

For the

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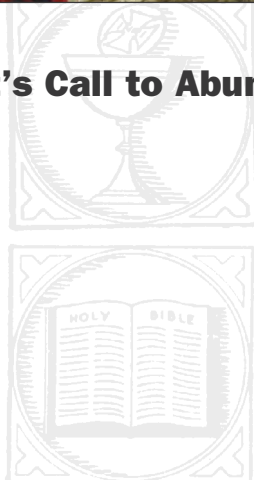
**Renewal of the Body:
Christ's Call to Abundant Health in This Time - p.4**

Renewal of the Mind - p.7

Renewal of the Spirit - p.9

Called to Serve - p.14


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CONTENTS



FEATURES

4 Renewal of the Body—Christ’s Call to Abundant Health in This Time

By John D. Eckrich, M.D., Founder and Director of Grace Place Lutheran Retreats, Saint Louis, Missouri

Lutherans, particularly Lutheran clergy, continuously burn themselves up trying to balance, integrate, and negotiate personal life with commitment to their Call, as if the two could be unraveled. In fact, I would suggest that vibrant and lengthy Christian service springs from balanced, ordered, and integrated personal health, centered and empowered in one’s personal relationship with Christ and rehearsed in the family and home life.

7 Renewal of the Mind

By Dr. William C. Weinrich, Academic Dean, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

If one wishes to consider the “renewal of the mind” and what that includes, one would do well to read and to contemplate the wisdom literature of the Scriptures, especially Psalm 119 and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which is in the Greek Old Testament (called the Septuagint). Note *Wisdom* 6:11: “Set your affection upon My words; desire them, and you shall be instructed.” The formation of the mind (instructed) is not apart from affection and desire for the words of God. The mind is renewed in that it “hears” the speaking of God.

9 Renewal of the Spirit

By the Rev. Paul E. Shoemaker, pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church, New Haven, Indiana

While I may learn many things and share in wonderful insights from commentators and my own personal study of the Word in preparation to teach the Word or to proclaim the Word, there is a difference when I take time for personal, private devotional time. Renewal of the spirit begins with spending time with the One who gives and sustains spiritual life through His Word.

12 What Does This Mean?

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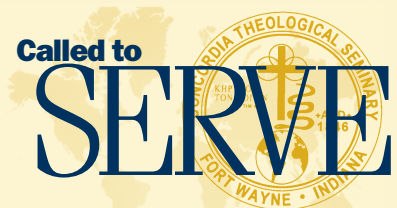
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- Continuing to Share the Faith** p. 16
- Baptism, Preaching, the Lord’s Supper, and the New Curriculum** p. 18
- 2005 Marks 160th Academic Year** p. 20
- Advent and Lenten Preaching Seminars** p. 23

Renewal of the Mind

By Dr. William C. Weinrich

When Paul exhorts to the renewal of the mind, therefore, he means that we are to think as God thinks, that is, think not merely about Jesus, but think thoughts which are of Him, as He thought and as He did.

In his letter to the Romans Paul exhorts: “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind so that you might attest what is the will of God” (Rom.12:2). We often consider the mind as the same as the intellect. The intellect is the instrument by which we think thoughts. Were the mind the same as the intellect, Paul would be exhorting us to think good and right thoughts. Obviously, this would not be a bad thing, but it is not to what Paul exhorts us.

We come closer to what Paul intended if we consider another but related passage, namely, 1 Peter 1:13-14: “Roll up the sleeves of your mind, be sober and set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As children of obedience, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.”¹ The Greek words used by Paul and by Peter do not merely mean “to think” thoughts, nor do they merely refer to the organ of thinking. If there



were anything foreign to biblical thought, it was the idea that God is an idea. God is not thought, for He is not an external object for our thinking. We might come to “know” a tree by looking at it, observing its changes from fall to spring, and by examining it in our science class. As a “thing” the tree is passive to our thinking.

However, God is not a “thing” which we can examine at our leisure and according to our own determinations. God is a person, and as a person He has will and intention and purpose. The second-century writer Justin Martyr made the point. In view of the various philosophies of his day, Justin wrote, “Reason took shape and became man and was called Jesus Christ.”² This was a remarkable claim and indicated nothing less than that Jesus Christ was the true beginning of all right thinking, the true beginning to all knowledge of God. Therefore, the biblical writers and the writers of the early church did not speak of “knowledge” as we might “know” a tree. They spoke of the knowledge of “faith.” That is to say, the early writers chose a term which gathered to itself a range of other terms, all of which indicated a life organized to and around a reality. Let us note again the words of Paul and Peter. Do you see how readily Paul moves from the “renewal of the mind” to attesting “what is the will of God”? Note also the language of Peter. Those who are of sober mind are “children of obedience” who are conformed not to the passions of unbelieving ignorance but to Him who is holy. “As He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.” Faith is a knowing, but not a mere intellection, a knowing of a thing. Faith is the knowing of a person, but as that person wills to be known and allows Himself to be known. As Justin said, “Reason became man and was called Jesus Christ.” We could paraphrase that and say, God spoke what was on His mind and what was on His mind, His thought, was the man Jesus. When Paul exhorts to the renewal of the mind, therefore, he means that we are to think as God thinks, that is, think not merely about Jesus, but think thoughts which are of Him, as He thought and as He did.

The fact that God did not communicate Himself through an idea but through a man immediately indicates that Christian faith is not merely a series of ideas, however exalted and true. Christian faith suggests and contains within itself a life, the life of Christ, into which we are invited to enter and in which we are invited to participate. If one wishes to consider the “renewal of the mind” and what that includes, one would do well to read and to contemplate the wisdom literature of the Scriptures, especially Psalm 119 and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which is in the Greek Old Testament (called the Septuagint). Note *Wisdom* 6:11: “Set your affection upon My words; desire them, and you shall be instructed.” The formation of the mind (instructed) is not apart from affection and desire for the words of God. The mind is renewed in that it “hears” the speaking of God. This hearing is not a mere audition, like listening to the evening news. This hearing is the being created by the creative word of God; this hearing is the being formed after the pattern of God’s speaking; this hearing is the change of form of which Paul spoke (transformed by the renewal of your mind). Christ’s descent into the flesh of sin for us provides this new form according to which our mind is to be renewed. Paul appeals to the Christians

of Philippi that they have “one mind, having the same love ... having in mind the same thing.” And what is this “same thing”? This: Christ Jesus “who, though He was in the form of God, [yet] emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-11). The death of Jesus is the form of the new mind which thinks as did the crucified Jesus. That is why Paul can associate this new mind with love, and that is why *Wisdom* can speak of affection and desire for God’s Word as the necessary prerequisite for being instructed.

In his treatise, *On True Religion*, St. Augustine writes that the “rational life ... does not owe its excellence to itself, but to the truth which it willingly obeys.” By the “rational life” Augustine is referring to that life which is according to the Word (*Logos*) and is willingly obedient to it. The will of the Christian is to be rightly ordered to the truth, who is Jesus. We do not commonly associate obedience and understanding/knowledge. But as Robert Wilkin reminds us, the Latin root of obedience indicates a hearing that is attentive to a corresponding act. To “hearken” to someone is to take their word, not as a foreign and alien demand, but as a description of one’s own desire. Therefore, according to Augustine, faith is “an affair not only of beliefs, but also of things that rouse the affections and move the will to act.”³ In fact, Augustine cites a favorite text of Isaiah: “If you do not believe, you shall not understand” (7:9 in the Septuagint and the Latin text which Augustine read). This text gave biblical support to what was arguably the most important theological axiom for the following 1000 years: “I believe in order that I might understand.”

Before the reading of the Scriptures in the liturgy, the pastor says, “Hear the Word of the Lord.” Again, he is not inviting you merely to listen. He is proposing that you appropriate the words as the substance of your own Christian faith and life. Similarly, our minds are renewed as we attend to the words of the Lord’s Supper: “Take and eat; take and drink. This is My Body and Blood given and shed for you.” This is that Body and Blood which was the “human form” by which Christ “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.” Having heard the words of the Scripture, having taken into yourselves *this* Body and *this* Blood, you are and are to be what you have heard and what you have eaten and drunk. “O taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Ps. 34:8) We do not often think of the mind as renewed by the ear and by the mouth. With God things are different!

Dr. William C. Weinrich is the Academic Dean of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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1 The verb often translated “gird up” is here translated “roll up the sleeves,” a metaphor for getting ready to work. Dr. Martin Scharlemann is responsible for this more modern rendering. The ESV has it right: “preparing your minds for action.”

2 *1 Apology* 5. The word translated “reason” is often rendered “word,” as “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). However, “word” means uttered discourse, that is, expressed reason. Following the thought of John, Justin claimed that Jesus was the manner in which God spoke.

3 Robert Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 183. The whole chapter on “The Reasonableness of Faith” is a worthy read.