

***A few reassuring words for “dyed in the wool” Lutherans who are really uneasy talking about their own “spiritual experiences” or with acknowledging the validity of modern day, supernatural intervention in the lives of ordinary “Joe six packs” like us.***

In "Martin Luther's Quiet Time" edited by Walter Trobisch, **Luther writes:**



*"It often happens that I lose myself in such rich thoughts (lit: My thoughts go for a walk)...When such rich good thoughts come, one should let the other prayers go and give room to these thoughts, listen to them in silence and by no means suppress them, for here the Holy Spirit himself is speaking, and one word of his sermon is better than thousands of our own prayers. Therefore I have often learned more in one prayer than I could have obtained from such reading and thinking."*

Luther also encourages a quiet time with pen and paper at hand to note down what God is saying: *"I repeat again what I said above when I talked to you about the Lord's Prayer: If the Holy Spirit should come when these thoughts are in your mind and begin to preach to your heart, giving you rich and enlightened thoughts, then give Him the honor, let your preconceived ideas go, be quiet and listen to Him who can talk better than you; and note what He proclaims and write it down, so will you experience miracles as David says: "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18)."*

*"This is one of those apposite, beautiful and (as St. Peter says in 2 Pet 1) precious and very great promises given to us, poor miserable sinners: that we are to become participants in the divine nature and be exalted so highly in nobility that we are not only to become loved by God through Christ, and have His favor and grace as the highest and most precious shrine, but also to have Him, the Lord Himself, dwelling in us in His fullness. Namely (he wants to say), His love is not to be limited only to the removal of His wrath from upon us, and to having the fatherly heart which is merciful to us, but we are also to enjoy this love (otherwise it would be wasted and lost love, as it is said: "to love and not to enjoy..."), and gain great benefit and riches from it." (WA 21:248, 11-22) (written in 1544)*

## **Experiencing the Spirit's Witness by C.F.W. Walther**

"In his Church Postil (St. L. Ed. XII, 239 f.) commenting on the words: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6), Luther, spite of the fact that he endeavored never to rely on changeable and delusive feelings, writes as follows: "At this point every one is to ascertain by self-examination whether he feels the Holy Spirit in his heart and experiences His speaking. {Mark you: the text says that the Spirit cries, "Abba, Father.}" For St Paul in this passage says that in every heart in which the Spirit dwells He cries 'Abba, Father.' Likewise, in Rom. 8:15 he says: 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.' This crying is felt when one's conscience, without wavering and questioning, conceives a staunch boldness to be quite certain, not only that his sins have been forgiven, but also that he is a child of God, assured of his salvation, and may with a cheerful and assured heart and with all confidence call God his dear Father and cry to Him. Of these things he must be more



certain than of his very life and must be ready to suffer every kind of death, and hell in addition, rather than allow this assurance to be taken from him by yielding to doubt..."

"As to the witness of the Spirit, Paul does not say that it is being borne in a general way, but "with our spirit." Accordingly our spirit must spiritually hear the witness of the Spirit, and that is the "feeling" of which we speak; it is the witness of the Spirit within us. It is strange that a Christian beginning to doubt will hear a voice telling him: "Christ has died for you spite of your sins. You need not become despondent nor yield to despair; you are numbered with the redeemed of the Lord, and your destination is heaven. Be of good cheer!" Coming spontaneously, this voice, which we cannot produce at pleasure, is the witness of the Holy Spirit. It comes to us especially at a time of spiritual tribulation. You do not need a witness every day, but when you are being accused, you go in search of one. The same happens in our spiritual life: when a poor Christian is in very great distress, the Holy Spirit calls to him, Do not despair."

C.F. W. Walther: *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: CPH, 1929), pp. 197 & 200.

### ***On Miracles...***

**Dr. Theodore Graebner**, was for many years a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. He was a prolific writer and the author of many excellent books and treatises in which he clearly and boldly set forth the truth of Scripture on a variety of subjects. He proved himself a staunch defender of sound, conservative Lutheranism. He writes on miracles:

*"The Scriptures do not limit the promises of his special gifts to the age of the apostles, and so we have no right to condemn anyone who believes that this gift [healing] exists today . . . The question remains, 'Do we believe in the continuance of these powers?' The writer here will speak only for his own person, but he will say that he believes in a continuance of these gifts where conditions are as they were in the age in which they were exercised according to the testimony of the Scriptures. I believe that where it is necessary to vindicate his truth, God will grant today the same power of prophesying future events, of casting out demons, of healing sickness by a command, of immunity to poison, of raising the dead, which he gave his first disciples."*

**Dr. William Arndt**, the co-editor of the famous Greek-English dictionary, in a Lutheran conference paper that he gave in 1930, states the earliest view of our Synod:

*"Let us not say: The Bible teaches that the charismatic gifts were confined to the early Church. In my conviction we cannot prove that the Bible carries such teaching...There are no Scripture passages... by means of which we can prove that the extraordinary gifts possessed by Christians in apostolic times...were intended for, and given to the Church of early New Testament times only." (Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 1. No. 1. 1931)*

**Dr. Luther** wrote in his 1532 commentary on the Sermon on the Mount:

*"...God occasionally lets genuine signs take place through wicked people and that God is acting through them...It can happen that because such a person is in a public office or in the government, he prophecies or does miracles and accomplishes a great deal of good, bringing many people to God. Still he may not be a pious person himself but may be going to the devil."*

*"...But where genuine signs take place through an individual person, such a person must certainly be pious, as are those who have a special revelation through dreams or visions. But such signs must be aimed at praising Christ and advancing the Gospel. So you have two kinds of signs that are good and legitimate: first, those that are performed by pious persons who are Christians, secondly, those that are performed by evil persons who occupy an office and teach correctly. We should always be guided by this certain standard, which should be applied to every kind of per-*

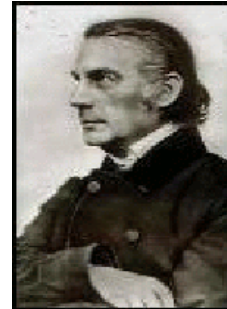
son, whether pious or impious, in office or out of office: Do the signs aim at praising Christ and advancing your faith?"

*"If you notice that they are directing you somewhere else, to pilgrimages or to prayers to saints or to the deliverance of souls from purgatory, in other words, to a dependence on your own works and creation of righteousness of your own, they you must say: 'If you did every possible miracle for me, so that I could see it and touch it, I still would not believe you. For Christ has given me adequate warning about that.'" (LW 21, Sermon on the Mount, p. 279)*

## **On Healing...**

Peder Olsen: Healing Through Prayer  
(Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1962), pp.18-19.

Wilhelm Loehe, the well-known pastor and founder and director of the Deaconess Home at Neuendettelsau, had the special gift of healing the sick through the prayer of faith. Many were healed through his prayers, and his parishioners were used to calling him before the physician in case of illness.



Loehe had the conviction that James 5:14-15 gave a special promise in connection with the prayers of the elders for the sick. The congregation regularly requested this intercession and many were healed. Many of these cases were not well known, for Loehe seldom spoke about them. But he often spoke about the matter itself, *"In order that the church might carry out its task in the world, the Lord has given it the gifts of the Spirit in the same way as Elijah gave Elisha his mantle. The special gifts of grace were given to the church on Pentecost. Have these gifts ceased to exist? No, it is only unbelief which holds this view. The Spirit is still present, and where the Spirit is there his gifts are also. It is possible to strive for these gifts, especially through prayer."*

It was not only the bodily ill but also those in spiritual conflicts and those with mental disorders and the possessed, who were often healed through Loehe's prayer. In some few cases he told the evil spirit to go out, and as a rule he treated the possessed and mentally ill through pastoral counsel and care.

As the reputation of Loehe as a curer of souls spread, people from everywhere came to Neuendettelsau to obtain his help. It has been said that among recent Protestant clergymen there are none who have attained to the stature of Loehe as a curer of souls.

**Martin Luther** writes about the laying on of hands in his treatise on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520): *"There is no doubt at all that, even if today such a prayer were made over a sick man, that is, made in full faith by older, graver, saintly men, as many as we wished would be healed. For what could not faith do?" (LW 36, p. 121)*

Practical examples of believing in God for modern gifts of healing abound in references to Luther's life. For example, in giving specific instructions to Pastor Severin Schulze on how to minister to a woman with depression, Luther writes:

*"I know of no worldly help to give. If the physicians are at a loss to find a remedy... This must be counteracted by the power of Christ and with the power of Faith. This is what we do – and we have been accustomed to it,...Then you shall depart, lay you hands on the man again and say: 'These signs shall follow them that believe; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.' Do this three times, once on each of three successive days. Meanwhile let prayers be said from the chancel of the church publicly until God hears them."*

(Bengt Hoffman: Luther and the Mystics, pp. 195-200)

A personal account of healing in Luther's ministry: *"Myconius, the venerated superintendent of Gotha, was in the last stage of consumption, and already speechless. Luther wrote to him that he must not die: ' May God not let me hear so long as I live that you are dead, but cause you to survive me. I pray this earnestly, and will have it granted, and my will shall be granted herein, Amen.' 'I was so horrified,' said Myconius, afterwards, 'when I read what the good man had written, that it seemed to me as though I had heard Christ say, 'Lazarus come forth.' And from that time Myconius was, as it were, kept from the grave by the power of Luther's prayers, and did not die till after Luther's death."* (Luthardt's Moral Truths of Christianity, p. 198 - quoted in a Ministry of Healing by A.J. Gordon)

**To Gerhard Wils Kemp, Luther wrote about an illness from which he was suffering:** *"Christ has so far triumphed, I commend myself to the prayers of yourself and the brethren. I have healed others, I cannot heal myself."* In other words, Luther had placed himself at God's disposal for spiritual healing of people sick in mind and body. At this particular juncture he despaired a little about the possibility of being healed himself.

### ***On Anointing the Sick...***

From "The Sacrament of Extreme Unction" as found in The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520) LW 36, pg. 117ff

*In the first place, then, if they believe the Apostle's words to be true and binding, by what right do they change and contradict them? Why do they make an extreme and a particular kind of unction of that which the Apostle wished to be general? For he did not desire it to be an extreme unction or administered only to the dying; but he says quite generally: "If any man be sick" – not, "If any man be dying." I care not what learned discussions Dionysius has on this point in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; the Apostle's words are clear enough, on which words he as well as they rely, without, however, following them. It is evident, therefore, that they have arbitrarily and without any authority made a sacrament and an extreme unction out of the misunderstood words of the Apostle, to the detriment of all other sick persons, whom they have deprived of the benefit of the unction which the Apostle enjoined.*

*But what follows is still better. The Apostle's promise expressly declares that the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up. The Apostle commands us to anoint the sick man and to pray, in order that he may be healed and raised up; that is, that he may not die, and that it may not be an extreme unction. This is proved also by the prayers which are said, during the anointing, for the recovery of the one who is sick...*

*These people exemplify the word of the Apostle in 1 Timothy 1:7, "Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither the things they say, nor whereof they affirm." Thus they read and follow all things without judgment. With the same thoughtlessness they have also found auricular confession in our Apostle's words – "Confess your sins one to another." (James 5:16) But they do not observe the command of the Apostle, that the priests of the church be called, and prayer be made for the sick. Scarce a single priestling is sent nowadays, although the Apostle would have many present, not because of the unction but of the prayer. Wherefore he says: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man," etc. I have my doubts, however, whether he would have us understand priests when he says presbyters, that is, elders. For one who is an elder is not therefore a priest or minister; so that the suspicion is justified that the Apostle desired the older and graver men in the Church to visit the sick; these should perform a work of mercy and pray in faith and thus heal him...*

*Therefore, I take it, this unction is the same as that which the Apostles practiced, in Mark 6:13, "They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." It was a ceremony of the early Church, by which they wrought miracles on the sick... Therefore, this unction is not a sacrament, but a counsel of James, which whoever will may use, and it is derived from Mark 6, as I have shown...*

*For this very contingency James provided with care and foresight by attaching the promise of healing and the forgiveness of sins not to the unction, but to the prayer of faith. For he says: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." But where is the prayer of faith in our present use of extreme unction? Who prays over the sick one in such faith as not to doubt that he will recover? Such a prayer of faith James here describes, of which he said in the beginning of his Epistle: (James 1:6) "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." And Christ says of it: "Whatsoever you ask, believe that you shall receive and it shall be done to you." (Mark 11:24)*

*If such prayer were made, even today, over a sick man – that is, prayer made in full faith by older, grave and saintly men – it is beyond all doubt that we could heal as many sick as we would. For what could not faith do? But we neglect, this faith, which the authority of the Apostle demands above all else... Moreover, we turn the daily or voluntary unction into an extreme unction, and finally, we not only do not effect the result promised by the Apostle, namely, the healing of the sick, but we make it of none effect by striving after the very opposite...*

*Now I do not condemn this our sacrament of extreme unction, but I firmly deny that it is what the Apostle James prescribes; for his unction agrees with ours neither in form, use, power nor purpose. Nevertheless; we shall number it among those sacraments which we have instituted, such as the blessing and sprinkling of salt and holy water. For we cannot deny that every creature is sanctified by the word and by prayer, (1 Timothy 4:4 f.) as the Apostle Paul teaches us. We do not deny, therefore, that forgiveness of sins and peace are granted through extreme unction; not because it is a sacrament divinely instituted, but because he who receives it believes that these blessings are granted to him... The faith of the one anointed receives even that which the minister either could not or did not intend to give; it is sufficient for him to hear and believe the Word. For whatever we believe we shall receive... The saying of Christ stands fast – "All things are possible to him that believe," (Mark 9:23) and, "Be it to you even as you hast believed." (Matthew 8:13)*

When Philip Melancthon lay gravely ill, Luther turned to the window in the sickroom and poured out his soul in the boldest and most glowing prayer for his friend's recovery. About this occasion Luther wrote: *"This time I besought the Almighty with great vigor. I attacked him with his own weapons, quoting from Scripture all the promises I could remember, that prayers should be granted, and said that he must grant my prayer, if I was henceforth to put faith in his promises."*

Luther then took the hand of the sick man saying: *"Be of good courage, Philip, you will not die, although the Lord might see cause to kill, yet he does not will the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn to him and live. God has called the greatest sinners unto mercy; how much less, then, will he cast you off, my Philip, or destroy you in sin and sadness. Therefore, do not give way to grief, do not become your own murderer, but trust in the Lord, who can kill and bring to life, who can strike and heal again."*

### ***On Healing Available in the Eucharist...***

**The Large Catechism** reminds us that the body and blood of Jesus is a "medicine for immortality, an antidote against death." We must regard the sacrament as *"a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefitted also. . . those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death and the devil and all evils"* (LC V, 68, 70).



## ***On Deliverance Ministry and Spiritual Warfare...***

*"How often has it happened and still does, that devils have been driven out in the name of Christ; also that by calling on his Name in prayer the sick have been healed."* **Martin Luther**, quoted in J. Sidlow Baxter, "Divine Healing of the Body" (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), p. 76

"On April 5 a pastor came from the church in Suptitz, near Torgau, to complain of apparitions and disturbances caused by Satan. He said that Satan disturbed his peace with nocturnal tumults and the smashing of all the utensils in his house. Satan hurled pots and dishes close to his head, so that they broke in pieces, and Satan annoyed him by laughing out loud, although he saw nothing of him. For a whole year, the pastor said, he had endured these and many other trials, so that his wife and children wished to leave the house.

Luther responded, *'Dear Brother, be strong in the Lord and firm in your faith! Don't give in to that robber! Suffer the outward things and the minor damage that comes from the breaking of pots, for it can't harm you in body and soul, as you have found, for the angel of the Lord is with you. Let Satan play with the pots. Meanwhile pray to God with your wife and children and say, 'Be off, Satan! I'm lord in this house, not you. By divine authority I'm head of this household, and I have a call from heaven to be pastor of this church. I have testimony from heaven an earth, and this is what I rely on. You enter this house as a thief and robber. You are a murderer and a scoundrel. Why don't you stay in heaven? Who invited you to come here?'* In this way you should sing him his litany and his legend and let him play as long as pleases.

*I was often pestered by the devil when I was imprisoned in my Patmos, high up in the fortress in the kingdom of the birds. I resisted him in faith and confronted him with this verse: God, who created man, is mine, and all things are under his feet. If you have any power over him, try it!'*

Then he told a story about a woman in Magdeburg who, when Satan disturbed her, drove him away by breaking wind. *'This example is not always to be followed and is dangerous,'* Luther said, *'because Satan, who is the spirit and author of presumption, is not easily mocked and put to flight. Reliance on such an example can prove that it's not at all appropriate for somebody else. So it once happened that a horned specter of Satan lost his horn when a godly man boasted of his baptism, but when another man foolishly tried to imitate this example, he was killed by Satan.'*

Table Talk of Martin Luther, recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, April 5, 1538  
(Luther's Works, Vol. 54, p. 279)

**Johann Christoph Blumhardt** (1805-1880) was a German Lutheran theologian and the father of Christoph Blumhardt. He is best known for his contribution in thought towards a kingdom-now/come theology and his motto and view of the atonement as Christus Victor, or "Jesus is Victor". This motto originated from the exorcism of Gottliebin Dittus, a demoniac, whose cure was effected after a two years' struggle that took place in Möttlingen in 1840-42. A revival followed, attended by so many people from so large an area that on Good Friday, 1845, no less than 176 localities were represented at the service. On one occasion, Blumhardt began praying over a dying girl, placed his hands on her, and she was healed. This created a sensation which drew people from all over Western Europe. This was so, even though Blumhardt himself insisted that it was not his hands that healed, but God's response to honest prayer. Blumhardt saw sickness as a way that the Devil's power was brought to bear on our sin-soaked lives. He believed that the way to resist sickness is to confess our sin and change our ways. At his services, so it is reported, healing of physical infirmities resulted from Blumhardt's laying on of hands in token of absolution. Blumhardt received calls to other places, but felt that his gifts and time belonged to the "distressed"; in order to be able to devote himself entirely to them, he bought in 1853 the royal watering-place Boll, which became an asylum for sufferers of all kinds, and from all ranks of society. The girl he had cured went with him as an assistant, accompanied by a brother and a sister

whom Blumhardt had also cured. In 1869 and 1872 his sons joined him in the work. From all countries the afflicted flocked to his asylum, where his unique treatment seemed to give them new vital energy. At last sickness attacked him, and he ordained his son to the work with the words, "I consecrate thee to victory." In 1899 this son withdrew from the clergy, but continued to maintain the establishment at Boll.

### ***On the Baptism of the Holy Spirit...***



**Martin Luther writes:** "And so we are filled with 'all the fullness of God.' This phrase, which follows a Hebrew manner of speaking, means that we are filled in all the ways in which He fills a person. We are filled with God, and He pours into us all His gifts and grace and fills us with His Spirit, who makes us courageous. He enlightens us with His light, His life lives in us, His beatitude makes us blessed, and His love causes love to arise in us. Put briefly, He fills us in order that everything that He is and everything He can do might be in us in all its fullness, and work powerfully." (WA 17/1:438, 14-28)

**P.E. Kretzmann**, wrote an article back in 1924 for the Concordia Publishing House called "The Baptism or Gift of the Holy Ghost." In the article he points out: "*The special baptism, or gift, of the Holy Ghost in the apostolic period, distinct from regeneration or conversion, consisted in this, that He endowed the believers of that day with extraordinary miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues, prophesying, performing miracles, etc.*"

After the mention of the Cornelius event in Acts 10 he continues: "*We find furthermore that in most cases the special act of laying on of hands accompanied the imparting of the Spirit, and that a distinct filling of the Holy Ghost, in addition to that taking place in regeneration is spoken of.*"

**George Stoeckhardt** writes in a commentary on 1 Corinthians that the person who has the gift of tongues is in a deeply spiritual state where they begin: "*...to speak bring forth pleasant sounds or songs, unintelligible, or only partly intelligible,...perhaps even not understood by the person who produced these sounds...the Spirit moves the inner spirit of man to utter euphonious sounds...unintelligible both to the hearers as well as the speaker himself.*"

The old Lutheran commentators also made an inference that the sighing mentioned in Romans 8:26 could be considered as a parallel phenomena to the gift of tongues. They point out that the two Greek words can suggest groanings or sighs as being inarticulate - in the sense of not be able to be expressed in understandable words. For example, the Lutheran Bible commentator **R.C.H. Lenski** comments on these verses:

"*Later writers state that the charisma of tongues was a speaking in non-human language and either identify these 'groanings' with this non human language or conceive of them as a parallel to it.*" (The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 547)

**Dr. William Arndt**, the co-editor of the famous Greek-English dictionary, in a Lutheran conference paper that he gave in 1930, clearly states the earliest view of the LCMS. It was right at the start of the modern Pentecostal movement and was presented by a scholar at a church conference who was well aware of the patristic tradition, as well as Reformed neo-dispensational theology as expressed by folks like B.B. Warfield. The fact of the matter is that it firmly rejects any type of neo-dispensational normative and durative cessationism:

"*Let us not say: The Bible teaches that the charismatic gifts were confined to the early Church. In my conviction we cannot prove that the Bible carries such teaching...There are no Scripture pas-*



characters that I could read from Schweinitz what he was writing [about 18 miles]. The pen he used was so long that its extremity reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears of a lion which lay there, and shook the triple crown on the Pope's head. All the cardinals and princes ran up hastily and endeavored to support it.... I stretched out my arm: that moment I awoke with my arm extended, in great alarm and very angry with this monk, who could not guide his pen better. I recovered myself a little.... It was only a dream. I was still half asleep, and once more closed my eyes. The dream came again. The lion, still disturbed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, until the whole city of Rome, and all the States of the holy empire, ran up to know what was the matter. The Pope called upon us to oppose this monk, and addressed himself particularly to me, because the friar was living in my dominions. I again awoke, repeated the Lord's prayer, entreated God to preserve his Holiness, and fell asleep.... I then dreamt that all the princes of the empire, and we along with them, hastened to Rome, and endeavored one after another to break this pen; but the greater our exertions the stronger it became: it crackled as if it had been made of iron: we gave it up as hopeless. I then asked the monk (for I was now at Rome, now at Wittenberg) where he had got that pen, and how it came to be so strong. [In those days they used goosequills for pens.] 'This pen,' replied he, 'belonged to a Bohemian goose [Huss] a hundred years old. I had it from one of my old schoolmasters. It is so strong because no one can take the pith out of it, and I am myself quite astonished at it.' On a sudden I heard a loud cry; from the monk's long pen had issued a host of other pens. I awoke a third time; it was day light." History of the Reformation, Book III, Chap. 4.

Frederick related the foregoing to his brother John. On the morning of Oct. 31, 1517, stating that he had dreamed it during the previous night. The same day at noon Martin Luther advanced boldly to the chapel at Wittenberg and posted upon the door ninety-five theses, or propositions, against the Papal doctrine of indulgences. This was his public entrance upon the great work of reformation.