ’s merit and faith has almost no validity at all any more, but Christ is represented merely as a preacher and model of morality, as an “ethical ideal” to be imitated. They preach the gospel of humanity—just as the lodges do. They want to make men morally good. Not only do they basically and practically confuse the world and the Church, heaven and earth, heavenly and earthly, spiritual and worldly happiness, but they turn more and more from the heavenly and spiritual to the earthly and worldly. They want to make life pleasant for man here on earth already; that is why they preach unselfishness, devotion to one’s fellowman, work for human society, social work, work for the state, patriotism, Americanism, love toward our neighbors, chastity, self-control and abstinence from intoxicating beverages and tobacco, prohibition legislation, good city, county, state, and federal government, neatness in clothing and cleanliness in the streets, sanitary measures, and regulations of all kinds—they preach these things as Christianity from their pulpits as a means of establishing the kingdom of God. They preach education, worldly culture, civilization, the culture of the mind, public schools, and a thousand other things that pertain only to this life. Almost everything can be heard in their churches; only one thing is seldom heard there, the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, and where some of this remains, it is spoiled and twisted by all manner of human ideas and so-called science. Thus they reduce the Church of Christ, this institution that is designed for saving souls, to a social organization that is intended to promote earthly happiness and moral improvement among unconverted people. While the Lutheran Church sits at Jesus’ feet as did Mary and listens to His words, the Reformed Churches behave like Martha, who serves at tables and rattles cups and plates, knives and forks.

This is the gospel of the English sects and the church work of the English sects, the product of common sense, of the spirit of reason, of the so-called practical approach, the nature of Martha. *It is a terrible danger*

*that threatens our Church from that source*, especially now that we are about to make the transition to the English language. Martha cannot stand seeing Mary sit at Jesus' feet, she wants her to lend a hand, namely with the serving at the table, with the rattling of dishes which she has chosen for herself and which she considers all-important. The sectarian churches of America cannot understand our Lutheran Church in its Mary-like attitude, which wants to hear nothing but the saving words of Jesus and wants to preach nothing but the Gospel. When we admonish the members of our congregations as citizens willing to serve the government for God's sake with their possessions and their blood, but refusing as a Church and as churches to place the holy ministry and the church officers into the service of the government, to recruit men, sell bonds, and the like, the people in the sectarian churches accuse us of being unpatriotic and denounce us and threaten violence against us as enemies of the country. If we as churches do not join their churches in some humanitarian undertaking, which after all is not the special task of the church, but the duty of humanity as such, they accuse us of being loveless and inhuman and boast of their "Christian" works, which, however, are not particularly Christian, especially when done by them. Let us not be deceived in this matter: the sectarian churches consider the Lutheran Church as a hindrance to culture, a danger to the state and to society, as long as we retain this Mary-like attitude and do not become like Martha.

O that the Lutheran Church, especially as it becomes an English-speaking Church would guard against this moralistic gospel and common sense Christianity of the Reformed as against the devil himself! O that we might say to them until Judgment Day as Luther said to Zwingli, "*You have a different spirit than we!*" This gospel of the sectarian churches is nothing else than the authority of the blind but proud human reason over the Gospel of Christ, whose mortal enemy it is, which it tends to destroy thoroughly, and robs of its divine, spiritual, converting and saving power, and makes of its conscious adherents men who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Then we can indeed draw large numbers of people into our churches, particularly also the lodge element, but we can no longer convert and save them. If we, as a Synod were already dominated by the Reformed spirit of reason, then no study of the Scripture, be it ever so intense, could produce a spiritual renewal in us, but would become mere modern criticism of the Bible and rob us of our faith. Let us not forget the judgment of our Lord, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In this Mary-like attitude alone is salvation.

Whereof does it consist? Indeed, Mary also uses her reason as she listens to the words of her Lord. And she will use it once again when she rises up and tells others what has brought about her salvation. She will also use it for the things of this life, which concern her association with her Lord in this earthly tabernacle. Yes, *reason has three functions in connection with God's Word*. 1. It should seek to understand the Gospel according to the words, sentences, concepts, and thoughts in which it is revealed to us in the Scripture, as thoroughly as possible, so that it becomes filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. 2. It should reproduce this Gospel, and teach it and preach it as clearly and as deeply and as fully as it has learned it. 3. It should provide the external means, the worldly institutions that the Church uses to propagate the Word, in an orderly manner. It should hear and perceive, not judge and adjust; it should preach the Word, not criticize it; it should provide external means, not internal content. These external means are of minor importance; yes, with the application of a little common sense almost take care of themselves, if only one is faithful to the first two functions. Yes, even the second flows out of the first rather readily with a bit of admonition, as long as it does not miss the one thing needful: *sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His words. This one thing is needful.*

#### **4. What is it, however, that the Lord has to say to every Mary?**

It is essentially two things: the word concerning our sin, and the word concerning His grace. He impresses our lost condition as a result of sin thoroughly upon our conscience; then He pours into our heart our salvation from the curse of sin and the service of sin through His atonement unto eternal life and eternal blessedness. *Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thou art mine!* That is the heavenly message. Here there is no room for the criticism of reason. This is *God's Word, God's power, the overwhelming victorious truth*. Here only one

thing is called for: trembling, confession, *repentance*; laying hold of grace and holding onto it, *living happily in faith and dying happily in it*. That is salvation. That is God's good and gracious will. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). Then when the same Lord says to such a man, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark 5:19), or, "Go thou and *preach* the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60), or, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15), then he goes, and he does that with great joy. Of that we shall speak in the last part.

III. *A thorough reconstruction of the Church can be brought about only by subordinating all personal interests to the one great goal: the perfecting of the Church of God on earth.*

### **Perfecting the Church is the aim and purpose of God's ways.**

Each human being encounters the question, "*What really is the purpose of all that exists and happens?*" The greatest thinkers of mankind have guessed at the answer to this question, but have not found it. Naturalistic philosophy of today has arrived at the point, where it says that the world has no purpose at all. That is supposed to be reasoned! The Scripture says that the purpose of all that exists and happens is *the glory of God*. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever!" (Rom. 11:36). More specifically it says, "All things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things" (Col. 1:16, 17). It is written in Ephesians I that the grace of God has as its purpose to "*gather together in one all things in Christ.*" Christ is to be "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" and everything is to serve Him in perfect order. But the most wonderful part is the conclusion of that chapter, where we read that God "gave him to be the head over all things to the *church.*" Elsewhere the Scripture tells us how and in what connection, namely, *as a bridegroom to his bride*, as a husband to his wife. Thus it is expressed in Psalm 45; Isaiah 62; Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Ephesians 5; Revelation 21:22. Judgment Day is the wedding day of the Lamb and His Bride, for which she has prepared herself, Matthew 22:24 and Revelation 19. God has determined in all eternity to accomplish this marvel: *Christ sitting on the throne of His glory as the Head and Lord of all things unto the Church, the Communion of Saints, seated beside Him in His own adornment as His Bride and Body as sharing His lordship over all things that have been restored.* Paul says of this, Ephesians 5:32, "This is a great mystery."—In order to bring this about and to accomplish it, God has created and preserved all things, even tolerated sin with great divine patience (Rom. 3:25); for this purpose the Son of God became man, suffered death, ascended up into glory, and poured out the Holy Spirit and sent the Gospel into the world. In order to accomplish this mystery He is still postponing the Day of Judgment. Most remarkable and wonderful of all: *in order to accomplish this mystery, He has put the Bride herself to work.* We Christians, the Bride of Christ, particularly we professors, pastors, teachers, and servants of our Lord are to bring the Church to the Lord Jesus Christ as a beautifully adorned bride to her bridegroom, Revelation 21:2, or as Paul says, II Corinthians 11:2, to present her as a chaste virgin to Christ, as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish, Ephesians 5:27. We are to help Christ prepare His Bride, *we are to perfect the Church.* That means two things: we are to *gather* the Church, "gather together in one" (John 11:52) the elect out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, that is, bring them to faith, and those who have already become believers we are to adorn and beautify, and present them to the Lord, rich in knowledge, strong in faith, fervent in love, rich in all Christian virtues, absolutely perfect. That, and that alone, is the purpose of the Church, of the congregation, of the Synod, its institutions, pastors, teachers, and professors. In order to accomplish this the sun still shines, the flowers still bloom, bread is still produced, and God has permitted a terrible war to break out. For this purpose He has also assembled us here at New Ulm, and has sent each delegate, as well as the Indian missionaries and Jack Keyes to us.

I need not mention that this wonderful work is accomplished only through preaching and teaching the Gospel at home and in the entire world. *Have we been faithful and zealous in the execution of this task in the*

*past?* I fear that we can step before God only with fear and trembling when He demands an account of our stewardship. I do not want to return now to the general spiritual indifference with which we, hearers and teachers alike, have worked hitherto. I should merely like to point to *several areas of our practical work*. We said above that the Church is dying spiritually in our hands. Is that surprising, if we consider how indifferently we are doing our church work? In most of our congregations the *parish school* is maintained only halfheartedly. We complain about the decrease of interest in this work and fear that it may perish entirely before long. The most fruitful mission agency that we have threatens to disintegrate in our midst! Yes, but who is to blame for this, except we ourselves, our worldly character, the lack of Christian knowledge on the part of the members of our congregations, and the indifference and weakness of our pastors and teachers! *Our educational institutions* have a general lack of students in Wauwatosa, Watertown, New Ulm, and Saginaw, extra room and small classes, while the Church is crying for more pastors and teachers. Who is to blame for this, if not the members of our congregations, the teachers, pastors, and we professors, who are not doing our part in the recruitment of new students!

The same indifference and halfheartedness is evident also in the administration of *our missions*. Our Indian mission still has the appearance of a favorite project of a few among us who have a special interest in such work, which the major portion of our Synod considers unnecessary waste of money and energy, which “brings no returns,” which is supported unwillingly and scantily because there is no respectable way of getting rid of it without offending those who favor it. God’s blessing cannot rest on work done in that spirit.

*Our church extension* work is far from a solution for the missionary commission of our Church. We do a little here and a little there. The entire program appears to be an attempt to gather a few congregations in order to increase the size of the area in which our Synod works and not to leave all this territory to others. Here too we work halfheartedly and always complain, as in the case of the Indian missions, about the huge amount of money that is consumed in this effort.

*And now I tell the Synod in the name of God:* If we do not take an entirely new attitude toward our mission work, our work in the congregation, in the school, and in the home, as well as in the operation of the educational institutions for the training of pastors and teachers which God has placed into our hands, and apply ourselves to this task with greater zeal than heretofore, then our Church, and particularly our own Synod, is an unfaithful servant, who has failed to recognize the time of his visitation, and whose future lies not ahead but behind him. My God! Until now it was still true of us here in America what was said to the church at Philadelphia in Asia Minor, “Behold, *I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*” (Rev. 3:8). This door is *the door to our entire American people*, to the white people, to the Indians, to the Negroes, but especially to the English-speaking part of our population. This door stood wide open through the greatest civil blessing that God can give to a nation and which He has given to our country: complete religious freedom in home, church, and school. It stood wide open through the English language, which is so easy to learn. It has been open since the hour when our fathers first came to this country. But is it not remarkable, that while they gathered German immigrants with great diligence—naturally by means of the German language—into the Church, they entered by way of the English language first to the negroes, and we now to the Indians, *but not at all to the large mass of English-speaking white men in our country*. We have enclosed ourselves in the capsule of our German language in church, school, and mission work, and have thus isolated ourselves from the large mass of our English-speaking people. The few English congregations found in our midst have resulted from necessity under pressure, frequently enough with a great deal of resistance on our part. Therefore they are in a pitiful condition, without parish schools, corroded by the English-Calvinistic proclivity for societies, and already infected with the spirit of sectarianism. We have buried ourselves so deeply in our German language, that until the time of the Great War the English-speaking portion of our people scarcely noticed us, much less recognized us. When they did take note of us, they were immediately suspicious of us and accused us being German-sympathizers and disloyal to our country because we spoke the language of the enemy and refused to use the English language in our churches. This accounts for the efforts made in many areas and carried out in some, forcibly to Americanize the German Lutheran Church. Would it not long since have been our task to bend

every effort to “Lutheranize” the English-speaking people of our country, rather than to wait until they try to “Anglicize” us forcibly?

This argument, of course, remains unbalanced and unfair if we do not emphasize at the same time that our German Church in this country *had its hands full with the task* of guiding the broad stream of immigrants from Germany and their children who were being reared in the German language here into the Lutheran Church and to supply them with Lutheran pastors and teachers. This gigantic task has been accomplished so imperfectly that hundreds of thousands of Germans have been lost to the sectarian churches, and hundreds of thousands of Lutheran children have had to grow up without a Christian education. Thus the reproach mentioned above must be reduced, I should say by as much as 90%. But even the 10% that remains is a sufficiently serious accusation. That our German Church held fast to the mother tongue of the Gospel in these last times, the German language, with great tenacity, was eminently right. We have this circumstance to thank for the pure, broad, deep knowledge of the Gospel we have today; but that it did not use the English language earlier with greater vigor was a serious mistake, which has robbed us hitherto of much influence among the people and has made the transition more difficult now. *We should have done the one and not neglected the other.* Now the reaction crowds us forcibly, and we are not prepared to meet it and guide it into the proper channels. Many of our young Lutheran people understand neither a *German* sermon, because their language has become English, nor an *English* sermon, because they never learned the English words and expressions used by the Church. And the people outside the Church are either antagonistic or suspicious toward us.

*What is our task in the face of this situation?* Is it to give up the German language as quickly as possible and to become English as quickly as possible? No, only a foolish zealot would say that. In the German language lie all the roots of genuine, solid, strong Lutheranism and Christianity, in the English not one. Tear this plant forcibly from the soil of the German language, and it will become as dry tumbleweed driven by the wind against the fence. We must *hold fast to the German language in church and school* as long as there still are those who can be edified better in German than in English. In our training-schools for pastors and teachers we must cling to the German language *until Judgment Day*, in order that our pastors, professors, and teachers may have direct and immediate access to Lutheran literature, above all to the German Bible, the German catechism, the German hymnal, and Luther’s incomparable and untranslatable writings. We may not take the German Bible, the German sermon, the German catechism, and the German hymns from our German people, or from our anglicized German people, until we have given them an adequate substitute for them in the English language. But as tenaciously as we must cling to the German, *so energetically we must also apply ourselves to the English.* For the next fifty years we must become bilingual. Our schools, which are already English, must teach the Gospel to our children also in English; the English sermon must be as much at home in our churches as the German and dare not be crowded back against the wall as a stepchild. Our institutions must train pastors and teachers, who are equally conversant with the English and the German language in preaching, teaching and the care of souls and in social contacts, cost what it may!

And now: equipped with a thorough knowledge of the English language, we must finally begin to *do mission work among the English-speaking people of America*, to bring the Lutheran Gospel to our people, to put it in practical language, *to make America Lutheran.* Our mission work hitherto, our Indian mission, inner mission, even to a great extent our educational institutions, have been a pitiful, puny stumbling and bungling without fire and power. At every convention of our Synod we ask, as it were, do we really want to, or don’t we? Halfhearted work produces halfhearted results. We have worked as though we were in a dream. Mary has sat at Jesus’ feet so long, that she has become a dreamer. She has accustomed herself to listening, her ear has become dull, her heart has become indifferent, her hands and feet have become heavy and lazy. Get up, Mary, rub the sleep out of your eyes, shake the weariness out of your members; *it is time to go to work!* Don’t you see the vast throng just outside your open door, crowding around your house, a vast multitude of English speaking people, who also want to hear some of those marvelous things that the Lord Jesus has poured into your heart? Don’t you see, that this English-speaking people before your door is parched with thirst as a result of the common sense gospel, the gospel of reason and of lodgery that has been dished up before it hitherto by these worldly preachers? Don’t you see the millions of English-speaking *children*, who are waiting for you to take them in

your lap and in your Christian day school tell them again what has made you so serenely happy? Oh, don't you see the twinkling eyes of the thousands of young men and the longing eyes of the thousands of young women who, fascinated by your beaming face, would like to learn the Gospel of grace so thoroughly, that they can enter into the service of the Lord in church and school, in order to shout this Gospel out into the multitude that throngs around your house?

Oh, a little bit of Indian missions work and a little bit of inner mission work, as we are doing now, that is pitiful bungling. Here, here right before our very door, in the English language, is work that is really worth our while. But it is *real work*; it requires real effort, the utmost exertion. Here we can use no indolent *person*—we must have *workers*. The Lord wants the first fruits, our physical and mental powers, our worldly goods; not leftovers, not the crumbs that drop from our table. Away with the collection plate that gathers pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, and is made only for lazy hands and greedy hearts! Away with the six and ten and twenty dollar a year church dues! Away with the few quarters or dollars a year for synodical purposes, for Indian missions, for inner mission, and for our institutions! The Lord wants us all to apply ourselves wholly to His work with body and soul, with heart, mouth, and hands, and *with* our pockets and *all our possessions*. The money must flow in amounts of five, ten, a hundred, a thousand dollars for our work in the Kingdom of God. Youths must not enter our institutions singly, but in droves. There ought to be no pastor, no teacher, no congregation that does not constantly send its best boys and girls from its midst to be trained for the service of the Gospel at our educational institutions! Oh, there is work to be done here!

*And it is time.* The sun is still shining; it is still daylight. But it will soon be evening, and the day is drawing to a close. *The opportunity* for work in English *is still there now*; but it is knocking loudly at our door. If we do not make use of it, it may forever be lost to us, and the sectarian churches will hold the field, or an American national church may swallow up our people and force the Lutheran Church back against the wall. Unless we make the American people Lutheran with all our might, our Lutheran Zion way well perish with the decline of the German language. *The future of the world after this war is over belongs to the English language.* God has willed it so and has brought it about. If we do not recognize that, if we do not follow Him here, we fall from our high calling, and the course of the world will proceed over the dead body of our Church.

*Only one great obstacle stands in the way of recognizing and executing this task: the earthly interests of each one of us*, namely, the interest of personal *vainglory*, of lust for power, of envy, which constantly produce strife and contention and dispute and disunity, and hinder common joyous cooperation; the interest of *indolence*, of luxuriousness and sumptuous living, which is the mother of all inactivity, lassitude, and laziness; the interest of *greed*, which always strives first and foremost for wealth, and hopes that the Kingdom of God will fall into a person's lap at no expense to him, who always gives the leftover crumbs and believes that he can hardly spare these little trifles either; in short, the interests of the earthly carnal mind, that must be in a position of leadership or he will not cooperate, that must ride in a Packard or a Pierce Arrow but has no time for the work in God's Kingdom, that can never get enough of this world's goods but of God's grace and spirit thinks he has more than enough.

Brethren, that designates all of us; here no one can claim to be an exception. But we can overcome this worldly attitude to a great extent and can trample it under foot *if we are faithful in that one thing* of which we spoke at the beginning, if we plunge ourselves anew into that fountain of youth of God's Word, into the Gospel, that source of salvation and life and of spiritual power, and *live in the Gospel and walk in our true element*. Here, here lie the sources of our power, nowhere else. This substance, this life in the Gospel, must restore the Church and the world. Yes, *must, will*. The promise is there. It is written in Isaiah 62. There the Lord speaks of the New Testament Church thus: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth... *Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God... I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, *till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*" Must this prophecy not be fulfilled?

Well, then (I speak in the words of Isaiah): “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city... How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 52:1, 7; 40:9–11). Lord, let this now be fulfilled in us all and through us all, for the sake of Thy abundant grace! Amen.