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## Three Aspects of the Way of Christ and the Church

(An Approach to the Fellowship Problem)

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IN 1 Cor. 1:9 St. Paul characterizes the members of the Church as those who have been called by God into fellowship (communion) with His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. This fellowship is a total participation in the whole Christ, a participation which takes a peculiarly vivid and experiential form in Holy Communion (1 Cor. 10:16 ff.). The totality of this communion with Jesus Christ, our Lord, is marked by the many compounds in "with," used by St. Paul to describe this communion: we suffer *with* Him (Rom. 8:17), we are crucified *with* Him (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), we die and are buried *with* Him (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), we are raised from the dead and made alive *with* Him (Col. 2:12 f.; 3:1; Eph. 2:5 f.); we shall be glorified, shall inherit, and shall live and reign *with* Him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 6:8). The fullness of this life communion is expressed most strikingly, for the Church as a community, in the figure of the Church as the body of Christ. For the life communion of the individual with Christ, the words of St. Paul in Gal. 2:20 f. are the perfect expression:

I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.  
I do not frustrate the grace of God. . . .

The last words quoted recall the historical setting of these words; they are part of a rebuke addressed to St. Peter when he at Antioch

did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel. Thus another and very important aspect of this communion with Christ becomes clear: it is not a mystical absorption into Christ, in which personality and will are lost; it is a communion of faith, a communion in which Christ remains Lord, personally, over our lives; the communion is normative for our lives: not to translate the Christ in us into action is revolt and disobedience — it is a setting-at-naught of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And this same note of authority and obedience is in the body-of-Christ image also, for the correlative of the Church as the body is Christ the Lord as its Head.

God has called us into communion with His Son, our Lord; and this Son is called, in the Corinthians passage with which we began, not only Christ but *Jesus*, the human Jesus, in whom God was incarnate. *Jesus* the Christ is *our Lord*. This being so, it is obvious that our life in the flesh, if it is to be a communion with our Lord, will have its goal, direction, and character set for it by the life our Lord lived in the days of His flesh: there is "truth in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21).

Ethelbert Stauffer, in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (p. 13 f.), has selected as the three distinguishing marks of Jesus' course of life

- a) its *doxological* character: He sought always and only the glory of God, the glory of the Father that sent Him;
- b) its *antagonistic* character: He came to destroy the works of the devil;
- c) its *soteriological* character: He came to seek and save that which was lost, to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

One might justifiably reduce or expand this list of the marks of Jesus' life; but they are adequate and may serve as the signature of the life of Jesus in the days of His flesh; they recur in the lives of His Apostles with great distinctness, as the Book of Acts and the Apostolic writings themselves testify; and they must run through the life of the Church, the body of which Christ is the Head, if the Church is to be true to its origin and its nature. They must be seen in the Church's worship, in its proclamation, in its theology

(the considered substance of that proclamation), in its mission work, in its work of mutual edification, its eleemosynary activity, its publicity, and not least in the way in which it practices fellowship and exercises exclusion.

### 1. *Jesus Christ*

#### A. DOXOLOGY

The way of Jesus is doxology translated into living. His life is the perfect fulfillment of the First Commandment, from which the fulfillment of all the others of necessity flows. There is a divine "must" over His whole life; the will of Him that sent Him is the be-all and the end-all of His Messianic existence. Mark 8:31: "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man *must* suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Luke 4:43: "I *must* preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also, for *therefore am I sent.*" Even in events of apparently incidental character this "must" appears. Luke 19:5: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I *must* abide at thy house." This "must" is often more specifically *the must of "It is written."* Luke 22:37: "For I say unto you that *this that is written must* yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors. . . ." Mark 14:21: "The Son of Man indeed goeth *as it is written of Him.*" . . .

Everywhere Jesus seeks not His own glory, but the glory of the Father that sent Him (John 8:50; 7:18; cf. also John 5:30; 4:34). "He can fulfill His mission of actualizing the glory of God in the midst of a world which in an intoxication of self-glory knows nothing, and wants to know nothing, of the glory of God, only if His own honor is nothing in His own eyes and the honor of God everything" (Stauffer, *loc. cit.*).

He meets every temptation of Satan (each temptation designed to make Jesus assert Himself and achieve independent glory) by asserting the sole glory of the only God (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He will not have His miracles give Him repute and glory; He commands silence where the wondrous deeds of healing are done, for He is the quiet and selfless Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah had spoken: "He shall not strive nor cry aloud" (Matt. 12:19). He will have His miracles understood as the coming-in of the Kingdom of *God* (Matt. 12:28), as the works which His Father has given Him

(John 5:36). In them the glory of God is to be made manifest (John 11:4, 40; 9:3). At the moment in which He makes His highest claim as Son, as the only One who knows the Father, He gives thanks to the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, that He has hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to the simple (Matt. 11:25-27), for "so the whole greatness of God's grace is manifested. It comes down to those who have nothing but their need. Thus it becomes clear that God's grace is not bound to, or conditioned by, anything that man has but with its own riches exalts those that are in the depths." (Schlatter.)

When His disciples confess Him as God's Anointed, the Son of God, He marks the doxological character of His mission by foretelling His Passion, just as He goes from the Mount of Transfiguration to Golgotha, that God may be all in all. And He will let nothing block out, or efface, that glory of God, not even the good intentions of Peter the Confessor, who sought to turn Him from His divinely appointed way: "Thou savorest not the *things of God*" (Matt. 16:23). He laid *His* glory by and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, so that at the end of all, when the Father shall have highly exalted Him and every tongue shall confess Him Lord, it may all be "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:6 ff.).

## 2. *The Apostles of Our Lord*

In the persons as well as in the inspired teaching and admonition of the Apostles we see the unique human life of Jesus reflected in the lives of ordinary mortal men. Their lives too, are lives of doxology. They are not plaster-cast and bloodless saints; but through and around and over their failings there runs deep and broad the main stream of the invincible will to glorify God in His Christ. The risen Christ Himself had taught them to be so minded: when during the forty days of His sojourn with them after the Resurrection they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He turned their thoughts and their lives *away* from any idea of a reign in Israel and toward a ministry to all the world: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be *witnesses* unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Power *was* to be theirs, but the same kind of

power that marked the earthly path of their King, who was born and came into the world that He might bear witness to the truth — and die in that witnessing. The Apostles were to become ministering princes of a ministering King, with no thought of any glory but the glory of God. As it was with the Eleven, so it was with that Apostle born out of due time; Paul was called to serve, to be a chosen vessel, to bear the *name of the Lord* before the Gentiles, and kings, and the Children of Israel (Acts 9:15); “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a *minister* and a *witness* . . .,” the Risen Lord told him (Acts 26:16; cf. 22:10, 15).

Henceforth the first title on the Apostle’s lips is “bondservant,” “minister,” “servant” — “If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10, 23-24). He sought no glory of men, but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, he spoke, in Christ (1 Thess. 2:6; 2 Cor. 2:17). He would tolerate no human greatness in the Church, not even his own: “Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos but *ministers* by whom ye believed, even as the *Lord* gave every man?” (1 Cor. 3:5.) If he must glory, he will glory only in his infirmities, that the Lord’s strength may be made perfect in his weakness, “that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9 f.; cf. 11:30; 12:5). And death in this ministry is not defeat, for *Christ is magnified* in his body, whether it be by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20; cf. John 2:19).

As in their persons, so in their doctrine the glory of God is everything; to exemplify this fully would be to reproduce the whole of Apostolic teaching, for it all, in one way or another, is a development of that one theme: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6). They preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves servants for the elect’s sake, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:5, 15). It belongs to the essence of God’s grace as the Apostles proclaim it that all boasting is excluded (Rom. 3:27), in order that he who glories may glory only in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31), just as it is of the essence of faith that it gives God the glory (Rom. 4:20). Christ has received us all, Jew and Gentile, to the glory of God (Rom. 15:7).

And their admonition to the churches is all to the effect that God be God in their lives, that all the lives of men be a living sacrifice to Him. So St. Peter, to give but one or two examples of many, exhorts his Christians to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles "that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, *glorify God* in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). Or again of the life within the Church: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that *God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ*, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever" (1 Pet. 4:11). God is always the First, and anything that man may do is but the answer and echo of God's prime action: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *He* loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11.)

The Apostles plant and build the Church; but they know that *God* wills the Church, that the Church is *His* husbandry, *His* building (1 Cor. 3:9), and that they can build it only to God's glory and on God's terms. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). That decides the question of fellowship: neither the national pride of the Jew nor the cultural pride of the Greek is spared the confrontation with the stumbling block and the foolishness of the Crucified (1 Cor. 1:23), no more than Jesus exempted the Pharisee from repentance in the full sense or saw in the ripe theology of a Nicodemus a substitute for the birth from above. Theologically the Apostles are curiously immobile: another Gospel that embroiders upon the one Gospel which placarded up Christ Crucified before men, denying none of its positive truths, but adding the grace of tradition and the rigor of legal discipline — such a Gospel is not, for the Apostles, an interesting theological development, to be discussed at length and objectively; it is anathema (Galatians). The higher theology of Colossae is not allowed to obscure the glory of the fullness of God's revelation and the completeness of His atonement in Christ. "Beware lest any man *spoil* you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of *men*" (Col. 2:8), for God will be All in all. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ and brooks no supple-

ment from men to darken its glory. And St. John brands a Christology that by-passes the full reality of the Passion as the breath of the Spirit of Antichrist (1 John). These gentle men of God who yearn with almost womanly tenderness over their little children in Christ grow hard as granite and inexorable as death when the glory of God in Christ is threatened.

### 3. *The Church of All Ages*

The Church in all ages exists for the glory and praise of God. God has chosen us before the foundation of the world that we might be to the praise of the glory of His grace; He has bestowed His grace on us in Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, that we should be to the praise of His glory; He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:3-14). Our existence as God's chosen generation, the royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, has as its goal that we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Our every act is to be such that men see in it our Father in heaven and glorify Him (Matt. 5:16); in all things God is to be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:11).

In the matter of fellowship, too, our Lord would have us savor the things that be of God. God wills the Church, and He wills it *one* (John 17:21; Eph. 4:4-6). That oneness is at once the gift of God to us and an obligation that rests upon us as new men in Christ. We are to strive, to exert ourselves, to maintain the unity that God's Spirit gives (Eph. 4:3). This means annihilation of self, the complete exclusion of self-insistence and self-interest: "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2; cf. Col. 3:12-14). Nothing human, all too human, dare impede or obscure unity where God has created it, nor hinder its restoration where correction and forgiveness, repentance and amendment, will restore it.

But neither can the human, all too human, build its Church; the Church is *God's* husbandry, *God's* building (1 Cor. 3:9); it is *God's* calling that brings men into fellowship with His Son and with one another; and every expression or acknowledgment of fellowship in our life ecclesiastical must be an actualization of *God's*

intention for *His* Church, according to His will as revealed in His Word. His will and His Word will suffer no abridgment to suit our ends. Luther's reply to those that urged the sweet reasonableness of settling for something less than God's total is well known: to those that urge "man solle nicht ueber *Einen* Artikel so hart streiten usw., und darueber die christliche Liebe zertrennen, noch einander dem Teufel geben; sondern ob man gleich in einem geringen Stueck irret, da man sonst in andern eins ist, moege man wohl etwas weichen und gehen lassen, und gleichwohl bruederlich und christlich Einigkeit oder Gemeinschaft halten," to such he replies: "Nein, lieber Mann, mir nicht des Friedens und Einigkeit darueber man Gottes Wort verliert; denn damit waere schon das ewige Leben und alles verloren . . . dem Worte sollen alle Dinge weichen. . . ."

There is, of course, a double temptation here — the Church's path is always on a narrow ridge between abysses. The one is to confuse the glory of God with our glory and to make of doctrinal discipline a heavy-handed and loveless insistence on *our* way of doing things or expressing things. The other temptation is to a "charity" that settles for less than the absolute obedience to the Lord of the Church to which God lays claim for Him: "Hear ye Him!" — to avoid the duty of correcting the erring brother; to throw truth and error together in the pious hope or the comforting conviction that truth will always ultimately win out. This type of ecclesiastical fatalism is hardly doxological. Another form of this fatalism is, to put it crudely, this: Since we cannot ever have complete doctrinal unity anyway, why should we try for it to begin with? Let's be satisfied with something less than the impossible ideal. We all know how fatal such an attitude is in sanctification, how it puts a leaden armor between us and the point of all the Biblical imperatives that say without qualification, "Be ye holy," and makes for highly relaxed and very comfortable citizens in the suburbs of Zion.

But if we are really doxological as a church we can avoid both extremes and walk the doxological road of Christ. The excision of ourselves and the growing-great of God in our whole treatment of error will give us a certainty and a serenity, a willingness to examine ourselves and to be examined, a large and unselfish kind-

liness that will be used by God to win men for the truth and will keep us both from a loveless rigorism and from that easy and resigned ecclesiasticism whose ideal is smooth operation all round.

### 1. *Jesus Christ*

### B. ANTAGONISTIC

The full assent to the glory of God necessarily involves unqualified opposition to the satanic in all its forms, including its manifold incarnations in men and within the Church.

The life of our Lord was a continuous battle against the Prince of this World and against all who are in his service. St. Peter can sum up Jesus' career on earth by saying that He "went about doing good and healing them that were *oppressed of the devil*; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38), and St. John can describe the goal of the Incarnation thus: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might *destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8).

Our Lord Himself viewed His miracles (especially but not exclusively the casting out of demons) as the incoming of God's kingdom and the overcoming of all satanic opposition: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt. 12:28). He had, by His victory in the Temptation, entered the strong man's, Satan's, house and bound him and was despoiling him of his "goods." Jesus knows: His mission is opposition to, and conquest of, the powers of hell; the devils know it too; they cry out, "Art Thou come hither to torment us *before the time?*" (Matt. 8:29). They are surprised only at the fact that Christ's conquest comes so soon; they were not surprised to see in Him their Antagonist and Overcomer.

Furthermore, the devil and all his works are for Jesus anything but remote abstractions, far removed from the actual world of men. They confront Him within the very people of God, within His own to whom He came, though they received Him not. When they, God's ancient people, oppose and reject the grace and truth of God incarnate in Himself, they are committing themselves to the hatred and the lie of the devil, who thus becomes their father: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). Where God sows good seed, the enemy sows tares (Matt. 13:39); beside each road that God builds there appears a satanic quagmire. Within His very own, within the circle of the Twelve,

is the mystery of the hate and the lie of Satan: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70.) And in the very center of the center, Satan is found in opposition; he intrudes into the words of St. Peter, the good and kind, the well-intentioned words that marked the path of God's Messiah otherwise than as God had marked it — "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). Jesus unsparingly opposes the satanic even in the words of Simon Bar-Jonah when Simon does not speak what the Father in heaven has revealed: "Get thee behind me, *Satan*" (Matt. 16:23); He points Peter back to his place as disciple and brands his words as what they are, satanic temptation and satanic opposition.

This antagonism of Jesus is the ultimate battle in the world's history and confronts men with the ultimate decision, the decision that decides for eternity. "The time of the Christ is a time of decision and therefore a time of division" (Stauffer); He is not come to bring peace in the sense of an ecclesiastical tranquillity: "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). He comes as God's gift to men, as God's last and definitive revelation to men; but to the wise who meet God's gift with satanic self-insistence and a satanic, "Yea, hath God said?" He remains hidden (Matt. 11:25-27) — for "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4).

## 2. *The Apostles*

In antagonism, too, the Apostles are at one with Him that sent them. They see their Apostolate as a warfare (1 Cor. 9:7), fought with the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left (2 Cor. 6:7), with God's weapons against all the forces of Satan, the adversary: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience . . ." (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Their warfare is waged against satanic pride, satanic self-exaltation, satanic disobedience to the knowledge of

God. Whatever hinders the Apostolic work can therefore be called the opposition of Satan (1 Thess. 2:18).

The Apostles as antagonists are aware of the constant satanic threat to the Church; they know that the Church is God's new world begun in the midst of the old, that it is as yet merely a bridge-head in a territory that is still an alien and hostile land, not yet the land wherein dwelleth righteousness. "We know," says St. John, "that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one." (1 John 5:19, RSV). St. Peter warns us: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9). And St. Paul leaves us in no doubt as to where we stand and who our enemies are: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

The Apostles know, too, that the satanic irrupts into the Church; that the antagonism between the grace and truth of Christ and the hate and lie of the devil is fought out on all fronts, including the front of visible Christendom: there are false Apostles, deceitful workers who bring *another* Jesus, *another* Spirit, *another* Gospel, and thus "transform" themselves into the Apostles of Christ; "and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness . . ." (2 Cor. 11:13-15; cf. 11:4). St. John draws the line between Christ and Antichrist in a way that, on a superficially ecumenical view of things, would leave him open to the charge of theological hairsplitting and church-splitting (1 John 4:1-2; cf. 2:18-22).

This *motif* of antagonism runs through the whole New Testament; polemics, the forcing of the decision, the inexorable drawing of the line between what is God's and what is not, are in the Gospels (Jesus against the Pharisees, for example), in Acts (Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, Judaism), in the Pauline epistles, in the Catholic epistles, and not least in the Apocalypse, just as in the Old Testament the front was established not only over against non-Israel and all idols, but also against all halfheartedness and all false prophets within the people of God.

### 3. *The Church in All Ages*

We are less aware today than Our Lord was, less aware than the Apostles were, less aware than a man like Martin Luther was, of the ever-present threat of the satanic—the satanic will to autonomy, the satanic counterthrust to the Kingdom of God that has come in Christ, the satanic lie that makes plausible mischief in the world and in the Church. St. Paul could say regarding Satan, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11); can our generation say as much? Are we conscious always of the necessary and radical antagonism between God and Satan, Church and world, including the world and the devil that assume ecclesiastical forms and project into the very life of the Church? (Eph. 6:13; James 4:4 ff.; 2 Cor. 6:14-18, esp. v. 17.)

One may fairly say of American Lutheranism today that we are more conscious of our evangelistic and missionary opportunities and obligations than ever before. One may doubt whether we are as conscious as we ought to be of the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel is both a savor of death unto death and a savor of life unto life and that we are sufficient for these things, capable of confronting men with this life-or-death alternative, only in so far as we do not play the huckster with the Word of God, but live under it and proclaim it in unqualified and responsible obedience (2 Cor. 2:15-17). We are therefore peculiarly liable to the temptation of the “common front,” whether it be a common front against Communism, or secularism, or Roman Catholicism. The need of a common front, like any other crisis in the life of the Church, may well serve as a serious call to repentance for past remissness in zeal for preserving the unity wrought by the Spirit, but it cannot serve as an excuse for an ecclesiastical huddling together under something less than the unity of the Spirit. Everyone remembers how Israel, newly returned from exile, was faced with a decision on the plea of the common front made by the “people of the land”: “Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do” (Ezra 4:2). Here was every component of the common-front situation: a crisis that called for action; a need where fresh resources were welcome; a seeming agreement in essential confession; perhaps even the bright hope that in the common task the agreement in faith would grow and be perfected. And yet Israel said No, and it was a No of faith,

a faith that risked the enmity of men for the glory of God. Israel knew: "Service to God in common with a life that is not subjected to Him will not hallow that life; rather, a heart divided between God and other lords will desecrate every service to God" (H. Frey).

Antagonism after the pattern of the life and teaching of our Lord and His Apostles does not mean antagonism over against brethren of a different race, different language, terminology, background, history, theological approach, or even over against the weakness of unconscious error; it does mean that with meekness (2 Tim. 2:25) and in fear (Gal. 6:1), with intent to win (1 Tim. 1:19-20), and with the high and joyous hope that the God of peace will bruise Satan under our feet shortly, we stand to do battle against Satan and all his works, including his works in ourselves and in our erring brethren. It means that we can never ignore error or treat it lightly, nor consent to it or partake in it, even by our silence. It means the end of any easy and secure optimism as to the amount of error we, or our Church, can stand, an optimism which the Apostles do not share — "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). This antagonism knows, too, that Satan can overreach us in our loveless rigor as well as in our complacent laxity, and is therefore not at all incompatible with humility and a gentle and loving concern for the erring brother. The same St. Paul that hurls anathemas in one chapter yearns like a mother over her children in another. The same Lord that called Simon Satan tells him, "I have prayed for thee, Simon, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). For, after all, the antagonistic is in the service of the soteriological. Our Lord, His Apostles, and we oppose in order to save.

#### C. SOTERIOLOGICAL

##### 1. *Our Lord*

When our Lord cries out over Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" He is describing the whole of His ministry, including His sharp rebukes to, and hard disputings with, Jerusalem's children; He opposed the satanic self-insistence of Jerusalem and her children, sought to shake her satanic disobedience, to break the hold of the satanic lie, in order to gather and save. Christ over against those that opposed Him is still the Son of Man, come to seek and to save (Luke 19:10). It is as Savior of the

World that He opposes Satan and glorifies God. He heals sickness and forgives sins upon earth (Mark 2:10); He takes the Baptism of the guilty upon Himself in order to fulfill all righteousness and to remove guilt, to fulfill His ministry as the Bearer of mankind's burden (Matt. 3:14 ff.); He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He comes to minister and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 1:45), and His life is consumed and perfected in His ministry: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground to die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). His whole earthly course is the way that leads to the death of one for the life of many.

## 2. *Apostles of Our Lord*

The will to save is written over the whole life of Our Lord; and it is written over the lives of His Apostles, too. There is no need to labor in the proof of that. Those noble words that St. Paul spoke of himself:

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law; to them that are without Law, as without Law (being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without Law; to the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake that I might be partaker thereof with you. (1 Cor. 9:19-23.)

these words could be spoken of the Jerusalem Apostles, too, the men who gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (Galatians 2) and in their will to save men bridged the gulf between Gentile and Jewish Christian, a gulf whose depth and width it is difficult for us at this distance to estimate.

The Book of Acts shows us Apostles compassing sea and land for the salvation of men's souls; the Apostolic writings show us the Apostles contending in agony and travail (Gal. 4:18; 2 Cor. 11:29) for the salvation of men's souls, exhorting, upbuilding, rebuking, correcting, ministering to the needs of men. It is this will to save that calls forth the heat and hardness of their antagonism;

the knowledge that there is salvation in none other than in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved than His Name (Acts 4:12), makes them men of steel over against any abridgment, perversion, or distortion of that knowledge, over against any darkening, however slight and apparently inconsequential, of that one name. Their will to save could bridge the gap between Jew and Gentile; it could not find the way to fellowship with Judaizers or with the divided heart of an Ananias and Sapphira.

### 3. *The Church in All Ages*

If we as a church stand in the only Apostolic succession worth the name — the succession to their teaching — our life is a life of universal ministry to a lost mankind. We preach Christ, the Hope of glory, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28); thereunto we labor, striving according to His working which worketh in us mightily (Col. 1:29). We seek, like St. Paul, by all means to win some. That "all means" may involve us in apparent inconsistencies and will drive us into loving condescensions and accommodations at which some will always frown. But that "all means" will never lead us to spare anyone the full confrontation with God in Christ: we will preach repentance toward God — the complete reversal of a man's life, the turning away from all evil and the turning to God in full obedience and trust; we will preach faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, which involves a complete surrender to Him and complete reliance upon Him (Acts 20:21). It is not a will to save that will leave a man indefinitely in the unresolved tension of a fractional repentance and a fractional faith; it is not the will to save that by a fractional fellowship with error obscures that error for the erring brother and leaves him in the unresolved tension of a broken Yea to God and His Word. God, by His potent means of grace, can and does save men "mit Macht und Wunder" (Luther) despite errors small and great, and in that we as a soteriological Church rejoice with an exceeding great joy. But God has not appointed us to determine just how much disobedience to His Word is fatal and how much is tolerable; He has appointed us simply to be witnesses of Him, to abide in Him and His Word. God

does not produce miracles upon demand, and we shall not tempt Him; we shall in fear and trembling make it our care to hold back nothing, to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20), so that each one of us can at his ministry's end say: "I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26).

This is impossible, we know; but the Church dare not shrink from the impossible; for the Church is itself a miracle, and its existence is madness: it lives by a word in a world of palpable power, and it lives by faith in a world where trust is mistrusted. The Church's possibilities are God's possibilities — and they begin where all human possibilities end; therefore we shall not stagger at the promises of God and against hope shall believe in hope (Rom. 4:18, 20).

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